Deception and the marketplace of ideas

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Abstract
American democracy is built, in part, on the ideal of a “free marketplace of ideas.” Consumers are assumed to have access to the same arguments, and through deliberation, come to a consensus about which arguments are true, and therefore, best. In this article, we explain how deceptive communication undermines this ideal. We focus on two key dimensions—the motive of deception and the perception of dishonesty—that influence people’s propensity to deceive and the social rewards of doing so. Deception is seen as the most justified when it is morally motivated and when it involves indirect tactics that are not perceived as particularly dishonest. We argue, therefore, that morally motivated half-truths, rather than blatantly selfish lies, may do the greatest damage to the marketplace of ideas. Ultimately, this article advances our understanding of the causes and consequences of deception and helps to explain the dynamics that lead to widespread misinformation in our social world.

Keywords
ethics and morality, loyalty and relationships, needs and values

1 | INTRODUCTION

“... the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas ... the best test of truth is the power of thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market.” —Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Abrams v. United States (1919)

For the past century, the metaphor of a “free marketplace of ideas” has been essential to defending the first amendment and freedom of speech more broadly. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes first articulated this metaphor in 1919, but the logic behind it originates from John Stuart Mill. In On Liberty, Mill (1859) argued that robust and open debate, free of censorship, is essential for pursuing truth and therefore improving human welfare. If everyone has access to the same arguments (i.e., viewpoints, ideas, or information), and weighs those arguments rationally, the best, most true arguments should dominate public thought.

This ideal, however, is built on an outdated model of how information spreads. Mill envisioned a world in which people (actual, physically present people) had a spirited debate in front of an audience who was able to independently assess the merits of the arguments presented and come to their own conclusions. This is rarely how information spreads in the 21st century. Although debates do occasionally occur, information is most often disseminated virtually, and assumptions of equal access and rational evaluation of information are violated. Rather than evaluating and comparing common information, consumers in the 21st century are segmented. Consumers frequently operate in “echo chambers,” in which they are exposed to different pieces of information, leading them to draw different conclusions. Political polarization has also interfered with rational deliberation. Authority figures knowingly share false information to promote their personal agendas, rather than helping others arrive at a ground truth (e.g., Kristiansen & Kaussler, 2018). Furthermore, consumers rely on emotion rather than reason to evaluate that information (Bago et al., 2020; Mosleh et al., 2021; Pennycook & Rand, 2021). For example, consumers react to opposing viewpoints with outrage (Brady & Crockett, 2019) and eagerly accept misinformation that aligns with their moral motivations (e.g., Effron, 2018).

A large body of work within marketing, behavioral economics, and psychology has examined the psychological forces that lead to
market frictions, relative to the predictions of neoclassical economics. This work, however, has primarily focused on markets in which people buy and sell goods and services. In the present research, we review the psychological forces that distort the way people buy and sell ideas. Specifically, we examine why deception occurs, how it spreads, why it is rewarded, and how these processes lead to frictions in the marketplace of ideas.

We begin by reviewing the last 20 years of marketing research on deception. Existing marketing research has primarily examined why people tell, and how consumers react to, selfish lies. This focus, which is also mirrored in the law, is helpful for understanding how to protect consumers from profit-seekers companies that may harm consumers by lying about the nature of their goods or services. We argue, however, that this focus is too narrow if we wish to understand how to protect consumers from misinformation more broadly.

To create this broader understanding, we review recent research in moral, political, and organizational psychology on the practice and judgment of deception. We focus on two key dimensions—the motive of deception and the perception of dishonesty—that influence people’s propensity to deceive and the social rewards of doing so. Deception is seen as the most justified when it is morally motivated and when it involves indirect tactics that are not perceived as particularly dishonest. Though blatantly selfish lies may be the most revealing of poor character, morally motivated half-truths are more likely to go unchallenged and to spread and therefore may do the greatest societal damage.

We conclude with a roadmap for future research on barriers to a free market of ideas. Ultimately, this article sheds light on the nature of morally motivated deception and helps to explain the dynamics that lead to widespread misinformation in our social world.

2 | DECEPTION ACCORDING TO MARKETING RESEARCH AND MARKETING LAW

2.1 | Deception according to marketing research

Consistent with existing research, we define deception as, “a communicator’s deliberate attempt to foster a belief in others that the communicator considers to be untrue” (DePaulo & DePaulo, 1989). As noted by Boush et al. (2009), as well as Masip et al. (2004), deception can include both verbal and nonverbal tactics, as well as the strategic omission of information. The goal of deception can be to either create or maintain others’ false beliefs. However, all deception intentionally misleads others (Boles et al., 2000; Levine & Schweitzer, 2015).

A key goal of marketing is persuading consumers (Boush et al., 2009). Deception is one way in which marketers can persuade consumers and therefore has been a focal topic of marketing research. To get an understanding of how the field of marketing has studied deception, we conducted a literature search of the last 20 years of research in the field. We used Web of Science to compile all articles containing one of the following terms: “deception,” “dishonesty,” “lying,” “lies,” “honesty,” or “truth” in the article’s title or abstract that were published between 2000 and 2020 in the following top marketing journals: Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Marketing Research, Marketing Science, Journal of Consumer Psychology, Journal of Marketing, and Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science.

Our literature search yielded 36 relevant articles. We removed three papers that were commentaries on another empirical article from our search, leading to a final set of 33 articles. These articles are summarized in Appendix A. The scope of these articles is defined by three key features. First, the articles tend to focus on dishonesty rather than honesty. About three-quarters of the articles focused on deception (examining either when and why people engage in deceptive behavior or how they react to deceptive behavior), and the remaining quarter focused on truth and honesty (examining judgments of honesty and the social consequences thereof). Second, the articles examining deception primarily focus on acts of commission (i.e., lies and cheating) that are done for selfish reasons (to benefit the liar). Third, despite this narrow focus on selfish lies, the literature has studied deception in a wide variety of contexts, including teenagers lying to their parents about purchasing behavior (Bristol & Mangleburg, 2005), marketers overstating the quality of a product in an advertisement (Kopalle & Lehmann, 2006), and consumers lying to a service provider during an online negotiation (Anthony & Cowley, 2012). Rather than focusing only on companies deceiving consumers, these papers also examine how consumers deceive other consumers, companies, or other parties.

These articles reveal several key insights. First, consumers often try to protect their self-concept by selectively engaging in deception. The most cited study in our literature review introduces the theory of self-concept maintenance (Mazar et al., 2008). According to this theory, which has been influential in a variety of fields, people want to think of themselves as good, honest people. This viewpoint, however, is in tension with the desire to profit from lying or cheating. As a result, when given the opportunity to cheat, most people cheat enough to profit, but cheat less than they could, which allows them to uphold their self-image (a recent, large meta-analysis also finds support for this theory: Abeler et al., 2019). Several other influential papers also examine the relationship between self-concept and deception, finding that consumers are willing to utilize deception as a protective mechanism in response to threatening information (Argo et al., 2006), consumers engage in judgments and behaviors that favor the target of the lie to reduce cognitive dissonance from lying (Argo & Shiv, 2012), and consumers are more likely to lie in a foreign language (as opposed to their native language) when the lie reflects an undesirable view of the self (Gai & Puntoni, 2021).

Second, deception negatively impacts consumer cognition. Memories of deception are often enhanced relative to truthful memories. As a result, deception can affect how people assess claims and situations. For example, consumers are more likely to believe claims that are repeated by multiple sources (Roggeveen & Johar, 2002), which can occur even if those claims are false (Johar & Roggeveen, 2007). This seems to be particularly problematic for older adults, who are
more likely to accept a claim as true the more often they were told it was false (Skurnik et al., 2005). Deception not only influences lie receivers’ cognition, but it also changes communicators’ cognition. As communicators’ lies become more consequential, arousal increases, focusing attention on the content of the lie and thus improving memory for the deceptive information (Cowley & Anthony, 2019).

Unsurprisingly, a large body of existing literature has also focused on consumer reactions to company deception. The idea that consumers are reactant to persuasion attempts (deceptive or otherwise) has long been a focus of marketing research. For example, the “persuasion knowledge model” (PKM) suggests that consumers try to be skillful receivers of persuasive messages and therefore attempt to neutralize and resist persuasion attempts (Friedst & Wright, 1994). Building on this logic, Vohs et al. (2007) suggest that consumers are particularly averse to feeling “duped”; targets of deception feel angry and frustrated and begin to distrust other communicators as a result (Kramer, 1994; Main et al., 2007). As a result, deception can undermine the general effectiveness of a firm’s advertising by making consumers defensive (Darke & Ritchie, 2007) or lowering their purchase intentions (Bickart et al., 2015).

Perceptions of deception can even harm firms trying to do good. Negative evaluations of corporate social marketing, for example, are driven by consumers’ beliefs that firms who fail to acknowledge self-serving motives are deceptive (Forehand & Grier, 2003). Given consumers’ negative reactions to deception, firms must be careful about when they choose to engage in deception. Kopalle and Lehmann (2006) suggest that firms should overstate quality only when consumers either do not rely on advertising to form quality expectations, or when consumers’ intrinsic satisfaction with a product is high. Similarly, Gardete (2013) posits that in a vertically differentiated market, firms with low-quality products should not overstate quality because it can both deter (by raising expectations about the price) and disappoint (by displaying lower quality than expected) potential consumers.

These results highlight how (perceptions of) deception can undermine trust in others’ motives and words. These insights, however, are gleaned almost entirely from the study of selfish lies, and therefore may not provide a complete understanding of the potential harm and pervasiveness of deception. An overarching theme in existing market research is that deception will not flourish in the long run because consumers will punish selfish (i.e., profit-seeking) lies by avoiding deceptive companies. Furthermore, the theory of self-concept maintenance suggests that the magnitude, and therefore harmful consequences of deception, is constrained by people’s desire to see themselves in a positive light.

However, not all lies are punished. Though deception within the traditional marketplace (i.e., the market for goods and services) is typically characterized by self-interest, deception within the marketplace of ideas is often morally motivated. People use deception to manipulate others into believing ideas or enacting behavior that they morally value. As we will discuss in Section 3, morally motivated lies are often rewarded rather than punished, which leads to persistent misinformation in the marketplace of ideas. Before turning to morally motivated deception, however, we examine how selfish lies are typically punished within the marketing domain. In Section 2, we review legal perspectives on consumer deception and discuss how marketing research and legal research can inform each other and how both can be broadened to better understand deception within the marketplace of ideas.

### 2.2 Consumer deception according to the law

From a legal perspective, deceptive marketing is defined as “any advertising or promotion that misrepresents the nature, characteristics, qualities or geographic origin of goods, services, or commercial activities” (Lanham Trade-Mark Act, 1946). Though this definition is broad, it is relatively narrow in practice. For a claim to be made against a defendant, a plaintiff must show that the marketing practice in question meets the following five conditions:

1. a false statement of fact has been made about the marketer’s own or another person’s goods, services, or commercial activity;
2. the statement either deceives or has the potential to deceive a significant portion of the targeted consumers;
3. the deception is also likely to affect the purchasing decisions of consumers;
4. the marketing practice involves goods or services in interstate commerce; and
5. the deception has either resulted in or is likely to result in injury to the plaintiff.

In cases of deceptive marketing, the most important factor in judicial rulings is the marketing practice’s potential to injure the consumer. Typically, this harm takes the form of money the consumer lost by making a purchase they would not have made if the marketing had not been misleading. However, other types of injury, such as physical or psychological harm, may be considered. For example, deceptive medical advertising that leads people to get unnecessary and inappropriate testing could lead to overdiagnosis, overtreatment, and unfounded anxiety.

Regulations typically define three main acts as deceptive marketing: failure to disclose, flawed or insignificant research, and product disparagement. In this sense, the tactics that influence legal action against consumer deception are broader than the tactics that have been the focus of marketing research (i.e., lies of commission). Flawed or insignificant research qualifies as deceptive marketing because it involves explicitly false statements that are unsupported by an accepted authority or research, or they are contradicted by a prevailing authority or research. Product disparagement is another form of commission in which a marketer deceives the consumer by misrepresenting a competitor’s product. Failure to disclose -- i.e., omission -- is considered deceptive marketing under the Lanham Act if the failure to disclose a material fact leads to a false representation of a good or service. In other words, deceptive marketing can come from both direct misstatements and somewhat correct
statements that mislead the consumer because they fail to disclose relevant information.

Although the above tactics are all prohibited, not all false statements are seen as problematic in the eyes of the law. If a statement is mere “puff,” it does not qualify as an illegal marketing practice. The precise definition of a “puff” or puffery depends on the location of the court. For instance, the US Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit defines puffery as advertising “that is not deceptive, for no one would rely on its exaggerated claims” (U.S. Healthcare v. Blue Cross of Gr. Phil, 1990). The Federal Trade Commission has also established its own definition of puffery, limiting the defense to marketing claims “that ordinary consumers do not take seriously” (Cliffdale Assocs, 1984). In general, however, claims that a product is “the best that has ever existed” or “amazing,” for example, will usually be allowed as “mere puff.” Puffery is not prohibited because, in most instances, the judicial system considers puffing to be so immaterial and unreliable that it cannot form the basis for liability. Consumers’ intuitions seem to mirror legal beliefs about puffery. Consumers expect obfuscation in the marketplace and the experience of obfuscation lowers their purchase intention, suggesting they do not rely on it (Bickart et al., 2015).

Reviewing the legal definitions of deceptive marketing yields important insights into how the marketplace views consumer deception. First, the law focuses largely on deception about goods and services, rather than beliefs themselves. The law is primarily concerned with protecting consumers from selfish companies whose false advertising can cause harm, typically in the form of money lost due to misleading claims. Despite this somewhat narrow focus, the legal definition is still notably nuanced. The legal definition focuses not just on explicitly false statements but also includes omissions or failures to disclose. The law also considers how the truth is established (i.e., the research process) and what is reasonable for consumers to rely on (puffery v. deception), rather than simply focusing on whether communicators state information they believe is true or false.

2.3 Moving from deception in the marketplace to deception in the marketplace of ideas

Our understanding of deceptive marketing is primarily limited to why people and companies lie and cheat and the consequences thereof. Although operationalizations of deception vary greatly across different papers, the bulk of our empirical research has focused on selfish acts of commission. Of the 33 articles in our review, 28 of them focused on selfish deception, and 21 of them focused on lies of commission, whereas only two considered morally motivated deception and three considered deceptive inactions or omissions. Marketing’s focus on selfish commissions is not particularly surprising given the context. When profit-seeking companies try to persuade consumers to buy a product or service, they can do so by telling lies about the quality of the good, or about their competitors. From a legal perspective, selfish lies are easier to catch (i.e., it is easier to find proof of a direct lie than a failure to disclose), they are more likely to be relied upon, and the harm caused by these lies is relatively clear.

However, more work is needed—from both an empirical and legal perspective—to understand the more nuanced forms of deception that permeate the marketplace of ideas. We argue that deception can be categorized along two central dimensions. The first dimension is the motive for deception. People not only lie to make money or protect themselves; they lie to uphold values that are important to them. These morally motivated lies are particularly prevalent when people are trying to spread ideology and influence others, that is, within the marketplace for ideas. Though morally motivated deception may occasionally be justified, we argue that it often does more harm than good. Moral motivations can inspire catastrophically harmful and seemingly immoral acts, such as torture, murder, and genocide (Rai & Fiske, 2011). Because morally motivated harm—or deception—often seems genuinely “right,” it is particularly difficult to curb, and therefore, particularly important to study.

The second dimension is the degree to which deception is perceived to be honest. People work hard to ensure they do not tarnish their self-image when engaging in deception, which has been the focus of existing marketing research. Therefore, people often avoid outright lies of commission, opting for more ambiguous forms of deception that allow them to feel truthful. We argue that morally motivated deception and more indirect forms of deception present a serious threat to markets precisely because they are harder to detect and because there is widespread disagreement about the harm they cause, and to whom. When people argue and express their views within the marketplace of ideas, they can skillfully mislead others through indirect measures (including evasion, paltering, or nonverbal cues) without being dubbed a liar. These indirect measures are easier to employ in live conversations than in premeditated or scripted communication (e.g., formal marketing campaigns).

In the following sections, we review burgeoning bodies of research, primarily from outside of the field of marketing, on each of these two dimensions. Then, we summarize why the combination of moral motives and indirect tactics makes deception particularly dangerous within the marketplace for ideas. We conclude with a roadmap for future research.

3 Morally Motivated Deception

Before we begin, it is important to clarify what we mean by “morally motivated” deception. We define “morally motivated” deception as any intentionally misleading act that is motivated, at least in part, by the desire to uphold or promote a personal moral value. Morally motivated deception can be altruistic, but it can also be mutually beneficial. That is, a person may make a personal sacrifice (e.g., by giving up money, status, or taking a hit to their reputation) or a person may accrue personal gains (e.g., by earning money, status, or fame) when engaging in morally motivated deception. As a result, moral motivations can act as a genuine motivator or a post hoc justification for self-interested deception (Levine & Munguia Gomez, 2021). Our
central thesis is simply that the availability of moral motivations allows both communicators and consumers to justify deception, leading to more frequent and more widespread misinformation within the marketplace for ideas.

We also note that a person can be motivated by any value that takes on moral significance for them. Many instances of deception are motivated by the core foundations (Haidt, 2012) some of which we discuss below, namely, harm avoidance (benevolence), fairness, and loyalty. However, deception may also be motivated by other moral values, as well as moralized political, religious, or even scientific convictions.

3.1 | Types of moral motives

3.1.1 | Benevolence

People frequently lie to help or avoid harming specific individuals (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998). In other words, people tell prosocial lies. Prosocial lies emerge in childhood, around age 4, and are often told for politeness purposes (Talwar & Crossman, 2011; Talwar et al., 2007). When parents encourage children to be polite, for example, by expressing false gratitude for unwelcome gifts or providing false praise about someone’s appearance, children begin to understand that lies promoting social and moral goals (like those of benevolence or social harmony) are often expected and rewarded.

Prosocial lies of politeness, often referred to as “white lies” (e.g., Argo & Shiv, 2012; Erat & Gneezy, 2012), persist into adulthood. However, adults also tell prosocial lies in more serious and consequential settings. For example, a doctor may provide false hope to a patient with the goal of improving their emotional well-being (e.g., Levine et al., 2018), or an employee may misrepresent a colleague’s performance with the goal of improving their confidence and motivation. Recent research suggests that people rely on two key dimensions when deciding whether to tell a prosocial lie. People consider whether the truth would cause immediate emotional harm to a conversational partner and whether the truth has any long-term instrumental value for the conversational partner (such as learning or growth; Levine, 2021). Communicators often focus primarily on avoiding immediate emotional harm (Levine & Cohen, 2018; Levine et al., 2020), but observers and targets only judge deception as acceptable when the truth would cause immediate emotional harm and would lack instrumental value. For example, many communicators may be eager to tell an ill-dressed partner “You look great!” because they are motivated to spare the partner embarrassment. However, most partners and third parties would only say such deception is justified if the ill-dressed partner could no longer change their outfit. In this case, honesty would cause emotional harm and lack instrumental value. In situations like this one, many believe that the truth would cause unnecessary harm, and deception would be ethical (Levine, 2021).

Communicators draw on a similar logic when they spread false ideas to the public because they believe the truth will cause undue harm. For example, some have argued that the World Health Organization (WHO) provided misleading information about the effectiveness of masks in protecting people against COVID-19 during the beginning of the pandemic. The WHO may have feared that honestly emphasizing the importance of masks would lead to serious shortages, therefore harming those who were in the greatest need of protection (e.g., healthcare workers; Ellis, 2020). Concerns about this unnecessary harm may have fueled misinformation and harmful ideas about the futility of masks. In general, lies that can benefit or avoid harm to others tend to be seen as more ethical than lies that only benefit a communicator (Levine & Schweitzer, 2014; Weisel & Shalvi, 2015; Wiltermuth, 2011).

3.1.2 | Fairness

When people feel that outcomes have been determined unfairly, they may also engage in deception to restore justice. The idea of “lying to level the playing field” is often valorized (Gino & Pierce, 2010a, 2010b); it is celebrated in children’s stories such as Robin Hood and in popular culture. Importantly, people lie—and justify lying—to create equality when it benefits them and when it harms them. For example, Gino and Pierce (2009) found that participants who were responsible for grading the work of a partner were more likely to overstate their partner’s performance when their partner was poor than when their partner was rich. Participants felt empathy toward partners who were poor (because they lost, rather than won a $20 lottery), particularly when participants themselves were rich (because they won the $20 lottery). As a result, participants were willing to lie to help their partners, both when doing so was in their own financial self-interest (Study 1) and when doing so was financially costly (Study 2).

Inequity aversion can also lead to harmful deception. A substantial percentage of poor participants (who had lost the $20 lottery) were also willing to lie to harm wealthy partners, because they felt envious toward these partners. Similar patterns emerged when financial inequality was caused by subjective performance ratings rather than random lotteries (Gino & Pierce, 2010a). Wealth-based inequality also influences deception in consequential market settings, such as the vehicle emissions testing market (Gino & Pierce, 2010b), as well as underlying moral judgments. Just as people believe it is more ethical to lie when it helps another person, people believe it is more ethical to lie when doing so reduces inequality (Gino & Pierce, 2010a). Concerns about fairness and inequality often spur deception in the marketplace of ideas, for example, when people who feel that they have been treated unfairly spread misinformation about their adversaries in order to regain power.

3.1.3 | Loyalty

People also lie to protect, defend, and honor their in-group or those close to them. In other words, people lie out of loyalty, a sense of moral partiality toward an object (such as a group, organization, or
individual; Hildreth et al., 2016). Whereas benevolence is characterized by a desire to avoid harm or improve the welfare of specific others, loyalty is characterized by a sense of duty or obligation to a social group.

Loyalty is particularly likely to trigger unethical behavior, including deception, when people feel that their in-group is threatened. For example, participants who took an oath of loyalty were more likely to cheat to benefit their group when their group was competing against another group (Hildreth et al., 2016). Although observers judge these loyalty-driven lies to be less ethical than disloyal truths, communicators who face loyalty–truth dilemmas tend to believe that lying is the more ethical choice (Hildreth & Anderson, 2018). The more people identify with the group who benefits from deception, the easier it is to disengage from and justify an act of deception that benefits them (Chen et al., 2016).

Loyalty-driven lies are often rewarded by fellow in-group members, whereas disloyal truths are punished. As a result, people may engage in deception not only out of a sense of obligation to their group members but also because doing so increases the chance that group members will protect them in kind. Indeed, employees who identify closely with their companies are more likely to lie to help their companies—including lying to consumers about a company’s products or services—when they believe that helpful acts are rewarded with reciprocity (Umphress et al., 2010). Fears of social exclusion also drive people to act unethically for the sake of their group. Employees and laboratory participants who are high in need for inclusion engage in pro-group, unethical behavior when they perceive a high risk of exclusion (Thau et al., 2015).

Although many people tell lies of loyalty, omissions of loyalty are likely more common. Covering up others’ misdeeds or promising not to “blow the whistle” is another way in which group members can prove their loyalty to a group and allow deception or other unethical acts to flourish (Dungan et al., 2015). When people personally value loyalty, or are reminded of the importance of loyalty, they express lower intentions to report group members’ unethical behavior (Waytz et al., 2013). Loyalty can lead people to hide any information that could incrimate their in-group. For example, political partisans often omit facts that conflict with their political group’s ideology, particularly when speaking to members of their in-group (Silver et al., 2021). Even when people recognize information as true and relevant to a conversation, they may choose not to share it if they fear it could lead to social sanctions by signaling disloyalty or creating confusion about group membership. Omitting “inconvenient truths” from public conversations violates assumptions about free and open debate in the marketplace of ideas.

### 3.1.4 Additional moral motives

Existing empirical research has primarily examined deception that is motivated by social moral motives, finding that people often lie to help and to demonstrate solidarity with others. However, any moral motive can fuel deception. For example, many people in the United States moralize personal autonomy and liberty (e.g., Haidt, 2012; Hofmann et al., 2014). If autonomy takes on the significance of a sacred value (a value that cannot be violated at any cost; Tetlock, 2003), then people could easily justify deception that promotes their personal freedom. Indeed, some have argued that misinformation about the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines is motivated by a political–moral defense of personal freedom (Eshun-Wilson et al., 2021). The values of authority and purity can also lead to deception, as well as many more nefarious actions (such as violence; Fiske & Rai, 2014; Rai & Fiske, 2011). People may lie—and think doing so is morally permissible or justified—if it is ordered by a respected authority figure or if it promotes the sanctity of their group. Even moral concerns about the environment or animal rights could fuel acts of deception. Deception associated with moral values is easy to justify.

### 3.2 Social reactions to morally motivated deception

#### 3.2.1 When morally motivated deception is rewarded

As suggested earlier, consumers of information (both observers and targets of deception), like communicators, tend to view morally motivated deception as more ethical than selfish deception (e.g., Levine & Schweitzer, 2014). Importantly, acts are also more likely to be attributed to moral motives when they are committed by in-group members (Waytz et al., 2014). Therefore, even deception that is selfish or ambiguous may be perceived as morally motivated, and therefore accrue social rewards, when it is committed by a valued social partner or someone with a shared identity.

People who benefit from deception are particularly likely to see it as ethical (Epley & Caruso, 2004) and may even see deception as more ethical than truth-telling (Levine, 2021). Recent work demonstrates how the beneficiaries of deception not only approve of morally motivated deception but actually choose to rely on those who spread it. For example, people are willing to trust others who tell prosocial (benevolent) lies, because they expect prosocial liars to be generous to them in future interactions (Levine & Schweitzer, 2015). Even those who are not willing to engage in deception themselves often choose to partner with dishonest others because doing so ensures that they accrue the gains of dishonesty without experiencing the self-image costs (Gross et al., 2018).

Notably, however, people often trust liars’ benevolence, despite recognizing their lack of integrity. As a result, they are not willing to trust benevolent liars for all tasks and roles—only those that are rooted in benevolence, kindness, and generosity. This trust is evident not only in dyadic interactions but also in complex social systems. Members of crime rings and those who have been influenced by them exhibit high in-group trust (Baccara & Bar-Isaac, 2008; Bowles & Gintis, 2004; Meier et al., 2016). This trust persists because in-group members can be expected to protect and care for each other, even if they exhibit low integrity toward outgroup members. People react to
Deception can be motivated by selfish or moral motives. Deception can also involve direct or indirect dishonesty. As discussed in Boush et al. (2009), deception includes not only blatant lies but also omissions, obfuscations, distractions, puffery, bullshit, and a host of other conversational tactics that allow communicators to mislead others without feeling responsible for the deception. Blatant lies, even ones that are morally motivated, often elicit personal guilt and lead to interpersonal punishment. Importantly, these lies are also easier to detect, prove, and regulate (e.g., Lanham Trade-Mark Act, 1946). However, more ambiguous shades of deception are easier to justify and harder to punish than blatant lies, largely because they are perceived as more true. In this section, we review recent advances on the factors that influence the degree to which people perceive deceptive words as honest. We focus both on the specific words that communicators use, as well as the mental exercises they employ, to legitimize deception.

4.1 | Misleading through silence and truth

4.1.1 | Omission

There are many ways in which communicators can mislead their audience without directly lying to them. Perhaps the most obvious form of indirect deception is omission. Omission refers to misleading others through silence. Omission can involve selectively leaving out information in a conversation or avoiding a conversation altogether.

Communicators may avoid certain conversations, for example, because they feel they will be uncomfortable or lead to negative social judgments (e.g., Kumar & Epley, 2018, 2021; Zhao & Epley, 2021). For example, people may avoid giving honest feedback because they expect doing so will lead others to feel angry and offended (Levine & Cohen, 2018). When communicators intentionally avoid these conversations, knowing that recipients have inaccurate beliefs about their performance or qualities, communicators are engaging in deception.
People not only omit opinions from conversations; they also omit facts. In exchanges involving jointly held moral and political beliefs, communicators tend to self-censor and omit relevant facts if they contradict the shared beliefs in question. Communicators engage in this self-censorship, despite purported beliefs that unbiased evidence sharing should be the norm, because they want to avoid social sanction. When people are not being observed or do not expect social repercussions for sharing such facts, they are less likely to engage in omission (Silver et al., 2021).

Though communicators often perceive omission to be more acceptable than blatant lies, targets of deception do not always feel the same way. When communicators intentionally omit information, they feel less guilt and worry less about reputational consequences than if they actively lie (i.e., engage in commission), even when both omission and commission benefit targets (Levine et al., 2018). As a result, they believe omission is more morally acceptable. However, targets often prefer prosocial commission—active lies that benefit them—to the omission of information. For example, though oncologists believe that omitting prognostic information is more ethical than providing patients with false hope, patients often prefer false hope. Communicators also distinguish between harmful lies of omission and commission more than targets do. These results are driven by egocentrism; both communicators and targets focus on the costs and benefits of deception to them, which can lead to divergent moral judgments. Communicators who omit information from public debates, therefore, may feel that this is acceptable; however, those harmed by such omissions are unlikely to agree.

4.1.2 | Partial truths: Paltering, dodging, deflecting, and cherry-picking

Though omission is common, it is not always an option. When asked a direct question, communicators cannot simply stay silent. Therefore, communicators often engage in other equivocation tactics that allow them to mislead targets without actively lying. For example, communicators can dodge direct questions by answering a different one (Rogers & Norton, 2011), obfuscate by providing a vague and long-winded answer (Bickart et al., 2015), deflect by asking a question in response to the question (Bitterly & Schweitzer, 2020), or palter by saying something that is true, but misleading (Rogers et al., 2017). For example, if a moderator asked an American politician a question about the rising drug problem, the politician might acknowledge that, “there are so many challenges facing America” (Rogers & Norton, 2011) and assert that she is committed to solving all of them, despite actually planning to decriminalize several drugs. This palter may mislead the audience into thinking that decriminalization will not occur, and yet, it is not technically an untrue statement.

Communicators believe that paltering, like omission, is more ethical than actively lying. Communicators take comfort in the belief that they did not technically say anything false, thereby allowing them to (at least partially) blame targets for misunderstanding the meaning of their statements. However, targets do not make such sharp distinctions. For example, targets who were deceived in a negotiation judged deception to be unethical, regardless of if it was achieved through active lies or paltering (Rogers et al., 2017).

Paltering can take many forms; a particularly common form of paltering is cherry-picking. When cherry-picking, communicators select the best, or most beneficial, truth to present to an audience. Researchers themselves frequently engage in this strategy. John et al. (2012) found that when it comes to questionable research practices, the practice that researchers admitted to engaging in the most was not reporting all measured dependent variables. In other words, they cherry-pick the dependent variables that best fit their narrative or hypotheses and omit the others, thus deceiving readers about the full scope of their results. Researchers are not alone in this practice—it is easy to think of examples of cherry-picking throughout the marketplace. Weight loss or skin care products often cherry-pick their most successful consumers as examples in advertisements. Doctors may cherry-pick patients whose results were the best-case scenario when trying to convince a new patient to start a treatment. Policymakers may cherry-pick statistics to share with the public that best support their agenda.

Although research on cherry-picking has been limited, a recent set of studies suggests that audience members may not perceive cherry-picking to be as aversive as blatant lies. Duncan et al. (n.d.) explore lay reactions to charitable marketing tactics. They find that even when the level of misrepresentation in the advertisement is held constant, people find outright deception (i.e., falsely staging a photo so that a person looks to be in need) to be much less acceptable than cherry-picking (i.e., photographing a real photo a person in need who is not representative of the community). Lay notions of cherry-picking reflect how cherry-picking is seen in eyes of the law. It is generally more difficult to punish cherry-picking practices than outright deception.

4.2 | Exploiting uncertainty

Communicators attend to the words they use so that they can mislead others without directly lying. They also attend to features of the truth. If a piece of misleading information could be true—in someone’s opinion, or at some point in time—stating it does not quite feel like a lie. In this section, we examine how communicators exploit this uncertainty to avoid feeling and being perceived as, dishonest.

4.2.1 | The objectivity of information

People tend to believe that misrepresenting objective facts is more dishonest than misrepresenting more uncertain or subjective information. As a result, people are more willing to misrepresent information that is more elastic, that is, vague or uncertain. For example, car sellers who have an incentive to understate a car’s mileage may understate the car’s mileage to a greater degree when their personal estimate of the mileage has a broad range rather than a narrow range.
(Schweitzer & Hsee, 2002). When the true mileage is uncertain, stating any potentially true mileage feels relatively honest.

People may also strategically choose to remain uncertain about information to justify future deception. People frequently avoid information that might lead them to question a preferred decision (Dana et al., 2007; Woolley & Risen, 2018, 2021). Just as people choose not to find out how their selfish actions harm others (Dana et al., 2007), they may choose not to find out whether their selfish or morally motivated statements are true (Cooper et al., 2021). For example, a person who believes that in-group loyalty requires them to claim that vaccines are harmful may choose not to do research on vaccine effectiveness and harm. By remaining uncertain, or ignorant of truth, a communicator can claim that they were voicing that they thought was true, thereby circumventing the guilt of dishonesty.

The subjectivity of information also influences perceptions of dishonesty. In general, people think it is more ethical to lie about subjective opinions (Levine, 2021) and emotional experiences (Kang & Schweitzer, 2020; Levine & Wald, 2020) than objective facts. Internal opinions and feelings are unverifiable and subject to change. Therefore, misrepresenting them may not feel dishonest, because some of the time, or to some people, they may not be. Consider, for instance, a person who says, “We have the greatest economy in the history of our country” (President Trump in remarks to reporters, June 15, 2018; Kessler, 2018) when he actually knows otherwise. Though this is a dishonest statement, it may be easy for the person to imagine that this it is true on some metrics, or it is true to some people (i.e., those who are financially well-off). “Greatest” is a subjective assessment, and therefore, it may not feel so dishonest to label something as such, without providing the corresponding verifiable metrics. Similarly, consider a person who says, “I feel fantastic” when they are actually feeling quite ill. Though this is a dishonest statement at the moment, the person stating this may have felt well recently or may expect to feel well again soon, in which case the statement does not feel, and is not perceived as, globally dishonest.

The misrepresentation of subjective opinions and feelings is so widespread that legally, people are not expected to rely on them. As discussed previously, misrepresenting the subjective quality of a good is known as “puffery,” not deception. People are expected to discount puffery. If people do discount puffery, it cannot cause harm. Based on this logic, puffery is not illegal (Colaizzi et al., 2016). However, people do rely on, and are harmed by, the misrepresentation of uncertain or subjective information. People tend to assume others’ statements are true, unless they have a clear reason to believe otherwise (Levine, 2014). Misrepresentation of any form, therefore, can undermine the ideals of a free marketplace of ideas.

4.2.2 | Creating uncertainty by imagining alternative truths

Interestingly, communicators also believe it is more ethical to misrepresent objective, factual information, when they simply consider what could be true. That is, communicators engage in counterfactual thinking (Effron, 2018; Shalvi et al., 2011) to justify deception. Observers and recipients of lies are also sensitive to counterfactual thinking. For example, republicans who were prompted to consider how large President Trump’s 2016 inauguration would have been if there had been lower security measures believed it was more ethical for Trump to falsely claim that more people attended his inauguration than President Obama’s. In general, imagining an event often leads people to implicitly see it as true (Shidlovski et al., 2014). Counterfactual thinking has a particularly strong influence on moral judgments of deception that align with people’s moral or political convictions. In the example above, Trump supporters were more likely to believe the counterfactual was plausible and therefore expressed higher approval of deception when they were prompted to consider it. Counterfactual thinking also influences punishment; people are less likely to punish deceptive communicators when they consider how the communicator’s deception could have been true.

Repeatedly encountering false information can also make it feel more true (Dechêne et al., 2010). For example, consumers who were warned that a company’s claim was false were more likely to remember it as true 3 days later when they received multiple warnings (Skurnik et al., 2005). Similarly, consumers who read fake news headlines—along with a warning that the claims in them were disputed—were more likely to believe the headlines were true when they had seen them before (Pennycook et al., 2018). Even when repeated information is suspect, people may think of it as true because it feels familiar and is relatively easy to process. Feelings of fluency can also cause people to perceive statements that follow a natural, or expected, sequence as truer (King & Aschialtraku, 2020). Interestingly, even when people know information is false, seeing it multiple times makes it seem less unethical to share with others (Effron & Raj, 2020).

4.3 | Disregarding truth

Ironically, communicators can also evade the experience of dishonesty when they tell lies so outlandish that they assume nobody would believe them. Bullshit, as defined by Frankfurt (2005), is a way of speaking that is entirely “unconnected with the truth” and is “not germane to the enterprise of describing reality.” In some ways, bullshit is the opposite of equivocation. When somebody bullshits, they may say blatantly false statements that do not feel dishonest because they are not expected to mislead others. In contrast, when someone equivocates—by paltering, dodging, or cherry-picking, for example—they say misleading statements that do not feel dishonest because they are technically true.

In recent years, bullshit has become a more prominent strategy of deception in the marketplace of ideas: “Fake news” has saturated the media. Like legal puffery, some argue that bullshit is so outlandish and ridiculous that no reasonable person would rely on it; and therefore, it cannot possibly cause substantial harm. However, this is unlikely to be true. Research has shown that people are susceptible to bullshit
The experience of dishonesty: Conclusion

People are more likely to engage in deception, and have an easier time justifying it, when deception is not perceived as particularly dishonest. People can circumvent the experience of dishonesty by avoiding blatant lies, by imagining how their lies could be true, or by convincing themselves that lies will not be believed, and therefore will not harm others. These findings build on theories of self-concept maintenance, which have focused on how the magnitude of selfish deception influences one’s self-concept (Mazar et al., 2008). However, they also highlight the variety of strategies that people can use to feel good about deception, even when lies are large, and have significant societal consequences.

A ROADMAP FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this review, we focused on two features of deception that have been largely ignored by existing research on consumer deception: the underlying motive and the perception of dishonesty. These features help us understand how deception influences the marketplace of ideas, rather than simply the traditional marketplace (for goods and services). However, to fully understand the causes and consequences of deception and how to rebuild a free marketplace of ideas, more work is needed. Here, we outline three specific avenues for future research.

Marketing tactics as barriers to a free marketplace of ideas

When companies are focused on persuading consumers to make a purchase, they may be tempted to engage in deception. Legal interventions and regulations can help curb deception in the traditional marketplace. However, marketing tactics that seem unrelated to persuasion and deception can exacerbate the consequences of deception within the marketplace of ideas.

Marketing tactics such as consumer segmentation and the strategic placement of advertising have been increasingly applied to the marketing of ideas, particularly on social media. The ideal of a free marketplace of ideas assumes that everyone has the same access and pays attention to the same information and therefore has equal ability to discern fact from fiction. We argue that this is no longer the case, and we urge scholars to investigate the benefits and costs of idea marketing, and the relationship between these tactics and deception.
in particular. Specifically, scholars should investigate how presenting different media sources, and evidence, to different groups of consumers influences political polarization and misinformation. Whereas presenting consumers with the subset of goods and services that most align with their values may increase consumer welfare, presenting consumers with the subset of ideas that most align with their values may not. Future work is needed to empirically study these dynamics more precisely.

6.2 | Expanding our understanding of dishonesty

It will also be important for future work to study a broader range of dishonest behavior. According to Cooper et al.’s tripartite model of honesty, honesty requires seeking truth, speaking truth, and fostering understanding in others (Cooper et al., 2021). Existing research, however, focuses primarily on truth-speaking—whether people communicate honest or dishonest information relative to their underlying beliefs. But widespread misinformation occurs not only because communicators or media sources fail to speak the truth but also because communicators fail to foster understanding in others and because consumers fail to seek truth. For example, when communicators engage in paltering or cherry-picking, they may state true information, but their intention in doing so is still to foster misunderstanding. Furthermore, when consumers deliberately endorse and share questionable information, they may strategically avoid truth, which is another form of dishonesty. More work is needed on these behaviors, both when and why they occur and how they are judged by others. Future work should also examine interventions to increase all three facets of honesty. This is particularly important given that some interventions thought to increase truth-speaking have recently been challenged (Kristal et al., 2020; Simonsohn et al., 2021).

6.3 | Experimental jurisprudence and the punishment of misinformation

Future work should also examine legal intuitions around deception and misinformation. Examining lay beliefs about the law is useful for understanding why certain legal concepts are widely accepted and how misdeeds will be punished by juries (Sommers, 2021). In particular, it will be important to understand how people assess harm when others misrepresent ideas. It is likely clear that companies who cheat consumers deserve punishment. However, if someone shares a false idea that they believe advances their agenda, who is to blame when others believe it? Furthermore, when deception is morally motivated and helps some, but harms others, what inferences do people draw about deception’s ultimate consequences and how does this depend on their relationship with the deceiver in question? It will be important for legal scholars and psychologists to dive into how people assign blame for and assess the harm of misinformation. Though private companies are beginning to crack down on misinformation, the law has yet to catch up (Siripurapu, 2020).

7 | CONCLUSION

When sellers deceive buyers, consumer welfare is destroyed and markets do not operate efficiently. Traditionally, the field of marketing has only considered these dynamics within the context of markets for goods and services. As a result, the field has been narrowly focused on understanding and deterring selfish lies of commission. In the present article, however, we consider these dynamics within the context of the marketplace of ideas. To understand the causes and consequences of deception within the marketplace for ideas, we must understand the multiple, and often moral, motives that underlie deception and the ethically ambiguous tactics used to promote it. Morally motivated half-truths undermine the free marketplace of ideas.

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ENDNOTE

1Notably, however, some of the core marketing research on this topic did not appear in our search (either because it is more than 20 years old, e.g., Fristad & Wright, 1994, or because it was not authored in our focal journals, e.g., Vohs et al., 2007).

REFERENCES
Bitterly, T. B., & Schweitzer, M. E. (2020). The economic and interpersonal consequences of deflecting direct questions. Journal of Personality...
## APPENDIX A: SUMMARIZING 20 YEARS OF MARKETING RESEARCH ON DECEPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Cites</th>
<th>Main finding(s)</th>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>Type of deception or judgment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderson and Simester (2014)</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>The 5% of online product reviews for which there was no observed confirmed transaction had significantly lower product ratings than reviews with confirmed transactions, as well as significant differences in the content of the reviews. The motivations and intentions of these reviewers remains unknown, but the authors suggest the reviewers are unlikely to be employees/supporters of competitors</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony and Cowley (2012)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Lying interferes with the ability to use diagnostic cues to update outcome expectations. As a result, liars are less prepared for the final outcome of a negotiation. This reduced outcome preparedness, in turn, leads to more polarized satisfaction judgments</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argo and Shiv (2012)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>People experience cognitive dissonance when they tell “innocent” white lies to conceal their negative feelings. As a result, white liars engage in judgments and behaviors that favor the target of the lie to reduce dissonance</td>
<td>Selfish/moral</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argo et al. (2006)</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>Self-threatening social comparison information motivates consumers to lie. Factors related to self-threat, including relevance of the social comparison target, comparison discrepancy, comparison direction, nature of the information, and perceived attainability, influences consumers’ willingness to engage in deception</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayus et al. (2001)</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>Firms with high or very low product development costs make accurate product announcements, whereas firms with intermediate product development costs intentionally engage in vaporware (announcing that a new product will soon be on the market, when the product will either never be released or will not be released in the near future)</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bickart et al. (2015)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Most consumers report having experienced salesperson obfuscation, or answering a question in a vague, long-winded way without answering the question at all, and believe that obfuscation is more prevalent in professions in which people have strong monetary motives to obfuscate. When consumers’ prior expectations for a dishonest response to a question are heightened, obfuscation undermines purchase intentions relative to a straightforward “do not know” response</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Other: obfuscation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol and Mangleburg (2005)</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>Teens lie to their parents and family about their purchases. They are more likely to do so when their family communication pattern emphasizes obedience and conformity as opposed to developing one’s own views of the world. This effect is mediated by the teen’s susceptibility to peer influence, television viewing, and materialism</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: omission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowley and Anthony (2019)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>As lies become more consequential, lie-induced arousal (LIA) increases, which narrows attention to the content of the lie and subsequently improves deception memory. Therefore, whereas more arousing lies may be</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Type of deception or judgment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darke and Ritchie (2007)</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>Deceptive advertising can seriously undermine the general effectiveness of advertising communication by making consumers defensive; a deceptive advertisement has a negative impact on both the deceptive advertiser and second-party advertisers</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gai and Puntoni (2021)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Compared with one’s native language, using a foreign language makes lying appear less self-diagnostic, thereby increasing or decreasing lying depending on which aspect of the self is salient. In situations where lying reflects an undesirable, dishonest self, using a foreign language increases lying. In contrast, in situations where lying primarily reflects a desirable (e.g., competent or compassionate) self, using a foreign language decreases lying</td>
<td>Selfish/moral</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garbinsky et al. (2020)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>The authors develop the financial infidelity (FI) scale. They show that financial harmony is an antecedent of FI scale scores. The FI scale also predicts a broad range of consumption-related behaviors</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardete (2013)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>In a vertically differentiated market, a firm with a low-quality product may not want to exaggerate its claims considerably, because doing so can simultaneously scare away potential consumers (who now expect high prices) and attract consumers who would be disappointed with the quality upon search and could decide not to buy</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorn et al. (2008)</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>Babyfacedness affects the perception of a CEO’s honesty/innocence and, hence, the credibility of the denial of wrongdoing and attitudes toward the company</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Perceptions of honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johar and Roggeveen (2007)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>This paper looks at refutations of false beliefs formed on the basis of repeated advertisement exposure. Refutations of commissions were believed less than refutations of omissions; results suggest that belief updating may be an automatic process where consumers do not verify the credibility of the refutation before making an adjustment to their beliefs.</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Perceptions of truthfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jung and Critcher (2018)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mandatory endorsements enhance the perceived credibility of negative ads; mandatory endorsements boost ad believability—Largely outside of participants' awareness—For two reasons: (1) the tagline offers a legitimizing association with regulation and (2) the candidates’ own personally delivered endorsement language offers an implicit promise of the ads’ truth value</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Perceptions of truthfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King and Auschaitrakul (2020)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Statements conforming to naturally encoded sequences are perceived as more truthful than statements that do not conform to these sequences</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Perceptions of truthfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kopalle and Lehmann (2006)</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>The paper builds a model to determine when it is optimal for firms to overstate quality. The results indicate it is best to overstate quality when (a) customers rely less on advertising to form quality expectations and (b) customers’ intrinsic satisfaction with a product is high</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazar et al. (2008)</td>
<td>2979</td>
<td>People are dishonest, but not to the fullest extent possible. They moderate their level of dishonesty to allow them to believe that they are honest people. The level of dishonesty people engaged in dropped when people paid more attention to honesty standards and climbed</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mislavsky et al. (2020)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Participants evaluated the acceptability of either corporate policy changes or of experiments testing them. If all policy changes were deemed acceptable, so was the experiment. This was regardless of whether the experiment involved deception, unequal outcomes, or lack of consent.</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prabhu and Stewart (2001)</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>The authors develop a conceptual framework of how managers interpret competitors’ signals over time in various market contexts. Receivers’ responses are less aggressive against senders that bluff in an environment of high information costs. When information is costly, receivers rely more on the sender’s announcements, first to develop beliefs about the sender and then to respond to the sender’s actions.</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rao and Wang (2017)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>When a firm has a claim of false advertising against them, there is a significant decline in demand following the termination of the claims, resulting in a 12%-67% monthly loss in revenue across products with false claims. Response to the termination of the false claims is heterogeneous: Newcomers are most impacted by these false claims, whereas longtime users persist in their purchases even after the false claims have been identified and removed.</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roehm and Roehm (2014)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>The authors examine consumer responses to parodic ads: Humorous commercial messages that parody extant advertising. Parodic ads were unsuccessful at creating brand identity. Consumers felt negatively about ads featuring mockery. Attitudes toward parodic ads were favorably influenced by the parodic ad’s perceive truth; however, perceived truth had no impact on attitude toward the parodic ad’s sponsor.</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Perceptions of truthfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roggeveen and Johar (2002)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Repeated claims were rated as truer than claims only seen one time. Additionally, belief in a claim is greater when it comes from two sources (compared to a single source). Results showed that number of sources enhanced believability of claims about a low-plausibility product.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Perceptions of truthfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotman et al. (2018)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Perceptions of brand harmfulness increase intentions to punish via unethical means and marketplace aggression, even when the consumer is not directly harmed.</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahni and Nair (2020)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Native advertising benefits advertisers; the authors find no evidence of deception under typically used formats of disclosure in the paid-search marketplace.</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Other: native advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sengupta et al. (2002)</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>Within a symbolic, expensive product category (e.g., watches), deliberate misrepresentation of price is particularly likely to occur when communicating with a higher status (aspiration) group as compared with an equal status (peer) group; the desire to seek identification with an aspirational reference group or person can be a key motivation for lying about one’s material possessions.</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skurnik et al. (2005)</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>The more often older adults were told that a given claim was false, the more likely they were to accept it as true.</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas and Jewell (2019)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Majority of participants reported secret keeping regarding consumption, for a variety of types and motivations; being embarrassed and not wanting to be judged were the top motives. Keeping brand consumption a secret can lead to enhanced self-brand connections through the underlying processes of thought suppression and thought intrusion</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: omission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver and Prelec (2013)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Participants who received BTS-based (Bayesian truth serum—Scoring method that provides incentives for providing truthful answers to questions dealing with personal information) payments without explanation became less likely to recognize foils as they progressed through the survey, suggesting that they learned to respond to BTS incentives despite the absence of guidance. The mechanism also outperformed the solemn oath, a competing truth-inducement mechanism</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woolley and Risen (2021)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>More people avoided information they were conflicted about receiving when they could attribute avoidance to another feature of the choice</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Other: information avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu and Geylani (2020)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The paper proposes a game theoretical framework to study deceptive ads and the impact of regulating said ads. When a low-quality firm issues a false claim and misrepresents its product quality, consumers can actively engage in information acquisition and verify the claim. However, when the penalty for false statements increases, consumer surplus can actually decrease. This is because as the penalty rises, the low-quality firms become more deceptive about product quality, and the increased deceptiveness reduces consumers’ incentives to verify product claims</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xie et al. (2014)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Participants spent longer handwashing after they shook hands with a person who lied for a small sum of money than for a large sum of money</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Deception: commission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>