



Effect of Deceptive Marketing on Women's Buying Behavior: Evidence in the Nigeria Cosmetics Industry

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Consumer buying behavior, deceptive marketing, diversity washing, greenwashing, social washing.

In recent times, the cosmetics industry has continued to grow, with women being the major players and consumers, driven by their active buying behavior. This buying behavior has made the business environment in this industry increasingly competitive, as organizations now need to shift from traditional marketing practices to digital marketing. This is a way to continue to improve women's buying behavior in the cosmetics industry. Based on this premise, the study investigates the effect of deceptive marketing on women's buying behavior in Ilorin Metropolis. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which was used to conveniently select 85 women at the Chupet Store located in Ilorin Metropolis. A self-designed questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents, and the data were analyzed using IBM AMOS version 27. The results indicated green washing significantly predict consumer buying behavior ($\beta = .26$; C.R = 2.10; $p < .05$). The result also revealed that social washing did not predict consumer buying behavior ($\beta = .20$; C.R = 1.38; $p > .05$), the result also revealed that diversity washing predict consumer buying behavior ($\beta = .30$; C.R = 2.14; $p < .05$). The study concluded that deceptive marketing in form of green washing and diversity washing play a significant role on women buying behavior. Based Based on this conclusion, the study recommends that organizations should incorporate deceptive marketing practices, such as green washing and diversity washing, into their marketing strategy, as this will help strengthen the buying behavior of women in the Nigerian cosmetic industry

1. Introduction

Deceptive marketing is false or misleading sales activities and information aimed at luring, coercing, seducing, persuading, or enticing both potential and existing consumers of a product to patronize a trader, seller, or manufacturer of a product (Bae et al., 2021). It is an act of selling the concept as the sole aim is geared towards the immediate conversion of goods to cash, not minding the aftermath effect it may have on the buyer or consumer and the organization's sales, sustenance,

and growth potential (Islam, 2021). It can be perpetrated through personal selling, advertising, labeling, packaging, catalog, and deceptive telemarketing. However, in developed countries such as America and Europe, as well as some underdeveloped countries, deceptive marketing activities are criminal offenses under the Competition Act. Customers should be conscious that their buying behavior can be misled through advertising methods because Customers are day after day affected by advertising and marketing. They have to be aware of the way companies present and advertise their products or services (Amucheazi & Olewu, 2023). After explaining in detail what deceptive marketing is, the study shows that customers can react in different ways and how they do it. Moreover, how they judge their purchase and their opinions of the company that deceived them, as well as how they express themselves nowadays.

The organic cosmetics industry in Nigeria may be one of the key leaders in deceptive marketing. There are concerns about whether the stainless-looking beauty queens featured in the commercials for the cream use it daily on their skin, or if it is merely a deceit intended to lure unsuspecting members of the public. (Bharti et al., 2022). There's a need for complete mass orientation and reorientation of our traders and producers, right from the small-scale traders and producers to the big-time traders and producers, because they exhibit a lot of selfish marketing traits and attitudes (Akter et al., 2021). Every product or services have its advantages or disadvantages, but what they also do is to emphasize the product's merits and de-emphasize its demerits. So, they need a complete reorientation and reorganization of their attitudes to life and moral value system. It is a big problem and barrier to our nation's economic growth, as this equally affects our image internationally (Eisend et al., 2016). The situation has gone so harmful to the extent that even the regulatory bodies such as the Standard Organizations of Nigeria (SON), Advertising Practitioners' Council of Nigeria (APCON), and Consumer Protection Council are more or less like toothless bulldogs as consumers are left at the mercy of the nefarious marketing activities of manufacturers, advert media houses and traders in our markets. This unchecked unethical marketing activity that is ravaging the nation's moral commercial value system leaves one wondering about the roles of the relevant regulatory bodies (Eisend et al., 2016).

Globally, it has been established that women are prone to buying different kinds of cosmetic products (Kittikowit et al., 2018; Jyothika, 2024; Adebola, 2024). Deceptive marketing is a common phenomenon in every sector in Nigeria; the production of organic cream products is causing a lot of issues among women and marketers because of deceptive marketing. The accredited organic products in Nigeria are very and women don't consider them harmful, but because of their interest in skin bleaching (Adebola et al., 2023; Chaudhary & Tyagi, 2023). Consumers were lured into the use of organic cream products through fashion consciousness, making them more involved in those products. People's desire to look good and be highly acceptable in society influences them to buy more organic cream products, and that is why the organic cream industry in Nigeria is growing day by day not considering the damage it has caused to the skin. Moreover, consumers are bombarded with tons of false marketing that lures consumers to buy organic cream products, or the testimony of the same gender or the complexion of the same gender also influences their buying, not considering the repercussions.

Both men and women desire to buy good products and also respond to various forms of deceptive marketing differently, but women's feminine attitudes regarding beautification and physical attractiveness make them purchase. (Isip & Calvert, 2020) Women make up 85% of all consumers, according to worldwide matrices, and their income is expected to exceed \$31.8 trillion according to Bridget Brennan's book *Why She Buys: The New Strategy for Reaching the World's Most Powerful Consumers*, published in 2015, the most lucrative target market for cosmetics products is women, who are also the most powerful buyers. Fake information and fraudulent attempts have an impact on customers and go against the market's well-functioning mechanism (Adebola et al., 2023; Rohmah & Suhardi, 2020). Deceptive marketing has been popular in Nigeria since 2020. They discover that selling their goods to women is more profitable. The study attempted to fill the gaps by focusing on the impact of deceptive marketing among Nigerian women. This issue has now become urgently necessary, and consumers, particularly women, are increasingly conscious of deceptive marketing.

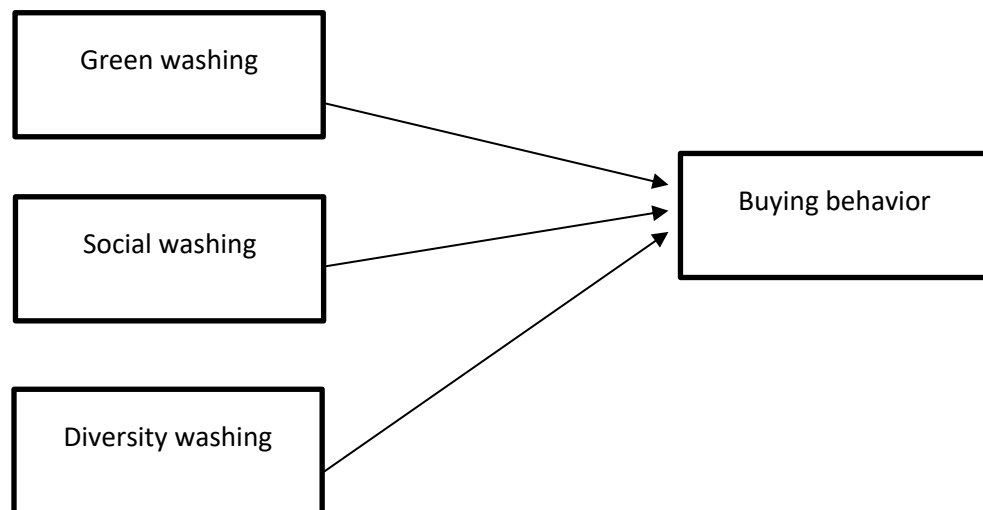


Fig1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Author Conceptualization 2025

The conceptual framework provides a detailed illustration of the probable link of green washing on buying behavior. Also, the possible link of social washing on buying behavior while the possible link of diversity washing on buying behavior. The three dimension makes up deceptive marketing which can influence buying behavior.

2. Method

Design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. This design helps to collect data within a specific point in time using a questionnaire as a method of

data collection. The independent variable is deceptive marketing which has three dimensions of green washing, social washing and diversity washing while the dependent variable is consumer buying behavior.

Sample size and Sample Technique

A total sample of 85 respondents was used in the study among different age groups, educational qualification and diverse occupations. This study utilizes the convenience sampling method to select the sample of the study.

Instrument

The study used a questionnaire that had three sections, namely socio-demographic factors, deceptive marketing, and buying behavior. Section A of the questionnaire measures respondents' socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, educational qualification, etc. Section B measures deceptive marketing while Section C measures buying behavior. The scale was scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The validity of the instrument was achieved through face and content validity through expert opinions and views. The items suggested were retained. The reliability of the instrument was achieved through pilot testing, and a Cronbach's alpha of .78 was reported for the instrument.

Procedure

Data collection for the study involved a set of activities that included the identification and securing of the participation of women who buy cosmetic cream in Ilorin city. Informed consent and confidentiality were obtained from the respondents used for the study. Data was collected among women at different sections of the cosmetic shop in Ilorin metropolis. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed, but only 85 were retrieved, showing a response rate of 85%. The questionnaire administration took approximately one week.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using the IBM-SPSS version 27 and AMOS 23. Data was analysed in two forms which include the descriptive and the inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the respondent socio demographic factors while the inferential statistics was used to test the hypotheses postulated in the study.

3. Results

Table 1. Respondents' Socio-demographics (N = 85)

Category	Level	N(%)
Gender	Female	85(100.0)
Age	19-30 years	31(36.5)
	31-40 years	23(27.1)
	41-50 years	16(18.8)
	51-60 years	15(17.6)

Marital status	Single	24(28.2)
	Married	31(36.5)
	Separated	4(4.7)
	Divorced	21(24.7)
	Widow/Widower	5(5.9)
Educational qualification	OND/NCE	28(32.9)
	HND/B.Sc	28(32.9)
	Msc	8(9.4)
	PhD	21(24.7)
Socio economic status	Low	23(27.1)
	Moderate	33(38.8)
	High	29(34.1)

Sources: Authors 'Computation (2025)

Table 1 shows that 85(100.0%) of the respondents were Female. Based on age, 31(36.5%) were 19-30 years of age, 23(27.1%) were 31-40 years of age, 16(18.8%) were 41-50 years of age while 15(17.6%) were 51-60 years of age. Based on marital status, 24(28.2%) were single, 31(36.5%) were married, 4(4.7%) were separated, 21(24.7%) were divorced while 5(5.9%) were widow/widower. In terms of educational qualification, 28(32.9%) had OND/NCE, 28(32.9%) acquired HND/B.Sc, 8(9.4%) possess a master's degree, while 21(24.7%) bagged a doctoral degree. Based on socioeconomic status, 23(27.1%) had low socioeconomic status, 33(38.8%) had moderate socioeconomic status, while reporting high economic status.

Correlation analysis

Table 2. Bivariate Correlation Analysis of the study variables

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
1. Greenwashing	12.18	4.19	-			
2. Social washing	12.05	3.41	.52**	-		
3. Diversity washing	12.37	3.59	.51**	.41**	-	
4. Consumer buying behaviour	12.97	4.53	.45**	.38**	.43**	-

Note: SD = standard deviation; **p < .01.

The results of correlational analyses showed that green washing was significantly and positively associated with consumer buying behavior ($r = .45$, $p < .01$). The study also revealed that social washing significantly and positively associated with consumer buying behavior ($r = .38$, $p < .01$). The study also revealed that diversity washing is significantly and positively link with consumer buying behavior ($r = .38$, $p < .01$).

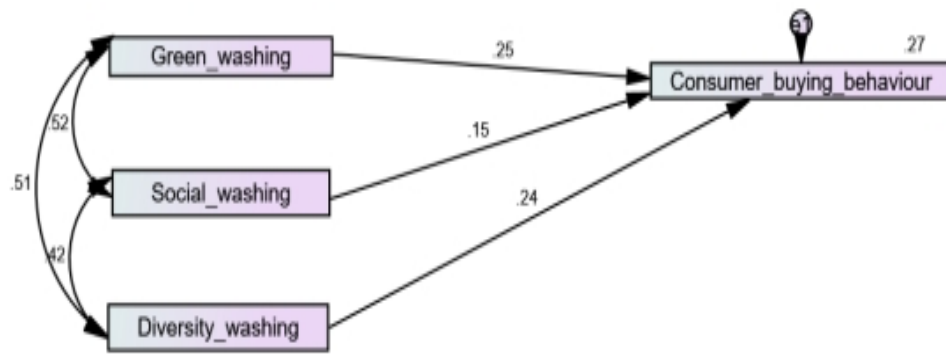


Fig 1. A simple predictive model showing the deceptive marketing on consumer buying behavior

Table 3. Final model fit measures

Measures	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
χ^2/df	1.031	<3	Satisfactory
GFI	0.921	$\geq .90$	Satisfactory
CFI	0.940	$\geq .90$	Satisfactory
NFI	0.929	$\geq .90$	Satisfactory
RMSEA	0.041	$\leq .08$	Satisfactory

Note: χ^2/df , normed chi-square statistic; GFI, goodness-of-fit index; CFI, comparative fit index; NFI: Normalized Fit Index; RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

Table 3 above indicates that the structural model fit met the requirement for a model fit as suggested by (Byrne, 2016; Hu & Bentler, 1999; McArdle & Nesselroade, 2014). The present study achieves a good fit of $\chi^2/df = 1.031$; GFI = 0.921; CFI = 0.940; NFI = 0.929; RMSEA = 0.041. Hence, the hypothesis was tested in a bid to interpret the structural relationships among the variables

Hypotheses Testing

Table 4. Standardized direct effects of deceptive marketing on Consumer buying behaviour

Hypothesized Path	β	S.E.	C.R.	P
Consumer buying behaviour <--- Green washing	.26	.12	2.10	.03
Consumer buying behaviour <--- Social washing	.20	.14	1.38	.16
Consumer buying behaviour <--- Diversity washing	.30	.14	2.14	.03

Note: S.E = standard error; CR= critical ratio; P = probability level

The analysis supports the first hypothesis postulation that green washing significantly predict consumer buying behavior ($\beta = .26$; C.R = 2.10; $p < .05$). The second hypothesis from Table 4 revealed that social washing did not predict consumer buying behavior ($\beta = .20$; C.R = 1.38; $p > .05$), hence the hypothesis was not confirmed. The third hypothesis revealed that diversity washing predicts consumer buying behavior ($\beta = .30$; C.R. = 2.14; $p < .05$). The third hypothesis was also confirmed.

4. Discussion of Findings

This study examines the effect of deceptive marketing on consumer buying behavior. The first finding showed that greenwashing was significantly and positively associated with consumer buying behavior. The finding revealed a significant and positive effect of deceptive marketing and its dimensions on consumer buying behavior. This is in line with (Baker, et al.,2022). In their study they found out that a positive relationship exist between deceptive marketing and consumer buying behavior.

The second hypothesis found that social washing did not predict consumer buying behavior. The study finding was in line with Bae et al. (2021) who found that consumers trust advertisements for info and belief values, they are more likely to be cheated (When consumers are conscious of deceptive advertising and of its procedures, they may underachieve, depending upon the emotional rank, that impact how they observe material, and the immediate surroundings where the claim is presented. The study findings were also supported by Shahrukh (2022) and Yao (2023), who found that social washing did not predict consumer buying behaviour. The study finding was not in line with (Strycharz & Duivenvoorde, 2021), who found that social washing did not predict consumer buying behavior.

The third hypothesis found that diversity washing predict consumer buying behaviour. The study finding was in line with Khushk et al., (2022); Vinnicombe & Mavin, (2023) who found that diversity washing play significant role on consumer buying behaviour. The study finding was also by Diwanji et al. (2023) who found that diversity washing predict consumer buying behaviour.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study aims to investigate how deceptive marketing affects consumer buying behavior. The result shows a relationship between deceptive marketing and consumer buying behavior. For decades, deceptive marketing has been the talk of the town among marketers and customers. Though the results indicate that more or less every marketer is somehow engaged in false claims and exaggerations, which is deception. It is reported that those marketers who do not mislead their customers. Always enjoy market shares more than those who overstate. Thus, this study suggests that marketing companies should not focus on false marketing with incorrect interpretations, and marketers should be more focused on the level of competitive services to generate positive consumer value and attitude to award the product or services.

The study concludes that customers with experienced green washing, diversity washing, and social washing, and a deceptive environment claim have different behavior than those customers who have experienced a comparatively less deceptive environment. Unfair, deceptive marketing can hurt customers. Telling the

truth would lead the customer towards satisfaction. The marketers need to be sure that the impression made by the marketers during the word-of-mouth marketing that the impression made by the marketers and disclaimer is not at fault. There should be no deceptive pricing. Make sure that the impression offer is honest and also satisfies the needs of the customers.

Study Implications

The finding has some practical and theoretical implications. First the study has been able to show that green washing and diversity washing play a significant role on consumer buying behavior. This implies that concerned stakeholders should put up deceptive marketing such as green washing, social washing and diversity washing in a bid to improve the consumer buying behavior of cosmetic products. Theoretically, the study will also build and support theory on consumer buying behavior by inculcating the role of green washing and diversity washing.

Limitations and future directions

No study is without its limitations. First, the sample size is small; hence, generalizing the study may be done with caution. Secondly, the study uses a survey kind of data collection, which may, in a way, tend to bias as a result of the social desirability effect. Thirdly, the study was conducted within a certain point in time, which sometimes may not be able to determine the level of buying behavior of female regarding their cosmetics. It is therefore recommended that future studies should use a large sample size in a bid to enhance generalization. The study also recommends that qualitative methodologies, such as interviews, focus group discussions, can also be used in a bid to get better insights from women regarding their buying behavior of cosmetics. Finally, the longitudinal study can be utilized by future studies in a bid to better understand women's buying behavior of cosmetics.

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