

## IMPACT OF FALSE NARRATIVES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

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**Abstract:** *The effect of misleading narratives and advertisements is a complicated and diverse issue with significant ramifications for people, society, and the more extensive world. In this broad analysis, we will dive into the different elements of this issue, looking at the manners by which misleading narratives and tricky ads influence individuals' lives, impact general assessment, shape political scenes, and have extensive economic, social, and mental outcomes.*

A misleading narrative is a familiar way of thinking that depends on wrong or fragmented data or information. Frequently, misleading narratives means wrong information passed all through a local area or society. These deceptions can be made purposefully or inadvertently by the forces that shape culture, the media and government strategy. A false narrative differs from fake news, or individual falsehoods since it regularly creates after some time through institutional support. Because of this unobtrusive support after some time, misleading stories are in the long run acknowledged as truth by enormous groups of people in society, even whole social orders, and are consequently, undeniably challenging to dismantle. False narratives can take different structures, including composed or spoken stories, pictures, recordings, and different sorts of media. They frequently mean to shape insights, convictions, and perspectives, and they can have critical certifiable outcomes.

False narratives contain data that doesn't line up with realities, proof, or reality. They might misshape reality or present altogether falsehoods. They are in many cases made or spread with the goal to hoodwink, control, or impact individuals' viewpoints, activities, or choices. They might be driven by different intentions, for example, political, philosophical, financial, or individual increase. False narratives can act as publicity, disinformation, or deception. It might be steady inside themselves, implying that all components of the storyline up with one another, yet they don't line up with true reality. Some commonly heard narratives include conspiracy theories where false narratives frequently manifest that recommended secret or secret powers are controlling occasions or controlling results. For example, the doubt-inspired notion that

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guarantees the moon landing by the US was a scam is a false story that goes against overpowering proof. It also includes propaganda where false narratives are often utilized in promulgating endeavours to progress political or philosophical plans. States, organizations, or people might utilize propaganda to shape popular assessment, frequently by contorting realities or depicting rivals adversely. False narratives are also used while spreading fake news where false narratives can be used out through fake word articles or sites that copy authentic news sources however spread created or misshaped data. For instance, false narratives about political upcomers or occasions can be proliferated through fake media sources. Rumours and scams also make use of false narratives. These are done by false reports and fabrications frequently energized by virtual entertainment. These can go from false cases about big name deaths to created tales about approaching natural disasters or anything.

Amongst all these examples where false narrative is used, manipulated media is at the pinnacle. Progressions in innovation have made it more straightforward to make media more controlled, influenced, or manipulated. For example, deepfake recordings or photographs. These can be utilized to create false narratives by setting people in circumstances they were not in or making them make statements they won't ever say. A false narrative in advertisements alludes to a deceptive or misleading storyline, message, or portrayal introduced in an advertisement to advance a product, service, or brand in the market. These false narratives can take different structures and include embellishments, exclusions, or inside and out falsehoods intended to impact customers' insights, convictions, or buying choices. False narratives in advertising can be hurtful not exclusively to shoppers yet in addition to competitors and the general commercial centre. The false narrative in advertising includes exaggerated product claims, false testimonials, misleading or false comparisons with competitors, pseudoscientific claims, FOMO creation or some hidden fee involved and much more. It's just a never-ending try by the advertiser to falsely fabricate his product in the market.

### **Impacts of False Narratives/ Ads**

False narratives and deceptive advertisements have been a part of human communication and commerce for centuries, but in the digital age, their impact has reached unprecedented levels.

The proliferation of social media platforms, online news outlets, and digital advertising has provided fertile ground for the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and deceptive marketing tactics. As we examine the impact of false narratives and advertisements, it becomes evident that this issue is not confined to a single domain; it touches upon nearly every aspect of modern life.

#### ✚ Misinformation and Disinformation

To understand the impact fully, it's essential to distinguish between misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information shared without harmful intent. In contrast, disinformation involves the deliberate spread of false information with the intent to deceive, manipulate, or harm. Both forms can have significant consequences.

#### ✚ Health Implications

One of the most critical areas where false narratives and advertisements can have a devastating impact is health. Misleading health information can lead individuals to make poor decisions about their well-being. For example, the spread of false narratives about vaccines has led to a decline in vaccination rates, contributing to outbreaks of preventable diseases.

Social-media programs have been more than involved to the diffusion of false information and conspiracy models during the recent COVID pandemic. On analyzing the concept of fake news in the health-related sector, it is likely to perceive that infodemic information is now part of the lives of people which in turn causes people to have disbelief in Governments, scientists, and health specialists, which impacts people's health directly.<sup>2</sup>

#### ✚ Political Consequences

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<sup>2</sup>Yasmim Mendes Rocha, Social-media platforms have contributed to the spread of false news and conspiracy theories during the new coronavirus pandemic. When analyzing the phenomenon of fake news in health, it is possible to observe that infodemic knowledge is part of people's lives around the world, causing distrust in Governments, researchers, and health professionals, which can directly impact people's lives and health. When analyzing the potential risks of misinformation, panic, depression, fear, fatigue, and the risk of infection influence psychological distress and emotional overload, 2021 Oct 9, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8502082/>

In the realm of politics, disinformation campaigns can be used to manipulate public opinion, sway elections, and undermine the democratic process. False narratives about candidates, policies, or election integrity can have far-reaching effects on the political landscape, eroding trust in institutions and sowing division among the electorate.

### Social and Psychological Effects

#### 1. Polarization

False narratives can exacerbate social and political polarization by reinforcing existing beliefs and biases. People tend to seek out information that aligns with their pre-existing views, a phenomenon known as confirmation bias. When exposed to false information that supports their beliefs, they are more likely to accept and share it, deepening ideological divides within society.

#### 2. Erosion of Trust

Trust in media, institutions, and information sources is essential for a well-functioning society. False narratives and deceptive advertisements erode this trust. When people encounter repeated instances of false or misleading information, they become more skeptical and less likely to rely on traditional sources of news and information, which can hinder effective governance and decision-making.

#### 3. Psychological Effects

The constant exposure to false narratives can have psychological effects on individuals. It can lead to anxiety, confusion, and a sense of powerlessness. The difficulty in discerning truth from falsehood in a deluge of information can leave people feeling overwhelmed and unsure of what to believe. Repeated exposure to false narratives can erode trust in institutions, including government, media, and scientific organizations. When people perceive that authoritative sources disseminate false information, they may become more skeptical and distrustful of those sources, which can have far-reaching implications for society. False narratives often exploit existing divisions in society and contribute to political and social polarization. People who

encounter false information that supports their ideological beliefs may become more entrenched in their positions, further dividing communities and societies.<sup>3</sup>

False narratives can also lead to decreased confidence in the accuracy of information sources. When individuals are exposed to a high volume of false or misleading information, they may become more skeptical of all information, making it challenging to discern truth from falsehood. Belief in false narratives can lead to social consequences, such as stigmatization or discrimination against specific groups or individuals. False narratives can perpetuate stereotypes and biases, leading to harmful attitudes and behaviors. Exposure to false narratives can lead to cognitive dissonance, a state of mental discomfort that arises when individuals hold conflicting beliefs or values. When people encounter information that contradicts their existing beliefs, they may experience confusion and psychological stress as they try to reconcile the conflicting information.

False narratives often reinforce existing beliefs and biases, leading individuals to seek out and accept information that aligns with their pre-existing views. This confirmation bias can reinforce echo chambers and hinder open-mindedness and critical thinking.

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### 🚦 Economic Consequences

#### 1. Consumer Harm

False advertisements, especially those related to health or consumer products, can harm individuals physically, emotionally, or financially. Fraudulent medical treatments can jeopardize health, while deceptive financial schemes can lead to significant monetary losses. Consumers may fall victim to scams, believing false promises made in advertisements.

#### 2. Market Distortion

Deceptive practices in advertising can distort market dynamics and competition. When companies use false claims or misleading information to gain an unfair advantage, it harms

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<sup>3</sup>Josef Bastian, When the Storyteller Lies: The Global Impact of False Narratives, The Cryptofolk Movement, Dec 16, 2019, <https://medium.com/the-cryptofolk-movement/when-the-storyteller-lies-the-global-impact-of-false-narratives-19d4f6fe15a8>

both consumers and legitimate businesses. False advertising can undermine the principles of fair competition and consumer protection.

### 3. Stock Market Manipulation

False narratives can also impact financial markets. False or misleading information about a company's performance or prospects can influence stock prices, leading to financial instability and harm to investors. The dissemination of false information for financial gain is illegal and can have severe consequences.

## ✚ Political Implications

### 1. Manipulation of Democracy

The impact of false narratives and disinformation on politics extends beyond election outcomes. Disinformation campaigns can manipulate public perception, sow distrust in democratic processes, and undermine the very foundations of democracy. The use of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation in political discourse can have long-lasting and corrosive effects on democratic institutions.

### 2. Foreign Influence

False narratives and disinformation are not limited to domestic politics. Foreign actors often engage in disinformation campaigns to influence the political landscape of other nations. These campaigns can be designed to exploit existing divisions, promote extremist ideologies, or undermine the credibility of democratic systems.

## ✚ Legal and Ethical Implications

### 1. Legal Consequences

Many jurisdictions have laws against false advertising, and spreading false information can have legal consequences. However, enforcing these laws can be challenging, particularly in the digital age where information flows across borders freely. Legal frameworks are continuously evolving to address these challenges. Defamation Lawsuits: False narratives that harm an individual's reputation may lead to defamation lawsuits. Defamation occurs when false

statements are published or spoken with the intent to injure someone's reputation. In some cases, the statement was made negligently or with actual malice (if the plaintiff is a public figure).

If these elements are proven, the defendant (the person accused of making the false statement) may be liable for damages. Defamation can take two primary forms: libel and slander. Libel refers to written or published defamatory statements, while slander refers to spoken defamatory statements. Lawsuits can be filed for both libel and slander if the criteria for defamation are met.

In the context of false narratives in advertising, legal action can be taken under false advertising laws and regulations. These laws aim to prevent deceptive marketing practices and protect consumers from false or misleading claims. Companies that engage in false advertising may face legal penalties, including fines and injunctions. False narratives can also sometimes involve the unauthorized use or misrepresentation of intellectual property, such as trademarks, copyrights, or patents. Legal action may be taken for intellectual property infringement or misappropriation.

## 2. Ethical Considerations

Beyond legal concerns, there are significant ethical considerations related to the dissemination of false narratives and deceptive advertisements. Ethical communication principles emphasize truthfulness, transparency, and respect for the audience. Violating these principles not only harms individuals but erodes the moral fabric of society.

False narratives in advertisements are tricky because they can delude shoppers, hurt competitors, and dissolve trust in promotion in general. To resolve this issue, numerous nations have regulations and laws that administer publicizing practices and forbid misleading promotions. These guidelines mean to guarantee that advertisements are honest, straightforward, and not misdirecting to purchasers. Purchasers can safeguard themselves from false narratives in advertisements by being basic and knowing watchers. It's fundamental for research items, contrast cases and free sources, read surveys, and know about normal publicizing strategies. Moreover, detailing misleading advertisements to important administrative specialists can assist with combatting the spread of false narratives in publicizing.

Some various regulations and laws that forbid false and deceptive advertisements. These have been sanctioned to safeguard the customers from different types of exploitation. The serious issue relates to the successful execution of these Acts by the authorities. Following are some of the laws dealing with false narratives and advertisements in India,

#### 1. Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act

The Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, of 1954 prohibits advertisements relating to certain drug medicines. This also prohibits tantric or magic remedies from being advertised or glorified. It prohibits advertising drugs for certain purposes and for the treatment to certain diseases and disorders. Section 3 of the Act says that no individual shall take any part in the circulation or publication of any advertisement about the promotion of a medication or prompting the utilization of a medication for the obtainment of miscarriage or stopping of conception in ladies, the support or improvement of the sexual capabilities, and adjustment or betterment of feminine menstrual issues. It also prohibits ads on drugs preventing certain diseases or illorders like diabetes, cataract, cancer, fevers (in general), obesity, rheumatism, impotence, high or low blood pressure, female diseases, epilepsy, etc. Section 4 also prohibits any ad of drugs which directly or indirectly implicates a false narrative in the minds of buyers or makes a false claim about the drugs. Violation of any of the provisions of this Act may attract punishment of up to 6 months of imprisonment, fine or both.<sup>4</sup>

#### 2. The Cable Television Network Regulation Act and Rules

The Act orders that all advertisements communicated through the digital TV station stick to the Advertising Code figured out under it. Section 6 of the Act says that no individual shall transmit or cause to transmit through a cable service, any advertisement, except if such advertisement is in congruity with the recommended rules under the Act. The Advertising Code under the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994, specifies that all advertisements ought to adjust to the pertinent laws of the country, the product or service publicized ought to not experience the ill effects of any deformity or deficiency as referenced in the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 and shouldn't contain references which are liable to lead general society to construe that the item promoted or any of its ingredients has some extraordinary or powerful or supernatural property or then again quality which is difficult of being demonstrated. It contains two main

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<sup>4</sup>The Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954, Act No. 21 of 1954



boards; the Program Board which contains a description of when and how which ads shall surf on air, and the Advertisement Board which provides guidelines on broadcasting certain programs in advertisements.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. The Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986

The Bureau of Indian Standards (Certification) Regulations, 1988 Rule 7 prohibits misleading advertisements pertaining to BIS certification. It says that the product licensee shall through advertisements convey that it has duly been certified according to the ISMS standards. However it also provides that merely holding a license shall not imply that the holder has been holding a license.<sup>6</sup>

### 4. The Infant Milk Substitute, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992 and the Infant Milk Substitute, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Amendment Act, 2002

This regulation forbids advertisements and promotion of newborn child milk substitutes, feeding bottles, and newborn child food varieties on the grounds that their promotion makes a misinterpretation and, in this manner, misdirects purchasers into believing that baby food varieties or milk substitutes sold in the market are as great or better than mother's milk. Section 3 of the Act says that no person shall publicize or participate in the distribution of any advertisement, for the dispersion, deal or supply of newborn child milk substitutes or feeding bottles or baby food sources or give an impression or make a confidence in any way that taking care of newborn child milk substitutes and baby food sources is identical to or better than mother's milk.<sup>7</sup>

### 5. Drugs and Cosmetic Act, 1940

It is an enactment introduced to provide rules and laws with regard to the use, storage and distribution of drugs and cosmetic items. It also contains a bar on advertisement of lab tests and reports of any cosmetics by government analysts according to Section 29 of the Act.

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<sup>5</sup>The Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, Act No. 7 of 1995

<sup>6</sup>Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986, Act No. 11 of 2016

<sup>7</sup>Infant Milk Substitute, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992, Act No. 41 of 1992

6. Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003

The Act clearly prohibits promoting the use or consumption of tobacco products.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from these laws which govern the publication or restrictions on publication of advertisements in general, the Consumer Protection Act. Section 2 of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 characterizes the term 'unfair trade practice' as an exchange practice which, to advance the sale, use or supply of any goods or service, takes on any unfair method or unjustifiable or deceptive work including any of the false and misleading practice. An advertisement is supposed to be deceptive if it deceives individuals, changes reality and impacts customer purchasing conduct. In many purviews, publicizing guidelines make it against the law to utilize false or deluding promoting. It is illegal to distort the nature of any product, or its composition, assembling, cost or spot of origin. "false" alludes to the distortion of current realities and facts; false data can bring about an unacceptable number of individuals utilizing the data to settle on wrong choices, however purchasers are vulnerable against such publicizing when given with exceptional environment. The Rules perceive lure advertisements as those which promote goods, or services for sale at a low cost to draw in buyers. Clause 5 of the Rules recommends required conditions for lure advertisements. Advertisements should not tempt shoppers to buy products lacking reasonable prospects of sale. The promoter should guarantee a sufficient stockpile of products to fulfil the predictable demand. In the event of default in gathering the inventory of promoted goods and products, the promoter should give the reasons to the default, and all the more explicitly, about the restricted stock and the advertisement's object to evaluate possible demand, as material. Further, customers should not be deceived by the exclusion of any relevant geographic or age-limit limitations for the promoted goods and products. Also, Section 14 of the Act provides for corrective advertisements to be ordered to neutralize the false narrative spread through false ads.<sup>9</sup>

### **Mitigation and Solutions**

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<sup>8</sup>Pushpa Girimaji, Misleading Advertisements and Consumer, Consumer Education Monograph Series 2, Centre for Consumer Studies Indian Institute Of Public Administration

<sup>9</sup> Consumer Protection Act, 2019, Act No. 35 of 2019

One of the most effective ways to mitigate the impact of false narratives and deceptive advertisements is to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills among the public. Educating individuals on how to evaluate information sources, fact-check claims, and discern credible information from falsehoods can empower them to navigate the complex information landscape. Fact-checking organizations play a crucial role in identifying and debunking false narratives. Holding individuals and organizations accountable for spreading false information is essential. Fact-checking helps to expose falsehoods and provides the public with accurate information. Governments and tech companies have a role to play in regulating the spread of false narratives and deceptive advertisements. This includes implementing policies to curb the dissemination of false information on social media platforms, enforcing existing laws against false advertising, and creating new regulations where necessary.

Promoting a culture of transparency and ethical communication is essential in both the public and private sectors. Companies should be held accountable for their advertising practices, ensuring that they do not engage in deceptive or manipulative tactics. Ethical communication can help restore trust in media and institutions.

## **Conclusion**

The impact of false narratives and advertisements is profound and pervasive. From misinformation about health to the erosion of trust in democratic processes, the consequences of falsehoods extend into nearly every aspect of modern life. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses education, regulation, accountability, and ethical communication. Only through concerted efforts can we hope to mitigate the damaging effects of false narratives and deceptive advertisements on individuals, society, and the world as a whole.

So, exhibiting false propaganda through a malafide intended advertisement causes serious repercussions on not only physical and emotional level but also at the society as a whole. The solution to this becomes a responsibility of buyer, seller, and the society to curb the display of such narrations in these advertisements.



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