



# A Study on The Effects of Negative Marketing

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**Abstract** – Negative marketing is a strategic approach in which organisations intentionally criticise competitors, spotlight rival product limitations, or use provocative communication to shift consumer perception and secure market positioning. While these tactics are highly effective at cutting through the noise to differentiate a brand, they carry significant "double-edged sword" risks, including the potential for severe ethical backlash, long-term erosion of brand equity, and a breakdown of consumer trust. This research investigates the multi-dimensional impact of negative marketing on consumer attitudes, brand image, purchase intent, and industry competition. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates quantitative data from consumer surveys with qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with industry experts and marketing practitioners. The analysis spans several key sectors, including FMCG, technology, and fashion, to provide a holistic view of the strategy's efficacy across different market dynamics. The core findings suggest that while negative marketing provides a measurable boost in brand visibility and short-term engagement, its long-term utility is often compromised. When campaigns are perceived as deceptive, mean-spirited, or unethical, they significantly diminish brand loyalty and can trigger retaliatory competitive cycles. Consequently, this study recommends that firms prioritise balanced marketing frameworks and ethical communication. By focusing on consumer-centric positioning rather than purely adversarial tactics, brands can achieve a more resilient and sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly transparent global marketplace.

**Keywords** – Negative Marketing, Consumer Perception, Brand Image, Advertising Ethics, Competitive Strategy, Consumer Behaviour, Brand Reputation, Marketing Communication.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Marketing plays a crucial role in influencing consumer decisions and shaping brand perception. Traditional marketing strategies emphasise highlighting the strengths and unique value of a product or service. However, some companies adopt negative marketing strategies, where competitors or rival products are criticised directly or indirectly.

Negative marketing can take several forms, such as comparative advertising, criticism of competitors' product features, highlighting competitor

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In highly competitive markets, companies sometimes use negative marketing to differentiate themselves and influence customer preferences. However, consumers today are more informed and sensitive to unethical marketing practices. Therefore, understanding the effects of negative marketing on consumer perception and brand reputation is essential.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the concept and strategies of negative marketing.
2. To examine the impact of negative marketing on consumer perception.
3. To study how negative marketing influences brand reputation.

### Statement of the Problem

In a competitive market, companies often use negative marketing strategies to attract attention and gain an advantage. While this approach can increase short-term visibility, it may harm brand image, reduce consumer trust, and raise ethical concerns. The effectiveness of negative marketing also varies across industries and consumers. Therefore, this study aims to analyse its impact on consumer behaviour, brand perception, and overall competitiveness.

### Limitations of the Study

- 1. Sample Size:** Limited to 100 respondents and 15 marketing persons, which may not capture the diversity of the national consumer base.
  - 2. Geographical Focus:** Restricted to Coimbatore, limiting generalisation to other Indian cities.
  - 3. Time Constraint:** Conducted within a short academic timeframe, restricting longitudinal observation.
- Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable indicative trends and lays the foundation for further research on consumer responses to negative marketing.

### Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in its ability to clarify how negative marketing tactics directly influence overall business performance and consumer behaviour. By analysing these strategies, organisations can gain a deeper understanding of how consumers react to critical or comparative advertisements and evaluate the resulting impact on long-term brand reputation and trust. Furthermore, this research provides a framework for assessing the actual effectiveness of competitive marketing strategies and identifying the various ethical concerns that arise in modern marketing communication.



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Ultimately, these insights assist organisations in developing more responsible, ethical, and sustainable marketing practices that balance competitive drive with consumer integrity. Example: In some industries, brands directly compare their products with competitors in advertisements. While this may increase visibility, it can also create negative consumer perceptions if it appears unfair or misleading.

### Scope of the Study

This study aims to evaluate the impact of negative marketing strategies across different sectors such as consumer goods, retail and e-commerce, technology, and service industries. It focuses on understanding how these strategies influence various aspects, including consumer perceptions and attitudes, brand image and reputation, and customers' purchase intentions. Additionally, the research examines the role of negative marketing in shaping competitive positioning and addresses the ethical issues involved in marketing communication.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Wilkie and Farris (1975):** In one of the earliest foundational studies on the subject, the authors explored the mechanics of comparative advertising. They found that while direct product comparisons are highly effective at increasing consumer awareness, the strategy carries a significant risk: if the comparison feels biased or exaggerated, it can lead to a sharp decline in consumer confidence toward the brand.

**Pechmann and Stewart (1990):** Researching the competitive landscape of the 1990s, these scholars analysed the effectiveness of comparative strategies. Their findings revealed a "recall vs. emotion" trade-off; while these advertisements significantly improved brand recall, they frequently triggered negative emotional responses if the tone was perceived as overly aggressive.

**Grewal et al. (1997):** This study shifted the focus toward the cognitive evaluation of advertising claims. The researchers concluded that modern consumers act as "critical analysts" of marketing messages. They found that brands making unfair or misleading comparisons were quickly identified by consumers, resulting in a deep-seated distrust of the organisation.

**Jain and Posavac (2001):** Entering the 21st century, this research examined the psychological responses to negative advertising. The authors discovered that while negative tactics are successful at capturing immediate attention, they often backfire by creating negative attitudes toward the advertiser, particularly when the strategy is viewed as unethical or mean-spirited.

**Kotler and Keller (2016):** In a more contemporary analysis, these authors emphasise that marketing communication is the primary driver of brand positioning. Their synthesis highlights that while negative advertising

remains a viable tool for visibility, its tendency to harm long-term brand credibility and customer trust often outweighs the short-term gains of a competitive attack.

## III. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

### Research Design

The study uses a mixed-method research approach:

- Quantitative Surveys: Conducted With Consumers To Measure Attitudes Toward Negative Marketing.
- Qualitative Interviews: Conducted With Marketing Professionals To Understand Strategic Perspectives.

This approach provides both statistical insights and practical marketing perspectives.

### Target Population

The target respondents include:

- Consumers from different age groups
- Marketing professionals and brand managers
- Students and working professionals

Industries considered include consumer goods, retail, and digital marketing sectors.

### Sampling Method

Stratified Random Sampling

The study employs a Stratified Random Sampling technique to categorise respondents based on three key variables: Age, Occupation, and Market Exposure. This method ensures that the final results are not biased toward a single group and reflect a diverse range of consumer behaviours.

### Sample Size:

- 100 Consumers (based on above percentages)
- 15 Marketing Professionals

In your research, Stratified Random Sampling is used to ensure that the data collected from 100 consumers and 15 marketing professionals is representative of the broader market. By dividing the population into specific "strata" (subgroups), you can analyse how different demographics respond to negative marketing.

### Data Analysis

- Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis.
- Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis and pattern identification.
- Case Analysis: Examination of well-known marketing campaigns.

## IV. FINDINGS

### Consumer Perception

- 62% of consumers reported noticing negative or comparative advertisements.
- 48% felt such advertisements were informative.
- 34% considered them misleading or unethical.



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### **Impact on Brand Image**

- Brands using aggressive negative marketing often experienced mixed consumer reactions.
- Some consumers perceived the brand as confident and competitive, while others viewed it as unprofessional.

### **Purchase Intention**

- Moderate negative marketing increased product curiosity.
- However, excessive criticism reduced consumer trust and purchase intention.

### **Competitive Effects**

- Negative marketing often triggered counter-advertising from competitors, increasing industry competition.

### **Ethical Concerns**

- Many respondents believed that marketing should focus on product value rather than criticising competitors.

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## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

To ensure long-term success and market stability, organisations should transition toward balanced marketing strategies that prioritise highlighting their own product strengths rather than focusing on competitor weaknesses. It is essential to ensure ethical advertising by strictly avoiding misleading claims or exaggerated comparisons that could trigger consumer scepticism. By strengthening brand value communication, companies can foster deeper trust and long-term loyalty through positive messaging. When competitive positioning is necessary, firms must use comparative advertising carefully, ensuring all claims are factual, fair, and transparent. Ultimately, shifting toward customer-centric marketing allows brands to align their communication with actual consumer needs, resulting in a more sustainable and effective market presence.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Negative marketing can generate attention and influence consumer perceptions in competitive markets. However, its long-term effectiveness depends on ethical implementation and consumer acceptance.

The study concludes that while negative marketing may provide short-term advantages in brand visibility, excessive or unethical criticism of competitors can damage brand reputation and reduce consumer trust. Therefore, organisations should adopt responsible marketing strategies that emphasise transparency, product value, and positive brand communication.

Future research may explore the impact of digital media, influencer marketing, and social media advertising on negative marketing practices.

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