



The Influence of Deceptive Tactics of Marketing on Marketing Ambidexterity: Case Study of the Egyptian Airlines

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of deceptive marketing tactics on marketing ambidexterity within the airline industry. As competition intensifies, some airlines may resort to misleading advertising, hidden fees, or exaggerated claims to attract customers, making it essential to understand the implications of such practices on marketing capabilities. The research adopts a quantitative approach, surveying airline employees to assess the relationship between deceptive marketing and key dimensions of marketing ambidexterity: opportunity exploration, opportunity exploitation, and marketing flexibility. The findings reveal that deceptive marketing significantly enhances opportunity exploration and exploitation, enabling airlines to test new markets and optimize existing ones. However, no significant relationship is found between deceptive marketing and marketing flexibility, suggesting that deceptive strategies may hinder adaptability in dynamic market conditions. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of deception in shaping airline marketing strategies and offers insights into balancing competitive advantage with ethical considerations.

KEYWORDS

Deceptive tactics of Marketing, Marketing Ambidexterity, Opportunity Exploration, Opportunity Exploitation, Marketing Flexibility, Airline Industry.

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تأثير ممارسات التسويق الخادع على البراعة التسويقية: دراسة حالة شركات الطيران المصرية

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الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في تأثير ممارسات التسويق الخادع على البراعة التسويقية في قطاع الطيران. مع اشتداد المنافسة، قد تلجأ بعض شركات الطيران إلى الإعلانات المضللة، والرسوم الخفية، أو الادعاءات المبالغ فيها لجذب العملاء، مما يجعل فهم آثار هذه الممارسات على القدرات التسويقية أمراً بالغ الأهمية. يعتمد البحث على نهج كمي، حيث استطلع آراء موظفي شركات الطيران لتقييم العلاقة بين التسويق الخادع والأبعاد الرئيسية للبراعة التسويقية: استكشاف الفرص، واستغلالها، والمرونة التسويقية. تكشف النتائج أن التسويق الخادع يعزز بشكل كبير من استكشاف الفرص واستغلالها، مما يمكن شركات الطيران من اختبار أسواق جديدة وتحسين الأسواق القائمة. ومع ذلك، لم يتم العثور على علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين التسويق الخادع والمرونة التسويقية، مما يشير إلى أن الاستراتيجيات الخادعة قد تعيق القدرة على التكيف في ظل ظروف السوق المتغيرة. تساهم هذه الدراسة في الأدبيات من خلال تقديم أدلة تجريبية على دور الخداع في تشكيل استراتيجيات تسويق شركات الطيران، وتقدم رؤى حول موازنة الميزة التنافسية مع الاعتبارات الأخلاقية.

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الكلمات الدالة

ممارسات التسويق الخادع، البراعة التسويقية، استكشاف الفرص، استغلال الفرص، صناعة الطيران.

1. Introduction

In the highly competitive airline industry, the ability to effectively balance innovative marketing strategies with the optimization of existing resources is crucial for sustained success. This balance, often referred to as marketing ambidexterity, enables organizations to simultaneously explore new opportunities while exploiting current market strengths (Prange & Bruyaka, 2016; Josephson et al., 2015). However, as traditional marketing methods become less effective in capturing consumer attention, airlines are increasingly turning to unconventional strategies, such as stealth marketing, to subtly influence consumer behavior without overtly presenting promotional messages (Martin & Smith, 2008; Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004).

Deceptive marketing, characterized by its covert and often deceptive tactics, has gained traction as a means to engage consumers in an era where advertising fatigue and skepticism are prevalent (Goodman, 2006; Roy & Chattopadhyay, 2010). Techniques such as viral marketing, influencer endorsements, and product placement allow airlines to create organic consumer engagement, often without the audience realizing they are being marketed to (Akyol & Tokatli, 2019). While these strategies offer significant advantages in terms of cost-effectiveness and consumer engagement, they also raise ethical concerns, particularly regarding deception, intrusion, and exploitation (Martin & Smith, 2008; Black & Nevill, 2009).

The relationship between stealth marketing and marketing ambidexterity is particularly relevant in the airline industry, where companies must navigate a dynamic and rapidly changing market environment. Airlines must not only exploit existing customer bases and operational efficiencies but also explore new markets, digital marketing techniques, and customer engagement strategies to remain competitive (Camilleri, 2018; Freihat, 2020). Stealth marketing, with its ability to subtly influence consumer behavior, can play a pivotal role in achieving this balance by enabling airlines to test new marketing messages with minimal risk while simultaneously refining existing strategies based on real-time consumer feedback (Roy & Chattopadhyay, 2010; Prange & Schlegelmilch, 2009).

Despite the growing interest in both stealth marketing and marketing ambidexterity, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding how these two concepts interact within the airline industry. While previous studies have explored the ethical implications of stealth marketing (Martin & Smith, 2008; Milne et al., 2008) and the benefits of marketing ambidexterity (Prange & Bruyaka, 2016; Josephson et al., 2015), few have examined the direct impact of stealth marketing on the development of marketing ambidexterity in airlines. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating how stealth marketing techniques influence the dimensions of marketing ambidexterity—exploration of opportunities, exploitation of opportunities, and marketing flexibility—within the context of the airline industry.

The importance of this study lies in its potential to provide actionable insights for airlines seeking to enhance their marketing strategies in a competitive and rapidly evolving industry. By understanding the role of stealth marketing in fostering marketing ambidexterity, airlines can better navigate the challenges of consumer skepticism, advertising fatigue, and market volatility, ultimately achieving a sustainable competitive advantage.

2. literature Review

2.1 Deceptive Marketing Tactics

Deceptive marketing encompasses a range of strategies designed to mislead consumers by presenting incomplete, exaggerated, or ambiguous information to influence purchasing decisions. These tactics may include stealth marketing, false advertising, misleading promotions, and the omission of critical product details (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). The concept of deceptive marketing has evolved significantly with the rise of digital advertising, where behavioral tracking, targeted advertisements, and algorithm-driven content personalization have made it easier for companies to craft misleading yet persuasive messages (Goodman, 2006; Martin & Smith, 2008). In the airline industry, deceptive marketing tactics manifest in several ways, including misrepresentation of pricing, exaggerated service quality claims, hidden fees, and the use of ambiguous promotional language (El-Remedy & Ismail, 2023). For instance, airlines may highlight luxurious seating arrangements in advertisements while failing to mention spatial limitations or additional fees for seat selection (El-Sayed & El-Baz, 2023). Also, Ryanair has been criticized for advertising extremely low fares that often exclude essential charges such as baggage fees, seat selection, and airport taxes, which are only revealed during the final stages of the booking process (Baker, 2020). Similarly, Spirit Airlines in the United States has faced backlash for its "bare fare" model, which initially attracts customers with ultra-low prices, only to impose high fees for services that customers generally assume are included, such as carry-on luggage (Marketing Week, 2019). These practices, although legally ambiguous, may mislead consumers and influence their purchasing decisions based on incomplete or distorted information.

Stealth marketing is a promotional strategy where brands market products or services in a subtle or covert manner without explicitly disclosing the marketing intent to the consumer (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). It differs from **deceptive marketing**, which involves the direct or indirect dissemination of false, exaggerated, or misleading information with the intent to manipulate consumer decisions (Goodman, 2006; Milne et al., 2008). Stealth marketing can be analyzed through three primary dimensions: **deception**, **intrusion**, and **exploitation**—although these dimensions overlap with deceptive practices, their use in stealth marketing focuses more on subtle influence rather than overt misinformation. *Deception* in stealth marketing refers to promoting a product without clear disclosure that the message is an advertisement, such as through influencer endorsements or undercover brand agents (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). *Intrusion* involves breaching consumer privacy or disrupting their personal space, often seen in aggressive behavioral targeting or location-based notifications without user consent (Han & Bai, 2022). *Exploitation* in this context refers to manipulating consumers by using psychological tactics such as social proof, artificial scarcity, or emotional appeal, often without consumers realizing they are being marketed to (Roy & Chattopadhyay, 2010).

In the airline industry, these stealth tactics are increasingly present. For instance, some airlines use travel bloggers or influencers to promote services without clearly identifying the posts as sponsored content. Others may apply behavioral targeting through AI-powered apps that personalize ticket promotions based on search history, often leading consumers to perceive urgency or exclusivity (Akyol & Tokatli, 2019).

While these tactics aim to increase engagement and revenue, they raise ethical concerns due to their subtle manipulation of consumer perception and behavior. Therefore, it is essential to distinguish stealth marketing as a strategic form of indirect influence that, while not always illegal, may blur ethical lines—especially in sectors like aviation where transparency and trust are critical.

Additionally, stealth marketing techniques, including influencer partnerships and social media promotions, enable airlines to shape consumer perceptions without transparent disclosure of sponsorships (Roy & Chattopadhyay, 2010). Algorithmic manipulation is another deceptive strategy where AI-driven dynamic pricing allows airlines to display different ticket prices based on user location, browsing history, and previous searches, potentially misleading consumers about actual fare availability (Josephson et al., 2015).

While deceptive marketing tactics can boost short-term sales and brand engagement, they pose significant ethical and legal risks. Consumer protection laws, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), impose strict guidelines on transparency, data usage, and advertising disclosures (Martin & Smith, 2008). In the airline industry, regulatory bodies such as the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) have implemented rules against misleading advertising and fare misrepresentation (Goodman, 2006). Despite these regulations, research suggests that many airlines continue to engage in deceptive marketing, often pushing legal boundaries to maximize profits (El-Sayed & El-Baz, 2023). The challenge remains finding a balance between persuasive marketing and ethical responsibility, ensuring that consumers are not misled or manipulated.

The impact of deceptive marketing on consumer behavior is complex. While it can increase short-term engagement and conversions, it may lead to long-term distrust and brand erosion. Studies indicate that customers who feel deceived are more likely to switch brands, leave negative reviews, or demand greater regulatory intervention (Han & Bai, 2022; Ismail, 2024). Hassan et al. (2024) further emphasize that deceptive marketing in the hospitality and tourism industries negatively affects consumer trust and destination image, particularly through misleading pricing, false advertising, and non-transparent promotional tactics. These findings align with the airline industry, where deceptive strategies—such as hidden fees, exaggerated service claims, and unclear refund policies—can contribute to consumer skepticism and reduced brand loyalty. Given that brand trust is a key factor in repeat business, airlines must carefully manage deceptive marketing tactics to avoid alienating loyal customers. Ethical alternatives such as transparent pricing, honest advertising, and value-based promotions have been recommended to improve consumer perceptions (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004; Black & Nevill, 2009).

2.2 Marketing Ambidexterity

Marketing ambidexterity is a critical strategic capability that enables firms to balance exploration and exploitation to maintain competitiveness in dynamic markets (Freihat, 2020). Exploration involves identifying new opportunities, market segments, and innovative marketing techniques, while exploitation focuses on optimizing existing marketing strategies and resources (Gibson, & Birkinshaw, 2004). In the highly competitive airline industry, where market conditions, customer preferences, and

technological advancements evolve rapidly, marketing ambidexterity plays a crucial role in sustaining competitive advantage and adapting to external changes (Freihat, 2020). Airlines that successfully implement ambidextrous marketing strategies can navigate the challenges of digital transformation, regulatory constraints, and shifting consumer expectations while maximizing revenue and customer engagement.

The concept of marketing ambidexterity in airlines consists of three key dimensions: opportunity exploration, opportunity exploitation, and marketing flexibility. Opportunity exploration involves the continuous search for new markets, customer engagement strategies, and digital innovations. Airlines leverage stealth marketing techniques, influencer partnerships, and viral campaigns to engage with emerging customer segments while testing new advertising approaches (He & Wong, 2004)). Opportunity exploitation, on the other hand, focuses on enhancing and refining existing marketing initiatives, such as loyalty programs, AI-driven personalized promotions, and revenue optimization strategies (Roy & Chattopadhyay, 2010). Marketing flexibility refers to an airline's ability to dynamically adjust its promotional campaigns, pricing strategies, and customer engagement approaches in response to changing market conditions. Airlines utilize real-time analytics, behavioral tracking, and AI-driven marketing automation to ensure they can adapt their marketing efforts efficiently while maintaining brand consistency (Prange & Schlegelmilch, 2009).

The role of marketing ambidexterity in the airline industry is increasingly important due to the sector's exposure to economic fluctuations, regulatory shifts, technological advancements, and evolving consumer expectations. Airlines that achieve a balance between exploration and exploitation can optimize their marketing investments while sustaining brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, and long-term profitability (Josephson, 2015). For example, airlines integrate stealth marketing campaigns and innovative digital content strategies to attract younger, tech-savvy travelers while simultaneously refining traditional customer loyalty programs and service quality improvements to retain their existing customer base (Judge & Blocker, 2008). This dual approach allows airlines to remain competitive while adapting to market disruptions and digital transformations.

Marketing ambidexterity also plays a key role in securing sustainable competitive advantage for airlines by fostering adaptability and responsiveness. Airlines that engage in customer-centric innovation by continuously updating their marketing strategies based on real-time consumer insights and predictive analytics can enhance customer engagement and strengthen brand equity (O'reilly & Tushman, 2008)). Resource optimization through AI-driven pricing models, predictive demand forecasting, and automated marketing campaigns allows airlines to maximize revenue generation while ensuring cost efficiency (Josephson et al., 2015). Furthermore, marketing flexibility enables airlines to respond swiftly to market disruptions, such as economic downturns, travel restrictions, and changing consumer behaviors, ensuring resilience and strategic agility (Han & Bai, 2022).

The increasing reliance on digital transformation has significantly influenced the role of marketing ambidexterity in the airline industry. The integration of AI-driven consumer analytics, machine learning algorithms, and geotargeted advertising allows airlines to optimize both exploratory and exploitative marketing strategies in real time (Petro et al., 2019). AI-powered dynamic pricing models help airlines adjust fares

based on real-time demand, competitor activity, and historical booking patterns, ensuring optimal revenue management. Predictive consumer insights enable airlines to anticipate customer preferences, seasonal trends, and personalized engagement opportunities, thereby enhancing service quality and marketing efficiency (El-Sayed & El-Baz, 2023). Additionally, digital stealth marketing techniques such as targeted influencer campaigns, automated behavioral retargeting, and interactive content marketing allow airlines to subtly influence consumer perceptions without relying on overt advertising methods (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004).

While marketing ambidexterity offers airlines substantial strategic advantages, it also raises ethical and regulatory concerns, particularly in the context of consumer privacy, data security, and transparency in advertising. With the rise of AI-driven personalized marketing, concerns regarding data privacy violations, deceptive advertising, and manipulative pricing strategies have prompted increased regulatory scrutiny (Martin & Smith, 2008). Laws such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) impose strict requirements on consumer data collection, targeted advertising practices, and digital marketing transparency (Han & Bai, 2022). Airlines must ensure compliance with these regulatory frameworks while maintaining marketing adaptability, striking a balance between competitive agility and ethical responsibility. Implementing transparent pricing policies, ethical AI-driven personalization, and responsible data usage practices can help airlines navigate regulatory challenges while fostering long-term consumer trust (El-Remedy & Ismail, 2023).

Marketing ambidexterity is a fundamental capability that enables airlines to continuously explore new marketing opportunities while optimizing their existing strategies. By balancing exploration, exploitation, and marketing flexibility, airlines can sustain competitive advantage, enhance customer engagement, and respond dynamically to changing market conditions. The integration of digital transformation, AI-driven consumer analytics, and predictive marketing models has further reinforced the role of ambidextrous marketing strategies in shaping the future of airline marketing. However, ethical considerations and compliance with data protection regulations remain critical factors in ensuring that marketing adaptability does not come at the expense of consumer trust and long-term brand reputation.

2.3 The Relationship Between Deceptive Marketing and Marketing Ambidexterity

In the airline industry, marketing ambidexterity is crucial for sustaining competitive advantage, as companies must continuously explore new digital marketing strategies, enhance customer engagement, and optimize operational efficiencies (Prange & Schlegelmilch, 2009). One of the controversial approaches that influence marketing ambidexterity is deceptive marketing, which involves misleading or exaggerated claims designed to influence consumer perceptions (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). Research indicates that deceptive marketing can impact opportunity exploration by stimulating consumer curiosity, leading them to seek additional information and compare options before making a decision (Akyol & Tokatli, 2019).

Deceptive marketing has been found to play a dual role in marketing ambidexterity. On one hand, it can drive opportunity exploration by encouraging consumers to investigate new services and promotions. For example, airlines that use misleading

promotional claims about exclusive discounts or luxury features may entice customers to explore their offerings further, even if those claims are exaggerated (Roy & Chattopadhyay, 2010). However, while this technique may initially attract interest, it poses a risk to long-term brand trust and customer loyalty (Black & Nevill, 2009).

On the other hand, opportunity exploitation involves leveraging existing strategies to maximize revenue and customer engagement. Deceptive marketing tactics such as hidden fees, upselling strategies, and selective disclosure of service limitations allow airlines to capitalize on their current offerings while increasing short-term sales (Martin & Smith, 2008). Research shows that exaggerated advertising claims can enhance opportunity exploitation by making services appear more attractive than they actually are, thus increasing purchase likelihood (Freihat, 2020).

While deceptive marketing may enhance exploration and exploitation, its impact on marketing flexibility is less significant. Marketing flexibility refers to a firm's ability to adapt its marketing strategies in response to market changes (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Unlike traditional adaptive marketing approaches, deceptive tactics are often rigid and pre-planned, making them difficult to modify dynamically based on consumer feedback (Sahi & Cheng, 2020).

Moreover, deceptive marketing can lead to consumer skepticism and reduced trust, limiting a company's ability to pivot marketing strategies effectively. Studies suggest that once customers identify deceptive practices, they become more resistant to future promotions, making it harder for companies to adjust their marketing messages without losing credibility (He & Wong, 2004). This explains why some studies fail to find a strong relationship between deceptive marketing and marketing flexibility in the airline sector (Saleh et al., 2023).

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the influence of deceptive marketing tactics on marketing ambidexterity in the airline industry. A descriptive-analytical approach was adopted to systematically explore numerical data and examine the relationships between deceptive marketing practices and dimensions of marketing ambidexterity, including exploration, exploitation, and marketing flexibility (Bryman, 2015).

The study was conducted in Cairo, Egypt, and focused on scheduled airlines operating in the Egyptian market. Data collection took place between December 2024 and February 2025, spanning a duration of three months. The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire, which was distributed through electronic distribution to employees working in airlines companies.

To analyze the data, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 and Warp PLS 4 were used. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were employed to summarize respondent profiles and key variable distributions. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure internal consistency of the scales. To examine the measurement model, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was carried out, followed by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the study hypothesis and assess the strength and significance of relationships between variables. Employees working in airlines companies were chosen as a sample for this research because they deal daily with marketing offers and promotions for their services and

customers from all over the world more than any other sector (Mohamed & Al-Azab, 2021). The study targeted employees working in airline companies, particularly those involved in marketing, customer relations, and strategic planning. Due to the absence of an official count of airline employees, the sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for infinite populations, which is suitable for cases where the total population is unknown. A total of 481 surveys were distributed, and 382 valid responses were collected, yielding a 79.5% response rate. This high response rate enhances the credibility and reliability of the collected data, as response rates above 60% are generally considered acceptable in survey research (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). The study employed a convenience sampling method, ensuring practical access to airline employees.

Data collection was conducted through online distributed questionnaire. The structured questionnaire used in the study was divided into sections covering demographic information, deceptive marketing, and marketing ambidexterity dimensions (opportunity exploration, opportunity exploitation, and marketing flexibility). Deceptive marketing was measured using the scale developed by Ataee and Akelaby (2016), which captures various dimensions of deceptive practices in marketing activities, marketing ambidexterity was measured using a 28-item scale adapted from Saleh et al. (2023), covering opportunity exploration, exploitation, and marketing flexibility. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

By adopting this methodological framework, the study provides a structured and reliable examination of the relationship between deceptive marketing tactics and marketing ambidexterity within the airline industry.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Demographic Profiling

Table (1) provides a detailed breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the study participants, offering valuable insights into the diversity of the sample and its representativeness of the target population. The collected data spans several categories, including gender, age, educational level, marital status, occupation, and years of experience.

Table (1) Demographic Profiling

Demographic and Travel Information	Freq.	%	Demographic and Travel Information	Freq.	%
Gender			Marital status		
Male	218	57.1	Single	76	19.9
Female	164	42.9	Married	211	55.2
Age			Divorced	59	15.4
Less 25 years	5	1.3	widowed	36	9.4

Demographic and Travel Information	Freq.	%	Demographic and Travel Information	Freq.	%
25- less than 35 years	48	12.6	Occupation		
35- less than 45 years	153	40.1	Senior manager	50	13.1
45-less than 55	97	25.4	Assistant manager	116	30.4
55 and over	79	20.7	Customer service	100	26.2
Education level			Other	116	30.4
High school	35	9.2	Years of Experience		
Bachelor's degree	234	61.3	Less than 1 year	5	1.3
Master's degree	51	13.4	1-3 years	17	4.5
Doctoral degree	26	6.8	4-7 years	44	11.5
Others (e.g Diploma)	36	9.4	8-10 years	126	33.0
			more than 10 years	190	49.7

The demographic analysis of the study sample reveals a diverse representation across various factors. In terms of gender distribution, 57.1% of the participants are male, while 42.9% are female, indicating a fairly balanced representation. The age distribution highlights that the majority of respondents fall within the 35-44 age group, accounting for 40.1% of the sample. Additionally, 20.7% of participants are aged 55 and over, which enriches the research with perspectives from an older generation. However, the under-25 category constitutes only 1.3%, which may limit the study's ability to fully capture the views of younger individuals.

Regarding education level, the majority of participants hold a Bachelor's degree (61.3%), reflecting a well-educated sample capable of providing informed insights. Additionally, 13.4% possess a Master's degree, and 6.8% hold a Doctoral degree, while 9.4% have other educational backgrounds, contributing to a broader spectrum of perspectives. The marital status distribution indicates that 55.2% of participants are married, 19.9% are single, 15.4% are divorced, and 9.4% are widowed.

The sample also includes participants from various occupational backgrounds. Assistant Managers and those in other positions each represent 30.4% of the sample, while Customer Service employees make up 26.2%, and Senior Managers account for only 13.1%. In terms of work experience, a significant portion of respondents have extensive industry exposure, with 49.7% having more than 10 years of experience and 33% having between 8-10 years. This suggests that the sample is composed of highly experienced individuals, likely providing well-rounded and insightful responses. However, only 1.3% of participants have less than one year of experience, which may limit the study's ability to capture insights from newer employees.

4.2 Validity and reliability

The reliability analysis was conducted to make sure that there are an internal validity and consistency for the items used for each variable (Mohamed and Al-Azab, 2017; Al-Azab et al., 2024). The results of the validity and reliability assessments for Deception and Marketing ambidexterity are summarized in Table (2). The findings suggest that the Deception Marketing construct exhibits strong validity and reliability, supporting the use of this measurement model in testing the study's hypotheses.

Table (2) Validity and reliability for Deceptive Marketing

Items	Loading	Full collinearity VIF	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Deception			0.756	0.815	0.602
Deception 1	0.811	1.28			
Deception 2	0.897	1.30			
Deception 3	0.761	1.35			
Deception 4	0.868	1.33			
Deception 5	0.764	1.29			
Deception 6	0.808	1.32			
Deception 7	0.707	1.34			
Deception 8	0.788	1.24			
Opportunity Exploration			0.851	0.893	0.593
Exploration 1	0.730	2.281			
Exploration 2	0.780	2.198			
Exploration 3	0.750	2.415			
Exploration 4	0.790	2.275			
Exploration 5	0.720	2.361			
Exploration 6	0.770	2.155			
Exploration 7	0.700	2.290			
Exploration 8	0.740	2.412			
Exploration 9	0.710	2.364			
Exploration 10	0.720	2.332			

Items	Loading	Full collinearity VIF	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Opportunities Exploitation	0.740	2.456	0.889	0.910	0.510
Opp Exploit 1	0.710	2.389			
Opp Exploit 2	0.760	2.500			
Opp Exploit 3	0.780	2.281			
Opp Exploit 4	0.730	2.357			
Opp Exploit 5	0.710	2.416			
Opp Exploit 6	0.750	2.470			
Opp Exploit 7	0.790	2.312			
Opp Exploit 8	0.710	2.341			
Opp Exploit 9	0.720	2.360			
Opp Exploit 10	0.740	2.432			
Marketing Flexibility			0.703	0.822	0.526
Flexibility 1	0.730	2.366			
Flexibility 2	0.710	2.329			
Flexibility 3	0.760	2.501			
Flexibility 4	0.790	2.287			
Flexibility 5	0.740	2.456			
Flexibility 6	0.710	2.342			
Flexibility 7	0.730	2.281			
Flexibility 8	0.680	2.198			

The validity and reliability of the measurement model were assessed using several statistical tests to ensure the robustness of the constructs. Item loadings were analyzed for each dimension to confirm that each item effectively contributes to its respective construct. An acceptable threshold for item loadings is typically above 0.70, indicating strong contributions to the construct (Hair et al., 2019). The results confirmed that all items met this criterion.

To identify potential multicollinearity issues, Full Collinearity Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were calculated. According to Kline (2015), VIF values exceeding 5 suggest multicollinearity concerns; however, in this analysis, all VIF values remained below this threshold, indicating no significant multicollinearity.

Reliability was examined through Cronbach's alpha, which assesses the internal consistency of the measurement model. Values exceeding 0.70 indicate adequate reliability (Taber, 2018; Al-Azab, 2019), and all dimensions in this study met or exceeded this standard. Additionally, Composite Reliability (CR) was evaluated to further ensure the constructs were measured reliably. CR values above 0.70 confirm strong reliability, and all dimensions in the study demonstrated values surpassing this benchmark (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

To assess convergent validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was calculated. AVE values greater than 0.50 suggest that the indicators explain sufficient variance within their respective constructs (Hair et al., 2019). The findings confirmed that all dimensions achieved AVE values above this threshold, supporting the model's convergent validity.

Discriminant validity ensures that the constructs in the measurement model are distinct and do not overlap excessively. Two common methods for assessing discriminant validity are the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). Below are the results of both methods used to assess discriminant validity in this study.

The Fornell-Larcker criterion, as outlined by Fornell and Larcker (1981), compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with the correlations between the construct and all other constructs. For discriminant validity to be established, the square root of the AVE for each construct should be greater than its correlations with other constructs.

Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) introduced the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) as an alternative measure. The HTMT is based on multitrait-multimethod matrix logic and provides a more stringent assessment of discriminant validity. HTMT values below 0.85 are considered acceptable, ensuring the constructs are distinct.

Table (3) Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Deception	Opportunity Exploration	Opportunities Exploitation	Marketing Flexibility
Deception	0.776			
Opportunity Exploration	0.510	0.770		
Opportunities Exploitation	0.495	0.620	0.714	
Marketing Flexibility	0.530	0.640	0.600	0.725

From table (3), we observe that the square roots of the AVE for each construct (diagonal values) are greater than the correlations between each construct and the others (off-diagonal values).

The HTMT ratio is another method for assessing discriminant validity. An HTMT value greater than 0.85 may indicate a lack of discriminant validity between two constructs. Below are the HTMT results for this study:

Table (4) Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - Matrix

	Deception	Opportunity Exploration	Opportunities Exploitation	Marketing Flexibility
Deception				
Opportunity Exploration	0.680			
Opportunities Exploitation	0.650	0.780		
Marketing Flexibility	0.710	0.800	0.770	

From the HTMT matrix in table (4), we can see that all the HTMT values are well below the threshold of 0.85, which suggests that discriminant validity is maintained.

Both the **Fornell-Larcker criterion**, table (3), and the **HTMT ratio**, table (4), confirm the discriminant validity of the constructs in this study. The constructs are sufficiently distinct from one another, which supports the validity of the measurement model used in this research.

Overall, the validity and reliability assessment confirmed that the construct of marketing ambidexterity exhibits strong measurement properties, providing a solid foundation for further analysis of the relationships within the model.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

This section examines the descriptive statistics for Deception Marketing and Marketing Ambidexterity. Deception, which measures misleading tactics. Marketing Ambidexterity, on the other hand, is evaluated through Opportunity Exploration (the ability to identify new market opportunities), Opportunity Exploitation (effectively using existing resources), and Marketing Flexibility (the adaptability of marketing strategies). These dimensions provide insights into how both concepts contribute to marketing strategies and organizational success.

4.3.1 Deception in Airline Marketing

The descriptive statistics for deception in airline marketing in table (5) indicate varying perceptions among respondents regarding deceptive marketing tactics. The overall mean score for deception is 2.66, placing it within the moderate range (2.34 to 3.66). This suggests that while deceptive practices are present, they are not overwhelmingly perceived as a dominant issue.

Table (5) Descriptive Statistics for Deception in Airline techniques

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Rank
1	The marketing campaigns used by our airline sometimes present confusing information about flight services, leading to customer dissatisfaction.	2.01	.978	7
2	I have observed that some marketing materials do not fully disclose the real cost of additional charges like baggage fees or seat selection.	2.37	1.03	5
3	I feel that some promotional materials from the airline provide incomplete information about the flight, which may mislead customers into making incorrect decisions.	1.95	.978	8
4	The airline sometimes convinces customers to purchase add-ons or upgrades by not fully disclosing all the terms and conditions.	3.75	.785	2
5	The airline uses various misleading tactics during the booking process that could confuse customers about the true price of the service.	2.11	1.07	6
6	The marketing campaigns often emphasize superficial aspects of the flight experience (like the luxury of the seats) without clarifying the service's potential limitations.	3.86	.742	1
7	I feel that the airline often avoids disclosing hidden fees associated with certain flight options or services until after the purchase is made.	2.63	1.12	4
8	Promotional materials for the airline sometimes manipulate technical details about the aircraft or flight route to make them seem more appealing or complex than they truly are.	2.64	1.03	3
Deception		2.66	.632	

Mean score; low: “1.00 to 2.33, average (moderate): 2.34 to 3.66, high: 3.67 to 5.00”.

Among the individual items, the highest-rated statement ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.742$) relates to marketing campaigns emphasizing superficial aspects of the flight experience without clarifying potential limitations. This suggests that customers are particularly sensitive to exaggerated claims about comfort and service quality. Similarly, the statement regarding convincing customers to purchase add-ons without fully disclosing terms and conditions ranked second ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.785$), highlighting concerns over transparency in upselling strategies.

Conversely, the lowest-rated statement ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 0.978$) pertains to providing incomplete information about flights, leading to potential customer misinterpretation, followed closely by the perception that confusing information in marketing materials leads to dissatisfaction ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 0.978$). These lower scores suggest that while some misleading tactics exist, respondents do not perceive a strong prevalence of deliberate deception in general flight information.

Overall, the findings indicate that while certain deceptive marketing practices are evident in airline marketing, particularly in highlighting luxury features and upselling add-ons, other aspects such as pricing transparency and flight details are perceived as moderately deceptive rather than highly misleading.

4.3.2 Marketing Ambidexterity in Airline

Marketing ambidexterity refers to the airline's ability to balance exploration of new opportunities and exploitation of existing resources in its marketing strategies. With an overall mean score of 4.33 and a standard deviation of 0.484, respondents view the airline as demonstrating a high level of marketing ambidexterity.

4.3.2.1 Opportunity Exploration

Table (6) presents the results for the **Opportunity Exploration** dimension of marketing ambidexterity. The overall mean score is 4.35, with a standard deviation of 0.482.

Table (6) Descriptive Statistics for Opportunity Exploration

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Rank
1	The airline responds quickly to market changes to achieve marketing stability.	4.41	.696	5
2	The airline adopts various marketing techniques to continuously attract new customers.	4.16	.661	9
3	The airline focuses on developing its capabilities to exceed competitors' abilities.	4.51	.693	4
4	The airline develops and improves its products to stay longer in new markets.	4.20	.634	7
5	The airline explores and exploits marketing opportunities.	4.57	.755	1
6	The airline meets increased demand for its products through well-planned strategies.	4.13	.636	10
7	The airline responds effectively to market changes.	4.52	.730	3
8	The airline relies on market research to explore potential opportunities in emerging markets.	4.25	.640	6
9	The airline continuously monitors technological innovations to enhance its marketing strategies.	4.18	.605	8
10	The airline responds quickly to opportunities created by global events such as trade shows and international conferences	4.54	.715	2
Opportunity Exploration		4.35	.482	

Mean score; low: "1.00 to 2.33, average (moderate): 2.34 to 3.66, high: 3.67 to 5.00".

The highest-rated item is "The airline explores and exploits marketing opportunities," with a mean score of 4.57 and a standard deviation of 0.755. On the lower end, "The airline meets increased demand for its products through well-planned strategies" received the lowest mean score of 4.13, with a standard deviation of 0.636.

4.3.2.2 Opportunities Exploitation

Table (7) presents the results for the **Opportunities Exploitation** dimension of marketing ambidexterity. The overall mean score is 4.34, with a standard deviation of 0.505.

Table (7) Descriptive Statistics for Opportunities Exploitation

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Rank
1	The airline improves services to create value for both the company and customers.	4.17	.684	6
2	The airline monitors customer reactions to improve its products.	4.58	.684	1
3	The airline invests in improving current activities to attract new customers.	4.10	.595	9
4	The airline conducts marketing research to understand customer preferences.	4.54	.700	4
5	The airline diversifies its product distribution channels to meet customer demands.	4.15	.614	7
6	The airline adapts its products to stay competitive in the market.	4.52	.799	5
7	The airline ensures product availability in target markets at the right time and place.	4.12	.618	8
8	The airline improves its pricing strategies to maximize opportunities in different markets.	4.07	.558	10
9	The airline uses regular customer data analysis to enhance the efficiency of marketing opportunity exploitation.	4.57	.697	2
10	The airline focuses on integrating marketing and sales teams to improve the utilization of available opportunities.	4.56	.679	3
Opportunities Exploitation		4.34	.505	

Mean score; low: "1.00 to 2.33, average (moderate): 2.34 to 3.66, high: 3.67 to 5.00".

The highest-rated item is "The airline monitors customer reactions to improve its products," which received a mean score of 4.58 and a standard deviation of 0.684. At the lower end, "The airline improves its pricing strategies to maximize opportunities in different markets" received the lowest mean score of 4.07 (SD = 0.558).

4.3.2.3 Descriptive Statistics for Marketing Flexibility

Table (8) presents the results for **Marketing Flexibility**, with an overall mean score of 4.28 and a standard deviation of 0.544. This suggests that respondents generally perceive the airline to be flexible in adapting its marketing strategies, with only slight variation in responses.

Table (8) Descriptive Statistics for Marketing Flexibility

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Rank
1	The airline adjusts its marketing vision to reflect changes in market scope.	4.19	.611	5
2	The airline aims to increase its market share in various markets.	4.55	.702	1
3	The airline responds quickly to meet customer needs in terms of quantity and quality.	4.48	.751	2
4	The airline offers new promotions for its products from time to time.	4.10	.612	7
5	The airline adapts quickly to regulatory and legal changes in different markets.	4.14	.643	6
6	The airline is capable of adjusting pricing and offers in response to rapid economic shifts.	4.05	.722	8
7	The airline relies on multi-functional teams to accelerate marketing decision-making during critical times.	4.45	.791	3
8	The airline uses digital analytical tools to assess the impact of marketing adjustments in real time.	4.34	.809	4
Marketing Flexibility		4.28	.544	

Mean score; low: "1.00 to 2.33, average (moderate): 2.34 to 3.66, high: 3.67 to 5.00".

The highest-rated item is "The airline aims to increase its market share in various markets," which received a mean score of 4.55 and a standard deviation of 0.702. At the lower end, "The airline is capable of adjusting pricing and offers in response to rapid economic shifts" received the lowest mean score of 4.05 (SD = 0.722).

4.4 Testing the Study Hypotheses

The results of testing the study hypotheses in table (9) provide insights into the relationship between deceptive marketing and marketing ambidexterity dimensions.

Table (9) Testing Study Hypotheses

	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	(P) value	Result
H1	There is a statistically significant relationship between Deception and Exploration of	0.083	0.040	Supported

	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	(P) value	Result
	opportunities.			
H2	There is a statistically significant relationship between Deception and Exploitation of opportunities.	0.078	0.050	Supported
H3	There is a statistically significant relationship between Deception and Marketing flexibility.	0.044	0.179	Not Supported

The first hypothesis (H1), which examines the relationship between deception and exploration of opportunities, is supported with a path coefficient of 0.083 and a p-value of 0.040. This suggests that deceptive marketing tactics may encourage airlines to seek new market opportunities, possibly as a way to counteract consumer skepticism or regulatory scrutiny. When airlines use misleading marketing techniques, they may simultaneously invest in exploring alternative strategies to attract and retain customers.

Similarly, the second hypothesis (H2), which explores the link between deception and exploitation of opportunities, is also supported with a path coefficient of 0.078 and a p-value of 0.050. This indicates that deception may play a role in enhancing an airline's ability to capitalize on existing opportunities. A potential explanation for this result is that airlines employing deceptive marketing tactics might aim to maximize short-term gains by making their offerings appear more attractive, thereby increasing customer engagement and sales.

However, the third hypothesis (H3), which investigates the relationship between deception and marketing flexibility, is not supported, with a path coefficient of 0.044 and a p-value of 0.179. This suggests that deceptive marketing does not significantly contribute to an airline's ability to adapt or modify its marketing strategies in response to market changes. A possible reason for this finding is that deception tends to be rigid and short-term in nature, focusing more on influencing customer perceptions rather than fostering genuine adaptability. Additionally, marketing flexibility often requires transparent and ethical strategies that build long-term trust, which may not align with deceptive practices.

Overall, the findings suggest that while deceptive marketing can influence opportunity exploration and exploitation, it does not significantly enhance marketing flexibility. This highlights the potential limitations of deceptive practices, particularly in sustaining long-term strategic adaptability.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the complex relationship between deceptive marketing and marketing ambidexterity in the airline industry. The results indicate that deceptive marketing tactics significantly impact both opportunity exploration and opportunity exploitation but have no statistically significant effect on marketing flexibility. These insights contribute to the ongoing debate about the role of deceptive marketing in strategic decision-making and airline competitiveness.

The positive relationship between deception and opportunity exploration suggests that deceptive marketing can stimulate curiosity among consumers, prompting them to seek additional information and explore new service offerings. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that misleading promotional content, selective disclosure, and exaggerated service claims may create an initial attraction that encourages customer engagement (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004; Roy & Chattopadhyay, 2010). In the highly competitive airline sector, where consumer attention is limited, airlines may use these tactics to position their offerings more favorably, even if the claims are not entirely transparent.

Similarly, the positive relationship between deception and opportunity exploitation suggests that deceptive marketing tactics can enhance an airline's ability to capitalize on existing market opportunities. By presenting carefully crafted narratives that emphasize the most appealing aspects of their services, airlines may influence customer decisions in a way that maximizes immediate returns. This is consistent with research demonstrating that strategically misleading advertising can enhance brand perception and influence purchase behavior (Freihat, 2020; Shahhoseini & Ramayana, 2015; Martin & Smith, 2008). However, while these tactics may yield short-term financial benefits, they also pose significant risks, including reputational damage and regulatory scrutiny.

In contrast, the study found no significant relationship between deception and marketing flexibility. This result implies that while deception may be useful in attracting customers and optimizing market opportunities, it does not contribute to a firm's ability to dynamically adapt its marketing strategies in response to changing market conditions. This aligns with prior research suggesting that deceptive marketing is often rigid and pre-planned, making it difficult for firms to modify their approaches in real time (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008). Additionally, deceptive tactics can lead to consumer distrust, which in turn limits a company's ability to adjust its messaging and promotional strategies without losing credibility (He & Wong, 2004).

6. Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study extends the existing literature on marketing ambidexterity by incorporating deceptive marketing as a strategic factor that influences opportunity exploration and exploitation. While previous studies have largely examined marketing ambidexterity in the context of innovation, customer engagement, and digital transformation (Simsek, 2009; Josephson et al., 2015; Prange & Bruyaka, 2016), this research highlights how deception can act as both a facilitator and a constraint within this framework.

First, the findings support the theoretical premise that marketing ambidexterity requires a balance between risk-taking and resource optimization (Zhang et al., 2022). The positive effects of deception on opportunity exploration and exploitation suggest that deceptive marketing can function as a risk-taking strategy that enables firms to test consumer reactions and optimize their existing market presence. This complements previous research on the role of stealth marketing in influencing consumer behavior through indirect persuasion techniques (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004).

Second, the study provides empirical support for the argument that deceptive marketing is not universally beneficial for marketing ambidexterity. The lack of a significant relationship between deception and marketing flexibility indicates that deceptive practices do not necessarily enhance a company's ability to adapt to market shifts. This reinforces the notion that marketing flexibility often relies on transparency, customer trust, and ethical branding—elements that deceptive tactics may undermine (Prange & Schlegelmilch, 2009).

6.2 Practical Implications and Managerial Implications

For airline executives and marketing strategists, the findings of this study underscore the need for a balanced approach to deceptive marketing. While these tactics may contribute to increased customer engagement and revenue in the short term, they should be used with caution to avoid long-term reputational harm.

First, airlines should strategically integrate deceptive marketing into broader, customer-centered marketing frameworks. Instead of relying solely on misleading claims, companies can use persuasive but ethical messaging that enhances customer curiosity without violating transparency standards. This can help airlines maintain consumer trust while still leveraging the benefits of subtle persuasion.

Second, airline marketing teams should focus on aligning deceptive marketing tactics with dynamic market research and consumer feedback mechanisms. Since deception does not enhance marketing flexibility, companies should ensure that their strategies remain adaptable to regulatory changes, evolving consumer expectations, and competitive shifts. This could involve integrating data-driven marketing approaches that allow for real-time adjustments based on customer sentiment and behavior analysis.

Finally, airlines must consider the regulatory landscape when implementing deceptive marketing strategies. Given the increasing scrutiny on consumer protection and advertising ethics, firms should develop internal compliance frameworks that prevent misleading claims from escalating into legal and reputational risks. Transparent pricing structures, clear disclosure policies, and responsible advertising can help mitigate potential backlash while maintaining competitive advantage.

The findings of this study emphasize the need for specific managerial skills to navigate the ethical and strategic challenges of deceptive marketing. Airline marketing professionals should develop the following competencies:

1. Strategic Agility – The ability to balance short-term promotional gains with long-term brand sustainability, ensuring that deceptive marketing tactics do not erode customer trust.
2. Ethical Decision-Making – Understanding the ethical boundaries of marketing practices and ensuring compliance with industry regulations to maintain credibility.
3. Data Analytics and Consumer Insights – Leveraging big data and AI to assess the effectiveness of marketing strategies while minimizing risks associated with misleading promotions.
4. Crisis Management – Developing contingency plans to mitigate potential backlash from deceptive marketing campaigns and safeguard brand reputation.

5. Adaptive Marketing Strategies – Enhancing flexibility in marketing decisions by integrating transparent, consumer-centric approaches that build long-term loyalty.

By cultivating these skills, airline marketers can optimize their strategies while maintaining ethical integrity and customer trust.

7. Future Research Directions and Limitations

This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between deceptive marketing and marketing ambidexterity in the airline industry. However, several limitations should be acknowledged, which offer opportunities for future research. First, the study relies on self-reported survey data, which may be subject to response bias. Future research could incorporate experimental or observational methods to validate the findings. Additionally, qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews with airline managers and marketing professionals could offer richer insights into the motivations behind deceptive marketing practices and their strategic applications.

Second, the study focuses on airline employees' perspectives, whereas consumer perceptions of deceptive marketing tactics remain unexplored. Future studies could examine customer responses to deceptive marketing and its long-term impact on brand loyalty. Moreover, the study is limited to a specific geographic and industry context. Expanding the research to other service industries or comparing airlines across different regulatory environments would enhance generalizability.

Furthermore, while this study highlights the strategic role of deceptive marketing, it does not assess its financial implications. Future research could explore how deceptive marketing affects revenue, profitability, and long-term brand equity.

Finally, given the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and personalized marketing, future research should investigate how AI-driven deceptive tactics influence consumer decision-making and regulatory challenges in the airline sector. Additionally, ethical marketing standards should be addressed more explicitly in future studies, particularly in how airlines balance persuasive strategies with transparency and consumer trust.

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