



The Impact Of Customer Empowerment On Reducing Marketing Deception: A Field Study For Several Iraqi Contracting Companies

Mohammed Y. Hadi*

Department of Business Administration
College of Administration and Economics
University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq

E-mail: mohammed.hadi2203m@coadec.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Orcid : <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6752-9889>

*Corresponding author

Sadoon H. Chitbeer

Department of Business Administration
College of Administration and Economics
University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq

E-mail: saadoon_m@coadec.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Received:21/2/2024 Accepted: 31/3/2024 Published Online First: 1 /10/ 2024



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Abstract:

Purpose: This paper attempts to analyze and discuss the impact of Customer Empowerment (CE) in reducing marketing deceptive practices carried out by companies.

Theoretical framework: The literature related to the research topic did not describe of the application of CE in the workplace, as it is a recent variable and is still in the development stage. The scale (Abdel-Bari & Ashry, 2023) was adopted to measure the CE questionnaire, in addition to the scale (Gaber et al., 2018) to measure Marketing Deception (MD).

Methodology: Field research was used to understand the practice of CE and identify scams. Six companies specialized in the field of contracting were selected. The research sample consisted of (152) employees. A questionnaire was used to collect data, and hypotheses were tested using the statistical program (SPSS).

Results: There is a positive impact of empowering customers in reducing deceptive marketing practices.

Research, practical and social implications:

Provide a detailed description of the means that can achieve CE and reduce MD. Also, we Provides a practical approach to researching CE and suggests that future research should include business cases as a means of achieving this and provide justification for the importance of implementing CE practices.

Originality/value: This paper is among the few to address CE with MD and emphasizes that CE must be an organization-wide goal and requires a long-term commitment to eliminate MD.

Keywords: Fraud, customer empowerment, marketing deception.

JEL Classification: M390, M31, M37.

Authors' individual contribution: Design — M.Y.H.; Data collection — M.Y.H.; — Analysis— S.N.; Writing the original draft—M.Y.H; Editing and review: M.Y.H. reviewed the text and confirmed its accuracy and consistency. Supervision was carried out by S.H.G; Guiding and providing academic advice throughout the stages of the research process.

Declaration of conflicting interests: The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

1. Introduction :

In recent years, the idea of the customer being the king has become firmly established in the science of marketing, making the customer the focus of organizations' attention and orientations. Many organizations have changed their old view from being merely passive consumers of their products to using them to participate in the production or marketing of their products, which has led to the idea of transferring power from organizations to customers growing. The study of CE has received increasing attention from researchers and practitioners, and despite the increasing popularity of the topic at present, there are many weaknesses and ambiguities in the concept and previous research, as it has not been addressed in a manner consistent with the importance of this vital topic, as the customer has become more active, participating, resistant, and a social influencer with strength and authority, as a customer who does not feel satisfied can affect the organization's reputation (Akhavannasab et al., 2018). CE means giving customers power by providing more understanding and information, or it is a subjective state resulting from increased control that helps customers choose what they want when they want, and on their terms (Hu & Krishen, 2019). It is a process resulting from choice, through which customers can access interactions and exchange free factors that produce better information and a better understanding of all interactions or sales processes and products (Castillo, 2017). It is also defined as a state of mind accompanied by actions that enable customers to make their own choices based on their needs, desires, and demands in the market. Customers are empowered through an objective state resulting from modern technologies and through a subjective state related to increasing the customer's intellectual capabilities, as it represents the perceived state of mind that occurs Under the influence of organizations (Prentice et al., 2016). According to (Aldaihani & Ali, 2018), CE is strategies or mechanisms used by organizations to provide their customers with sufficient knowledge and independence in making decisions. A study by El Beirouti & Mouterfi, (2022) provided an integrated approach to giving customers the power and responsibility to be co-producers by following the cooperative approach. The organization can be closer to its customers and the customer can be more connected to the products, which translates into satisfaction as a result of focusing on the psychological aspect and creating a sense of belonging for the customer. Thus, marketing research that revolves around the concept of CE can be organized according to three aspects. It can be viewed as a process of delegating authority through public policies or cooperative management practices established by organizations for consumers. It can also be observed as a manifestation of an individual or collective opposition process. However,, some research has indicated that it is a subjective state associated with perceived personal control over consumption (Bachouche & Sabri-Zaaraoui, 2017). The process of empowering customers may provide them with the necessary knowledge and reducing deceptive marketing practices. MD is described as one of the topics within the broad field of human deception and the development of the concept of deception in marketing, as deception as an element of marketing practice is as old as organized human commercial behavior, as the theoretical concept of advertising deception (along with advertising) appeared in the era of production in the late the twentieth century. Currently, MD is diversifying along with the systems used to communicate and deliver products from producers to consumers. MD occurs when a producer or seller uses a deceptive method to gain an unfair advantage over competitors or consumers by influencing or manipulating consumer choices. (Docan-Morgan, 2019). Al-Hindawi & Abdul-Rahim, (2021) observe that MD is intentional or unintentional wrong marketing practices that result in making purchasing decisions and shading the customer, which leads to the formation of a negative impression. The practice of MD by business organizations means that the organization communicates incorrect and incorrect information either about the quality of competitors' products or the quality of its products. Therefore, MD is considered deception and fraud to achieve an illicit profit in the short or long term through an intentional negative process carried out by the marketer or seller to obtain some benefit, regardless of the negative consequences that befall the customer (Al-Sawy,

2023). In addition, products are complex in many markets, and consumers need a basic level of experience to evaluate and compare products, which allows sellers to easily deceive and exploit consumers who lack this experience. Sophisticated consumers engage in extensive research to discover the price, quality, and individual suitability of the product, while sophisticated consumers engage in extensive research to discover the price, quality, and individual suitability of the product. Consumers do not have the experience or skills to evaluate product quality and suitability, which leads to them being easily exploited by fraudulent organizations (Gamp & Krämer, 2018). Researchers have distinguished between explicit and implicit deception in marketing, as explicit deception may be an explicit lie that is false in light of objective evidence that can be verified by comparing the actual characteristics of the advertised product and the content of the advertising message. This differs from implicit deception, which includes factual claims that have implications. False or misleading statements that cannot be easily verified and encourage consumers to draw false conclusions about the products advertised (Roth, 2022). Scientific research has paid less attention to the consequences of MD, whether for the offending organizations or the victims. However, understanding the effects of unethical marketing is important, given that negative information is often more salient to consumers than positive information, and that organizations can easily initiate deceptive marketing on the Internet, especially social media (Song et al., 2019). Thus, the basic problem of the research can be identified by asking the following question: Does CE affect reducing MD? This research aims to know, study, and analyze the nature and extent of the relationship between CE and its role in reducing MD practices and the necessity of educating customers about the various practices and forms of MD practiced by organizations and working to clarify the effects and consequences of these practices as they are an obstacle that prevents correct and fair ethical marketing practices. This paper is organized into several sections. The first section includes an introduction to the research. The second section includes literature related to this study. The third section is devoted to the research methodology. The fourth section included the practical side of the research. The final and fifth section concludes the research.

2. Literature Review And Hypotheses Development:

Many studies have dealt with the variable of CE, which is a relatively recent variant, . Camacho et al., (2014) proposed a study that examined the effect of empowering customers on adherence. The results of the study presented that empowerment to make decisions reduces adherence to expert advice. The effect of information empowerment varies predictably across cultures and is only universally beneficial when initiated by the customer. The study's objective included whether empowerment leads customers to adhere more or less to expert advice. Castillo, (2017) suggested whether there is a relationship between the big five personality dimensions as a whole or individually with CE, and to verify the extent to which this empowerment relates to customer satisfaction. The study concluded with the tendency of customers who perceive a state of empowerment to be more satisfied in the consultative selling process within the retail industry than those who do not perceive such empowerment. In addition, customers associated with personality traits such as openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness are the people who tend to feel more satisfied when interacting.

A study by Rajab & Al-Masry, (2019) presented that clarifies the role of CE in developing customer value by mediating the quality of the relationship to assist business companies adopt and activate the CE approach, which contributes to enhancing the quality of the organization's relationship with its customers and developing the value that the customer adds to the organization. The research concluded with: There is a positive moral effect of empowering the customer with its four dimensions (influence, meaning, freedom of choice, and self-efficacy) ranked according to their importance on the quality of the customer's relationship with the organization providing the service, and there is a positive moral effect of the quality of the relationship with its two dimensions (satisfaction and trust) ranked according to their importance

on the value that the customer adds to the company, in addition to the presence of a positive significant effect of CE in its four dimensions (influence, meaning, freedom of choice, and self-efficacy) arranged according to their importance on the customer value, and the presence of a significant effect of the quality of the relationship as an intermediary variable on the relationship between CE and customer value.

An investigation by Dakrouri & Awadallah, (2020) suggested that aimed to know the direct and indirect effects of the preliminaries of electronic CE, represented by electronic customization and electronic personalization of the product, on the outcomes of CE, based on electronic customer satisfaction in the presence of CE as an intermediary variable. It reached there is a direct effect of both electronic customization of the product and electronic personalization on customer electronic satisfaction, and there is an indirect effect of both electronic customization of the product and electronic personalization on customer electronic satisfaction when mediated by CE. Likewise many studies have dealt with MD, as BEKOUCHE et al., (2018) determined the extent of the phenomenon of MD in the mobile phone services sector. The study concluded that MD in this sector is practiced through the elements of the mix. Marketing to different degrees can be reduced by increasing customer awareness by activating the role of customer protection associations and monitoring the competent authorities. Karim & Shirov, (2021) aim to study included identifying the impact of MD in its dimensions represented by deception in the product, deception in pricing, deception in promotion, and deception in distribution on the consumer's purchasing decision. The study concluded that there is a positive impact of MD on the consumer's purchasing decision for customers of e-commerce sites (FB marketplace and Ali Express and Ouadkniss), and that there is also a significant impact of the deception dimension in distribution on the consumer's purchasing decision.

A study by Al-Jubouri, (2020) suggested that aimed to identify deceptive marketing practices on social networking sites and clarify the perception of student customers about these practices. The study concluded the need to activate the role of auditing and monitoring the implementation of marketing ethics and its role in creating a positive image for the customer. Marketers should reconsider the organizational structure and create a special department that monitors the deception process that occurs on social media.

A study by Sadiq & Mohsen, (n.d.) proposed that aimed to identify the effect of deception in the product, price, promotion and distribution on customer loyalty and intention to repurchase and shed light on the concepts of purchase, repurchase, intention to repurchase, and MD and determine the relationship between MD and intention to repurchase consumers. The study concluded that there is a negative impact of MD through product deception, promotion, and price deception on the repurchase intention of the Omani customer, but there is no relationship between distribution deception and repurchase intention. The problem of research was appears in the spread of the phenomenon of MD in recent times, especially with technological development and promotion in social media, which has made many believe that the success of marketing a service or commodity is linked to deceptive marketing practices, as MD is an unethical phenomenon that aims to deceive and shade the customer by pushing him toward. Making an incorrect purchasing decision because of delivering incorrect information about the product being dealt with to customers. Thus, the basic problem of the research can be identified by asking the following question: Does CE affect reducing MD?

The main objectives of the research are the need to educate customers about the various practices and forms of MD practiced by organizations, and work to clarify the effects and consequences of these practices as an obstacle that prevents correct and fair ethical marketing practices, and work to arouse the attention of the research sample to the importance of these vital contemporary topics and their various effects and consequences.

Based on what was stated in previous studies, we propose the following hypotheses

H1: The main hypothesis: There is a statistically significant effect of CE on MD, which is divided into the following sub-hypotheses:

H1.a: The first sub-hypothesis is that there is a statistically significant effect of freedom of choice on MD.

H1.b: The second sub-hypothesis is that there is a statistically significant effect of self-efficacy on MD.

H1.c: The third sub-hypothesis is that there is a statistically significant effect on MD.

H1.d: The fourth sub-hypothesis is that there is a statistically significant effect of meaning on MD.

3. Methodology:

The researchers relied on analysing the data required to test the hypotheses and achieve the research objectives by using a questionnaire tool that included two parts. The first provides important personal information about research respondents who work in construction and contracting companies, such as education level, gender, years of work, age, and position. The researchers used various statistical programs (Amos.V.26) and (SPSS.V.26), and the second part contained questions related to the variables of the study to process the data and draw conclusions.

3.1. The research sample and community:

The research community consisted of a group of engineers and some other specializations distributed among six companies in the field of contracting and construction (Construction and Real Estate Development Company, Wadad Al-Asimah Real Estate Company, Zahrat Al-Khaleej Al-Mashreqa Company, Ahl Al-Wafa Company for Trade and General Contracting and Limited, Al-Khaleej Contracting Company, and Nawadh Al-Binaa Company General Contracting). During the process of distributing 164 questionnaires and collecting 152 valid questionnaires for processing, the sample size was calculated. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first section asked some questions related to personal information (age, gender, educational level, job position, years of service, and marital status), while the second section included questions about (customer empowerment and marketing deception). The results were analyzed using a Likert scale to formulate questions.

3.2. The Research Model

The research model included two main variables: (customer empowerment), which represents the independent variable and MD which represents the dependent variable. We study and analyse to find out the direct effect of the main variable on the dependent variable, which can be shown in Figure 1 as follows:

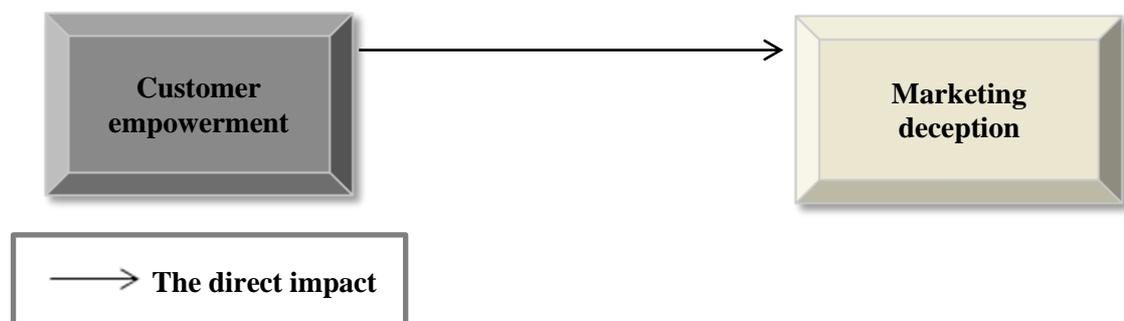


Figure 1: The model of study.

3.3. The dimensions of customer empowerment and marketing deception

Many studies have addressed the variable of CE in modern organizations using four main dimensions: freedom of choice, self-efficacy, influence, and meaning. In addition, the research addressed the dimensions of MD, which are deception in the product, deception in price, deception in distribution, and deception in promotion, which will be showed in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1: The dimensions of CE and MD

Dimensions	Customer empowerment	Source
1. Freedom of choice	Freedom of choice is the ability to choose the course of action that the customer desires from the multiple options presented to them. Freedom of choice allows one to feel independent, express free will, and choose an option without pressure from outside influence.	(Botti et al., 2023)
2. Influence	It is the extent of an individual's ability to influence organizational results. Influence is the control over the employee's environment or the belief that his actions affect the system.	(Helmy et al., 2019)
3. Self-efficacy	Bandura defined self-efficacy as self-judgment of an individual's ability to carry out a series of actions and operations to achieve a desired goal.	(Liu et al., 2019)
4. Meaning	It is the compatibility between the requirements, duties, and responsibilities of the individual's role at work, beliefs, values, personal standards, and the value of the individual's work goals that were evaluated according to the individual's standards.	(Turnipseed & VandeWaa, 2020)
Marketing deception		
5. Product deception	These are the unethical practices and activities that organizations provide to several individuals, whether free of charge or in exchange for money, which aim to satisfy the desires and needs of consumers without transferring ownership.	(Beshibshi et al., 2018)
6. Price deception	It is the process of shading information that would suggest that the announced price is appropriate for the customer and offering formal discounts that return the price to its normal level.	(Khalifa, 2021)
7. Distribution deception	Deception in the distribution process includes unethical practices such as charging high prices, deceptive practices, misleading information about goods and services, as well as poor services provided to disadvantaged customers.	(Wiastuti & Susilowardhani, 2015)
8. Promotional deception	It is considered unethical and deceptive advertising if it has a tendency to deceive a large number of customers in a material way, works to create and distort incorrect content by using media channels, attempts to harm competitors' goods or services, and conveys false or misleading information.	((D'Souza, n.d.)

Source: Conducted by the researchers based on sources mentioned.

4. Results:

4.1. Reliability test:

Internal consistency is measured through this test, which indicates that all questions have the same goal. It is a statistical tool used to verify the stability of the study data. The reliability test is considered a means that enables the researchers to estimate the stability of the data without the need to re-collect it from the same sample, which will be showed in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2: Reliability coefficient values (Cronbach alpha).

Variable	Paragraphs	Cronbach alpha value
Customer empowerment	Q1 – Q20	0.903
Marketing deception	Q21 – Q43	0.888
Validity	Q1 – Q67	0.960

Source: Conducted by the researchers based on the (Amos.V.26) program.

The values extracted from the previous table show the Cronbach alpha coefficients for the variable “CE” with a ratio of 0.903, and for the variable “MD” with a ratio of 0.888. These values exceeded the approved cut-off limit (0.70), which indicates the stability and stability of the study data.

4.2. The description of variables:

This test aims to examine and describe the questionnaire items, dimensions and variables of the study, with the aim of shedding light on the variation and distribution of these elements in the researched company. The analysis is based on statistical methods that comprehensively use the arithmetic mean, along with the standard deviation, which highlights the degree of dispersion of the sample's opinions.

The following tables show the reliability test of the research scale for the dimensions of CE and MD, which will be shown in Table 3 and 4 as follows:

Table 3: The reliability test of the research scale for the customer empowerment dimension.

The customer empowerment dimension		
The descriptive analysis of the freedom of choice dimension		
Items	Mean	Normal deviation
The supplier company offers a variety of products that allow the company freedom of choice	4.31	0.69
The official online supplier company page provides technologies that give me more freedom in decisions regarding the products they provide	4.29	0.72
The supplier company offers a variety of product designs that allow me to enjoy testing the most suitable one for me	3.74	1.21
The provider company provides after-sales services and allows me the freedom to choose between them	4.17	0.89
The supplier company allows me to see the details and quality of the materials it produces and is used in construction	3.51	1.22
The descriptive analysis of the self-efficacy dimension		
Items	Mean	Normal deviation
I have the ability to make decisions related to the service provided by the company providing me.	4.24	0.73
I possess the information and skills necessary to properly handle the goods and services provided by the supplier company.	4.15	0.78
I have the experience necessary to present ideas that express my unfulfilled needs and communicate these ideas to the company.	4.13	0.77

Have sufficient information to contribute to the designs of companies providing products.	4.24	0.75
I have a feeling of the ability to influence and bring about change and that I can perform new tasks.	3.42	1.25
The descriptive analysis of the impact dimension		
Items	Mean	Normal deviation
I feel like I have some control over my dealings with the company.	4.17	0.73
I feel better about the products provided by my supplier as a result of my previous reviews.	3.43	1.18
I believe that I influence the product choices offered to me by the company.	4.12	0.75
I feel that I and others can influence the events, policies, systems, and results of the company.	4.24	0.70
The company provides me with the means and powers that allow me to influence decision-making through my skills, abilities, and submitted suggestions.	3.70	1.13
The descriptive analysis of the meaning dimension		
Items	Mean	Normal deviation
I feel satisfied because of my ability to influence the products the company offers.	4.11	0.75
The company provides means and technologies that increase the ability to easily access the product that meets my needs with minimal effort and costs.	3.62	1.21
The company provides various tools and services that allow me to solve the problems I face regarding obtaining feedback.	4.11	0.83
The company provides the means through which a sense of self-worth and self-satisfaction can be achieved by providing clear information.	4.14	0.73
The company ensures harmony between values, personal understanding and role expectations as well as personal beliefs.	4.08	0.73

Source: Conducted by the researchers based on the (SPSS.V.26) program.

The results of Table 3 show that the freedom of choice dimension indicates that the beneficiary company has a deeper understanding of the production processes and materials used, which increased work transparency and helped build relationships based on trust. The results of the self-efficacy dimension indicate that employees' belief in their ability to influence encourages them to take the necessary steps to achieve change and perform tasks. This motivation is considered an important factor in achieving goals, and as they have confidence in their ability to achieve influence, levels of self-confidence will rise, which helps them deal effectively with new challenges and opportunities. The results of the influence dimension also indicate that workers see an improvement in the products provided, which indicates The supplying company is working to improve the quality of the products and meet customer expectations, and improving the products has led to customer satisfaction, which has strengthened the relationship between employees and the supplying company and increased the possibility of continued cooperation.

The results of the meaning dimension indicate that the means and technologies are designed to facilitate access to products, which enhanced customers' experience and increased their comfort and satisfaction. The ability to easily access the product reduces the effort needed by the customer and user and reduces the time they need to find the appropriate product.

Table 4: Reliability test of the research scale for the marketing deception dimension

The marketing deception dimension		
The descriptive analysis of the product deception dimension		
Items	Mean	Normal deviation
The supplier company enters into contracts with customers and upon implementation does not fully fulfill them.	3.50	1.21
The supplier company provides products of brands from unrecognized origins and of low quality.	3.52	1.20
The provider company provides after-sales services insufficient to meet customers' needs as agreed upon.	4.19	0.67
The services provided by the company are poor, as they do not meet the customer's needs convincingly and are not credible.	4.24	0.60
The provider company does not provide attention during the preparation of services and after their completion, such as questions, follow-ups, and when reporting a complaint.	4.09	0.75
The provider company resorts to providing customers with services from alternative companies that differ from the request and needs of our company.	4.01	0.66
The descriptive analysis of the price deception dimension		
Items	Mean	Normal deviation
The supplier company motivates customers to increase purchase quantities by granting fictitious discounts.	3.82	0.80
Our company confuses two prices for the commercial product and the original one, which causes us to be deceived in the price.	4.01	0.59
The company providing the price of the product is deceptive by charging a higher price than the advertised one.	3.57	0.93
Some products are priced at a high amount to make the customer believe that they are of high quality.	4.11	0.78
The provider company uses price offers with discounts that do not match reality when selling.	3.91	0.66
The descriptive analysis of the deception dimension in promotion		
Items	Mean	Normal deviation
The company uses misleading promotional methods to hide information.	3.72	0.71
Representatives use the company's camouflage selling strategy in a way that suggests that the products provided are of higher quality than their actual level.	3.89	0.59
The supplier company displays video clips about the products that portray a positive image, and in actual dealing it is otherwise.	3.95	0.70
The company exaggerates in presenting the advantages, benefits and effectiveness of the products provided by it and does not focus on the side effects.	3.45	1.13

The provider company provides untruthful information to customers when promoting it, such as changing prices, services, and conditions.	3.50	1.02
The company announces fake discounts.	3.95	0.57
The descriptive analysis of the deception dimension in distribution		
Items	Mean	Normal deviation
The supplying company's distribution points do not cover all areas in the target market.	3.93	0.68
The supplier company's product distribution policy does not include sufficient distribution channels.	4.07	0.80
In distribution, the company adopts a product delivery strategy only.	3.64	1.24
The supplying company is not committed to delivering the products on time.	3.58	1.25
The supplier company does not fulfill its promises to deliver the product in terms of quantity and time.	4.08	0.71
The storage mechanism adopted by the supplying company leads to damage to some materials as well as their exposure to damage.	3.99	0.73

Source: Conducted by the researchers based on the (SPSS.V.26) program.

The results of Table 4 show that the descriptive analysis of the product deception dimension indicates that the company is working to conduct an internal evaluation of processes and resources to ensure the company's ability to achieve the obligations contained in the contracts. It identified the obstacles and challenges that hinder the full implementation of contracts and analysed the reasons behind these issues and a descriptive analysis of the dimension of price deception. These results indicate that setting prices in an exaggerated manner to deceive customers that the products are of high quality is considered unethical behavior and negatively affects the company's reputation in the long term. Although motivating customers to increase purchase quantities by granting imaginary discounts leads to increased sales for a temporary period, it leads to negative effects in the long term. The results of the descriptive analysis of the deception dimension in promotion indicate that the company exaggerates in marketing the products without focusing on the side effects, which leads to a loss of confidence among customers and distorts the company's image. These results indicate that announcing fake discounts leads to a loss of confidence among customers and negatively affects the company's reputation. In the long term, finally, the results of the descriptive analysis of the dimension of deception in distribution indicate that the occurrence of non-compliance with the company's promises regarding the delivery of products in terms of quantity and time leads to a loss of confidence among customers, and that if the supplying company does not commit to delivering the products on time, this has a significant impact on customer satisfaction and leads to loss of trust.

4.3. Hypothesis testing

This test aims to examine the dimensions of CE as an independent variable in the MD variable (the dependent variable), which can be shown in Table 4 as follows:

Table 5: The results of testing the effect of the independent variable, customer empowerment on the dependent variable, marketing deception

Main hypothesis						
The effect of the customer empowerment variable on marketing deception						
α	β	t(β)	Sig.(β)	R2	F-test	Sig.
1.104	0.689-	17.070	0.000	0.504	291.378	0.000
First sub-hypothesis						
The effect of the variable freedom of choice on marketing deception						
α	β	t(β)	Sig.(β)	R2	F-test	Sig.
2.002	0.464-	10.325	0.000	0.461	106.613	0.000
Second sub-hypothesis						
The effect of the variable self-efficacy on marketing deception						
α	β	t(β)	Sig.(β)	R2	F-test	Sig.
1.952	0.472-	10.890	0.000	0.448	118.592	0.000
Third sub-hypothesis						
The effect of variable influence on marketing deception						
α	β	t(β)	Sig.(β)	R2	F-test	Sig.
1.659	0.559-	13.379	0.000	0.444	178.986	0.000
Fourth sub-hypothesis						
The effect of variable meaning in marketing deception						
α	β	t(β)	Sig.(β)	R2	F-test	Sig.
1.751	0.525-	13.272	0.000	0.457	176.138	0.000

Source: Conducted by the researchers based on the (Amos.V.26) program

Testing the main hypothesis, from the results presented in the Table 5 shows that the value of the constant in the regression equation was 1.104, which is the lowest value for the dependent variable “MD.” In addition, it can be noted that the slope of the regression is -0.689, with a negative value, which is considered evidence of an inverse effect of CE on MD. As for the value of the coefficient of determination that was calculated (0.504), it indicates that CE explains part of the variance occurring in MD. Regarding the F-value, which amounted to 291.378, it has a very significant statistical value (0.000), which is less than the usual level of statistical significance (0.05), this indicates that there is a significant effect of CE in MD, that is, acceptance of the hypothesis.

Testing the first sub-hypothesis shows that the value of the constant in the regression equation was 2.002, which is the lowest value for the dependent variable “MD”. In addition, it can be noted that the slope of the regression is -0.464, with a negative value, which is considered evidence of an inverse effect of freedom of choice in MD. As for the value of the coefficient of determination that was calculated (0.461), it indicates that freedom of choice explains part of the variance occurring in MD. Regarding the F-value which amounted to 106.613, and has a very significant statistical value (0.000), which is less than the usual level of statistical significance (0.05), this indicates the presence of a significant effect of freedom of choice on deception that is, accepting the first sub-hypothesis.

Testing the second sub-hypothesis it becomes clear that the value of the constant in the regression equation was 1.952, which is the lowest value for the dependent variable “MD”. In addition, it can be noted that the slope of the regression is -0.472, with a negative value, which is considered evidence of an inverse effect of self-efficacy in MD. As for the value of the coefficient of determination that was calculated (0.448), it indicates that self-efficacy explains part of the variance occurring in MD.

Regarding the F-value which amounted to 118.592, and has a very significant statistical value (0.000), which is less than the usual level of statistical significance (0.05), this indicates the presence of a significant effect of self-efficacy in deception. Catalog. That is, accepting the second sub-hypothesis.

Testing the third sub-hypothesis it becomes clear that the value of the constant in the regression equation was 1.659, which is the lowest value for the dependent variable "MD". In addition, it can be noted that the slope of the regression is -0.559, with a negative value, which is considered evidence of an inverse effect of the effect on MD. As for the value of the coefficient of determination that was calculated (0.444), it indicates that the effect explains part of the variance occurring in MD. Regarding the F-value which amounted to 178.986, and has a very significant statistical value (0.000), which is less than the usual level of statistical significance (0.05), this indicates the presence of a significant effect of the effect on MD. That is, accepting the third sub-hypothesis.

Testing the fourth sub-hypothesis it becomes clear that the value of the constant in the regression equation was 1.751, which is the lowest value for the dependent variable "MD". In addition, it can be noted that the slope of the regression is -0.525, with a negative value, which is considered evidence of an inverse effect of meaning in MD. As for the value of the coefficient of determination that was calculated (0.457), it indicates that meaning explains part of the variance occurring in MD. Regarding the F-value which amounted to 176.138, and has a very significant statistical value (0.000), which is less than the usual level of statistical significance (0.05), this indicates the presence of a significant effect of meaning in MD. That is, accepting the fourth sub-hypothesis.

4.4 Discussion

Based on the results collected and analysed, it appears that there is a positive relationship between CE in reducing deceptive marketing practices. There are also other factors that may affect the relationship between CE and MD, such as increasing customer knowledge through the empowerment process will lead to reducing deceptive marketing practices. Although this study attempted to provide a more comprehensive framework for empowering the customer and his role in reducing deceptive practices, the scope of this study, the methods used in it, and the results it reached indicate that there are areas for another future research. Future research should use the variables of this study and apply them in other areas. Future research will search for more factors and variables that limit the process of deceptive practices.

5. Conclusion:

The supplier company is involved in misleading its customers by charging prices that exceed the declared prices, which constitutes dishonest behaviour and affects customer confidence. Setting prices higher than advertised could lead to the loss of customers and the deterioration of business relationships, which affects the company's reputation. It was found that the company resorts to exaggerating the advantages and benefits of the products it offers, without sufficient focus on the negative aspects or side effects, which leads to distorting customers' expectations. Failure to focus on side effects also leads to a lack of marketing transparency, which poses a challenge in building trust with customers. The company appears to be misleading customers by exaggerating the features and benefits of the products, without adequate focus on potential side effects. The company's inability to meet commitments regarding product quantity and time constitutes non-compliant behaviour and affects its credibility. The researchers advise studying CE and applying it in other fields to enrich more. Future research should study blockchain technology because it is an important factor in reducing deceptive marketing practices.

Authors Declaration:

Conflicts of Interest: None

-We Hereby Confirm That All The Figures and Tables In The Manuscript Are Mine and Ours. Besides, The Figures and Images, Which are Not Mine, Have Been Permitted Republication and Attached to The Manuscript.

- Ethical Clearance: The Research Was Approved By The Local Ethical Committee in The University.

References:

1. Abdel-Bari, M., & Ashry, I. (2023). The relationship between direct marketing and customer empowerment (by application to customers of electronic shopping sites in the Arab Republic of Egypt). *Egyptian Journal of Business Studies*, 47(3), 189–229.
2. Akhavannasab, S., Dantas, D. C., & Senecal, S. (2018). Consumer empowerment in consumer–firm relationships: conceptual framework and implications for research. *AMS Review*, 8(3), 214–227.
3. Aldaihani, F. M. F., & Ali, N. A. Bin. (2018). Impact of social customer relationship management on customer satisfaction through customer empowerment: A study of Islamic Banks in Kuwait. *International Research Journal of Finance and Economics*, 170(170), 41–53.
4. Al-Hindawi, M., & Abdul-Rahim, A. I. (2021). The effect of marketing deception on the consumer's purchase decision - an applied study on students at Dimat University. *Scientific Journal of Business and Environmental Studies*, 1(12), 295–339.
5. Al-Jubouri, A. A. N. (2020). The effect of marketing deception on the decision to purchase electronic purchases: an exploratory study for students of the Department of Business Administration - College of Administration and Economics in Iraqi universities. *Al-Rafidain Development Magazine*, 39(128), 129–149.
6. Al-Sawy, Z. (2023). Measuring customer interaction during the stages of purchasing decision-making towards marketing deception practices. *International Journal of Administrative, Economic and Financial Sciences*, 2(4), 81–140.
7. Bachouche, H., & Sabri-Zaaraoui, O. (2017). Are all customer empowerment strategies equally beneficial? The role of brand familiarity and type of empowerment strategies. *33è Congrès de l'Association Française de Marketing*.
8. BEKOUCHE, K., CHERFAOUI, M., & KORICHI, H. S. (2018). Marketing deception in mobile services: Study of a sample of mobile phone market operators in Ain El-Defla (Algeria). *El-Bahith Review*, 18(1), 631–643.
9. Beshibshi, A. H., Haroush, O., & Amara, S. (2018). *The effect of marketing deception on building the mental image of consumers in the services market: a field study of our sample of consumers of the services of the telecommunications company Mobilis Agency - Jijel -*.
10. Botti, S., Iyengar, S. S., & McGill, A. L. (2023). Choice freedom. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 33(1), 143–166.
11. Camacho, N., De Jong, M., & Stremersch, S. (2014). The effect of customer empowerment on adherence to expert advice. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 31(3), 293–308.
12. Castillo, J. (2017). The relationship between big five personality traits, customer empowerment and customer satisfaction in the retail industry. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research (JBRMR)*, 11(2).
13. Dakrouri, M. I., & Awadallah, A. A.-S. A. (2020). Introductions and outcomes of electronic customer empowerment: an applied study on customers of electronic shopping sites. *Scientific Journal of Financial and Commercial Studies and Research*, 1(2), 447–475.
14. Karim, D., & Shirov, F. (2021). *The impact of marketing deception on the consumer's purchasing decision*.
15. Docan-Morgan, T. (2019). *The Palgrave handbook of deceptive communication*. Springer.

16. D'Souza, V. (n.d.). "Unethical Advertising through Social media"-A case study investigating ethical marketing issues in fast food industry of Ireland.
17. El Beirouti, A., & Mouterfi, A. (2022). Customer empowerment: managerial practice to involve the customer and exploit his knowledge in order to improve his satisfaction-Djezzy Company Case. *Les Cahiers Du Cread*, 38(1), 31–60.
18. Gaber, H. R., Labib, A. A., & Salem, K. O. (2018). The effect of marketing deception on consumer buying decision On Facebook. An empirical study on University Students In Libya. *European Journal of Business and Innovation Research*, 6(3), 12–18.
19. Gamp, T., & Krähmer, D. (2018). *Deception and competition in search markets*. University of Bonn and University of Mannheim, Germany.
20. Helmy, I., Adawiyah, W. R., & Banani, A. (2019). Linking psychological empowerment, knowledge sharing, and employees' innovative behavior in SMEs. *The Journal of Behavioral Science*, 14(2), 66–79.
21. Hu, H., & Krishen, A. S. (2019). When is enough, enough? Investigating product reviews and information overload from a consumer empowerment perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 100, 27–37.
22. Khalifa, M. (2021). The effect of marketing deception on customers' mental image: An applied study on Egyptian mobile phone service companies. *Scientific Journal of Business and Environmental Studies*, 1(12), 191–261.
23. Liu, X., Lin, C., Zhao, G., & Zhao, D. (2019). Research on the effects of entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial self-efficacy on college students' entrepreneurial intention. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 450989.
24. Prentice, C., Han, X.-Y., & Li, Y.-Q. (2016). Customer empowerment to co-create service designs and delivery: Scale development and validation. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 37(1), 36–51.
25. Rajab, J., & Al-Masry, M. (2019). The role of customer empowerment in developing his value to the company by mediating the quality of the relationship: an applied study on customers of cellular telecommunications companies in Syria. *Arab Journal of Management*, 39(1), 165–190. <https://doi.org/10.21608/aja.2019.27780>
26. Roth, L. (2022). *Deception Perception: The Marketing of Student Loans*.
27. Sadiqe, L., & Mohsen, A. (n.d.). *THESIS INTRODUCTION FORM*.
28. Song, R., Kim, H., Lee, G. M., & Jang, S. (2019). Does deceptive marketing pay? The evolution of consumer sentiment surrounding a pseudo-product-harm crisis. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 158, 743–761.
29. Turnipseed, D. L., & VandeWaa, E. A. (2020). The little engine that could: The impact of psychological empowerment on organizational citizenship behavior. *International Journal of Organization Theory & Behavior*, 23(4), 281–296.
30. Wiastuti, R. D., & Susilowardhani, E. M. (2015). Element of Marketing Communication Mix for Hotel with Sharia Concept (Study Case in Sofyan Hotel Betawi). *Proceeding of ICCOMAC*.