THE IMPACT OF DECEPTIVE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MARKETING TACTICS ON TOURISTS' SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS AND TRUST AND DESTINATION IMAGE IN EMERGING MARKETS

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Abstract: While previous research has examined the impacts of discrete deceptive marketing practices, limited studies have taken a holistic perspective to understand the interconnected relationships between various deceptive tactics across different marketing mix elements and key tourist behaviors and perceptions. This represents a significant gap as the complex interlinkages shape challenges for developing tourism industries. Therefore, this study explores how deception in products, pricing, promotion, and place collectively influences tourist trust, destination image, and online reviews of Egypt. Through a survey of independent travelers, we found deception indirectly hampers tourism by eroding trust and shaping a negative overall image. This provides nuanced insights into downstream consequences by assessing diverse deceptive practices through an established marketing framework. The findings offer valuable theoretical contributions by developing a more comprehensive understanding of causal interactions between deception types and critical outcomes. It also highlights challenges for policymakers seeking to expand hospitality sectors in developing economies.

Keywords: deceptive marketing, destination image, tourist trust, emerging economy, hospitality, Egypt, social media

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INTRODUCTION

Deceptive commercial practices remain an ongoing concern, including within the hospitality sector (Fang and Xiang, 2023; Kim et al., 2023). Recently, Marriott and Hilton faced legal and financial repercussions stemming from the

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undisclosed incorporation of mandatory daily resort fees into online room rate listings (Carrns, 2019). Commonly rationalized as covering amenities, these surcharges fluctuate widely among properties and are not transparently disclosed (Wang et al., 2021). As demonstrated through resulting litigation, such obfuscated billing contravenes consumer protection statutes while undermining brand trust. Thus, deceptive marketing techniques have become a critical issue facing the hospitality and tourism industry due to their susceptibility to unethical practices (Xu et al., 2022). Particularly, misleading tactics like false advertising harm companies through reputation damage and consumers through disappointment and distrust (Kuo et al., 2015). While marketing ethics have been studied extensively, most research focuses on the marketer perspective rather than the consumer viewpoint (Li and Ma, 2023; Moon et al., 2019). However, understanding consumer opinions is vital as marketing shifts to relationship-building, elevating the importance of ethics in customer interactions. Moreover, the backlash to deception can diminish trust and damage brand image.

Due to the hospitality service sector's inherently intangible nature and hypercompetitive environment, hospitality and tourism firms face heightened vulnerability to deceptive practices that mislead consumers (Fang and Xiang, 2023; Siddiqi et al., 2020). Such tactics undermine trust, satisfaction, and repurchase intentions while diminishing the destination's reputation through poor brand perception (Kuo et al., 2015). Deception manipulates consumers through false or incomplete information across marketing channels like advertising and packaging (Cawley et al., 2013). While illegal in developed nations, the ethics of such strategies remain ambiguous in developing contexts (Misra, 2015). Regardless, deception poses multifaceted concerns for stakeholders, given issues around truth, relevance, and intent (Bhattacharya et al., 2022).

Building hospitality, consumer trust, and a positive image are paramount for destinations to mitigate risk, expand offerings, and enter new markets for financial gains (Kim et al., 2023). However, research demonstrates marketing's inherent ethics substantially impact these relationship assets. As one of the most environmentally exposed operations, marketing falls prey to unethical pressures that erode trust if left unaddressed, as the unfavorable responses to deception endanger brand reputation Li and Ma (2023). Therefore, comprehending hospitality customers' attitudes assumes renewed importance, though empirical attention remains limited compared to insights into marketer standpoints (Moon et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2022). While the prevalence of deceptive practices persists, the body of academic knowledge surrounding their causes and effects remains limited. Knani (2014) identified that comparatively little research explores ethical marketing issues within hospitality versus broader business contexts. Further, deception has received disproportionately less attention from scholars in developing countries than industrialized nations, suggesting a gap in cross-cultural understanding of its justifications and ramifications (Yaman and Gurel, 2006). Most studies also narrow their focus to examining singular components of the marketing mix instead of evaluating deception holistically across all elements (Gaber et al., 2018). Finally, although past work has begun to link deception to trust and image, further empirical investigation is still needed to elucidate these relationships more thoroughly and better comprehend deception's broader consumer and reputational impacts (Kuo et al., 2015). These substantial knowledge gaps prompt the need for additional scholarly inquiry. Therefore, this study aims to address the following key research questions:

- To what extent can deceptive practices across the entire marketing mix influence consumer trust and destination image?
- How do fluctuating levels of trust and image impact social media engagement behaviors?
- Do trust and image levels mediate deception and online communications?
- Do relationships between deception, trust/image, and communications differ according to cultural contexts like developing countries? Addressing these questions will advance academics' understanding of the scope and consequences of deception through a more holistic multi-contextual lens. Highlighting the detrimental effects on trust and image can help discourage unethical hospitality marketing.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT
1. Deceptive marketing and customer trust
Research into trust within tourism and hospitality emerged in the late 1990s (e.g., Crotts et al., 1998). Incidents of distrust erupted in these industries, such as unfair treatment from suppliers (Chang, 2012) and unfulfilled service promises from hotels (Lien et al., 2015). As a result, trust became a pivotal topic, driving further study. Trust is built on expectations of dependability, ethics, and social responsibility rather than opportunism. It also strengthens loyalty and long-term customer relationships. However, deceptive experiences undermine trust, leading consumers to seek alternatives. For example, TripAdvisor reviews detailing inaccurate room photos or misleading amenities at a resort can quickly eliminate trust in that brand. Beyond dissatisfaction, deception spawns doubt and distrust, negatively impacting repurchase intentions (Kuo et al., 2015). Deceptive online practices correlate with lower trust and satisfaction (Gaber et al., 2018). Marketing mix elements provide avenues for fraud, such as imitating prestigious brands, concealing product details, or price gouging through sham sales or arbitrary taxes (Gaber et al., 2018). Misleading promotions and non-transparent distribution tactics further erode informed choice. Studies confirm deception's trust-harming effects. Deceptive ads reduce trust (Darke and Ritchie, 2007). Ethical marketing cultivates trust, while unscrupulous practices undermine it (Kennedy et al., 2001). Witnessing deception breeds wariness (Darke and Ritchie, 2007).

The literature demonstrates the detrimental impacts of deceptive marketing practices across the four Ps of the marketing mix - product, price, promotion, and place. Deception in any element erodes consumer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty intentions while breeding scepticism and doubt. Customers expect transparency and ethical conduct from tourism suppliers. When promises go unfulfilled, or information is misleading, trust rapidly deteriorates. The downstream effects span beyond the individual encounter to damage brand reputation and destination image. Therefore, mitigating

deception across all touchpoints is imperative for tourism marketers seeking to build lasting relationships and satisfaction. This comprehensive evidence warrants investigating deception's specific influences on trust for each marketing mix component. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1-1. Product deception practices have a negative impact on consumer trust.
H1-2. Price deception practices have a negative impact on consumer trust.
H1-3. Promotional deception practices have a negative impact on consumer trust.
H1-4. Place deception practices have a negative impact on consumer trust.

2.2. Deceptive marketing and destination image

Consumers perceive deceptive marketing breeds adverse consequences like dissatisfaction, negative word-of-mouth, complaints, and switching behavior (Román, 2010), harming a destination's image. Dishonest travel blog posts misguide readers, affecting perceptions (Zehrer et al., 2011). For example, false online reviews influence impressions and destination images through unfavorable eWOM (Ahmad and Sun, 2018). Moreover, tourists use solitary unpleasant encounters to guide decisions (Kim et al., 2023), prone to adverse perspectives that jeopardize their reputation (Román, 2010). Social psychology's negativity bias explains more substantial emotional/behavioral impacts from bad versus good incidents (Nawijn and Biran, 2018). In this vein, tourists expect trouble-free vacations, requiring employee honesty to circumvent fraud (Tipton et al., 2009). Those believing services are deceptive may feel dissatisfied (Küçükergin and Dedeoğlu, 2014; Liu et al., 2019), as positive and negative emotions coexist (Hosany et al., 2016).

Desired emotional outcomes are tied to positives, while undesirable implications connect with negatives (Nawijn and Biran, 2018). In this regard, destructive emotions have longer-term negative intentions (Nawijn and Fricke, 2015) as deception reduces the perceived value (Darke and Ritchie, 2007; Tipton et al., 2009), impacting communications /products as distrust emerges toward goals/offerings (Darke and Ritchie, 2007) of the brand image (Liu et al., 2019). Therefore, emotions triggered by deception can damage the destination image through negative word-of-mouth and social signals (Hosany et al., 2016). These wide-ranging impacts endanger the destination image built on trust and satisfaction. This evidence supports the following hypotheses:

H2-1. Product deception practices have a negative impact on destination image.
H2-2. Price deception practices have a negative impact on destination image.
H2-3. Promotional deception practices have a negative impact on destination image.
H2-4. Place deception practices have a negative impact on destination image.

2.3. Customer trust and social media

Hospitality and tourism literature conceptualizes trust across two domains - organizational trust in government and tourism enterprises (e.g., Han et al., 2015) and interpersonal trust between tourists, locals, and guides (e.g., Ouyang et al., 2017). Adequate internet fraud protection bolsters confidence in online transactions. When sellers prioritize fraud prevention, buyers feel more secure purchasing virtually. However, few studies explore social media marketing's trust dynamics (Veloso et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2016). Prior works analyze vendor characteristics (Yahia et al., 2018) or image/commerce factors on social platforms (Hajli, 2015), yet trust remains pivotal for promotions via these media. Many businesses use social networks to promote products/services (Ai et al., 2022). As in traditional online contexts, trust likely determines social media purchase intentions. Successful transactions require faith in suppliers active across platforms. Consumers view social media as less credible than conventional outlets (Nadeem et al., 2015). User-generated content lacks traditional media's legitimacy. For example, a hotel promoting its amenities on Instagram must convince followers it authentically provides a luxurious experience. Organizations must exceed standards to cultivate trustworthiness in this sphere. Minor errors erode followership while enabling unfavorable opinions (Nadeem et al., 2015). Therefore, trust's importance for retention and relationships suggests:

H3. Consumer trust is linked to positive reactions on social media forms.

2.4. Destination image and social media

Information technology has evolved from a traditional marketing tool to a platform for knowledge creation and innovation in tourism (Xiang et al., 2015). Open data sharing and social knowledge on social media enabled tourism innovation while transforming communication between destinations and travelers, aided by mobile and internet advances (Song et al., 2022). Social media's interactivity allows tourists to create and share experiences on platforms like Facebook, Flickr, and WeChat. Thus, the destination image is continuously co-produced through traveler-generated content (TGC) and content from tourism organizations on social media (Mak, 2017).

Studies consistently show destination image significantly influences tourist decision-making, satisfaction, recommendations, and intentions to revisit (Agapito et al., 2013; Zuo et al., 2023). These are crucial insights for destination marketers seeking enhanced strategies, as Lo et al. (2011) found that 89% of tourists document trips, with 41% sharing images on social media. Given the intangible nature of destinations, marketers leverage image differentiation from competitors (Tsaur et al., 2016). Creating a distinctive image competes with other destinations.

Social media allows DMOs to gather consumer preferences and build brand relationships cost-effectively (Kim et al., 2014). It can also enhance brand image or perception as a must-visit place. Uner et al. (2022) argue destination branding enhances marketing and attracts visitors. Tourists act as customers and promoters for the destination (Gurung

and Goswami, 2017). Thus, social media increasingly influences destination awareness and image formation (Veloso et al., 2023). This evidence supports the following hypothesis:

H4. Destination image is linked to positive reactions on social media forms.

2.5. The mediating role of customer trust

Trust facilitates effective social media communication (Cheng et al., 2017). Ai et al. (2022) found trust fundamental in shaping online and offline social behavior. Trust may play an even more significant role in social media relationships than in traditional settings (Yoo and Gretzel, 2016). Several studies identify trust as a critical mediating factor (e.g., Vohra and Bhardwaj (2017)). Trust fosters cooperation and informed decision-making among relationship parties (Ai et al., 2022). For example, Wang et al. (2015) showed eTrust mediates the relationship between hotel website effectiveness and online booking intentions. Trust reduces consumer apprehension and motivates purchase intentions by serving as an enabler (Wang et al., 2015). Meeting customer needs engenders positive intentions like purchases (Mikalef et al., 2017). However, without trust, customers may hesitate to shop via social media. Trust and perceived ethics are intertwined.

Lack of trust hinders online expansion and development (Li and Tsai, 2022). Trust diminishes perceived risk in online stores and promotes favorable attitudes toward tourism suppliers, ultimately driving purchase intentions. In contrast, perceived marketing deception damages trust (Jadil et al., 2022). A UK study showed consumers' perceptions of retailers' ethical website practices influenced their trust, attitudes, and intentions to revisit and purchase (Limbu et al., 2011). Trust and attitude mediate the relationship between perceived ethical performance and purchase/repurchase intentions (Al-Adwan et al., 2022). This evidence suggests marketing deception negatively affects trust, vital in social media e-commerce (Veloso et al., 2023). Thus, trust likely mediates the relationship between marketing deception and outcomes. This reasoning supports the following hypotheses:

H5-1: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between marketing deception in product and social media communications forms.

H5-2: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between marketing deception in price and social media communications forms.

H5-3: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between marketing deception in promotion and social media communications forms.

H5-4: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between marketing deception in place and social media communications forms.

2.6. The mediating role of destination image

Hospitality and tourism suppliers initially utilized online marketing as a new and potentially effective communication channel for product distribution (Law et al., 2004; Veloso et al., 2023). This transformed tourist behavior and helped close the gap between customers and suppliers. In recent years, the widespread adoption of social media has catalyzed a paradigm shift in communication, information sharing, and relationship building across geographical and cultural divides (Cao et al., 2022). However, concerns about the possible negative impacts of social media on social connections have emerged alongside its popularity (Yang and Mundel, 2021). Scholars refer to individuals' interactions with social media platforms and content - such as posting, liking, commenting, sharing, and following - as social media engagement (Veloso et al., 2023). Such engagement has become critical for businesses due to its influence on brand perception, customer loyalty, and purchasing decisions (Yang and Mundel, 2022). Experts predict ad fraud will remain an issue until efficient monitoring and stronger government controls on online advertising emerge (Cao et al., 2022; Statista, 2023). Consumers have expectations about communication details, truthfulness, relevance, and clarity. The technology exploits or damages these expectations through deception (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2019).

As a communication and public relations tool, social media enables efficient dissemination of destination images and develops stakeholder relationships (Song et al., 2022). Numerous studies suggest social media interactions between consumers and suppliers shape destination branding and identification. Destination image positively impacts supplier-consumer relationships, increasing credibility and loyalty (Salamzadeh et al., 2022). Scholars increasingly recognize the importance of destination branding, as destination image positively influences tourism (Zuo et al., 2023). Social media shapes destination image and is a valuable tool for destination marketing organizations, though its use is often limited or underutilized (Mariani et al., 2016). More substantial efforts may be needed to attract and retain brand community members through social media (Luo and Zhong, 2015).

Drawing from destination brand image and social media marketing, we posit that the overall image associated with a destination acts as an intermediary construct through which deception in marketing communications shapes subsequent outcomes. Specifically, when consumers detect discrepancies suggestive of deceit in product, pricing, promotional, or place-related marketing, this can gradually deteriorate the favorable image built up in their minds regarding the destination (Akhtar et al., 2019). This diminished image results in less favorable communications on social media platforms. Therefore, we hypothesize the following mediating effects of the destination image:

H6-1: Destination image mediates the relationship between marketing deception in product and social media communications forms.

H6-2: Destination image mediates the relationship between marketing deception in price and social media communications forms.

H6-3: Destination image mediates the relationship between marketing deception in promotion and social media communications forms.

H6-4: Destination image mediates the relationship between marketing deception in place and social media communications forms.
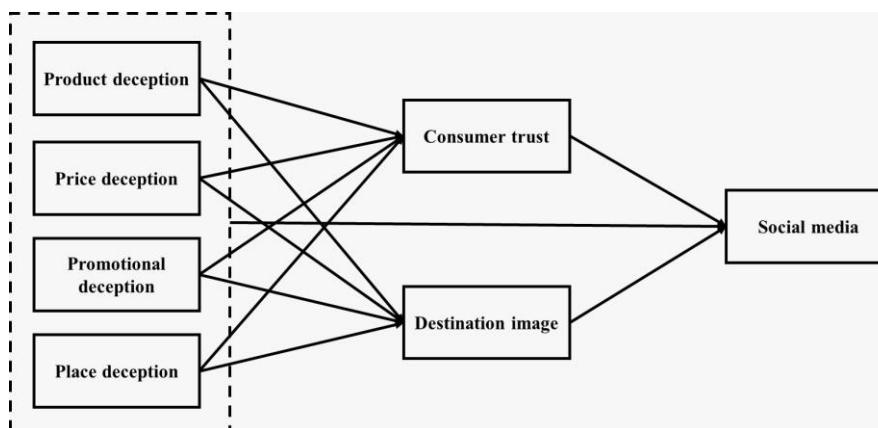

Figure 1. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Measures

This study examines four dimensions of deception within the marketing mix as predictor variables. Deceptive practices relating to place, pricing, products, and promotion will be evaluated as potential determinants of critical outcomes. Specifically, place, pricing, product, and promotion deception are implemented as independent variables. Tourists' usage of social media is also investigated as a dependent variable. Tourist trust in service providers and overall destination image are considered mediator variables. This study investigates the impacts of deceptive practices in tourism services on critical tourist perceptions and behaviors. Drawing from marketing literature, it adapts validated measures of deceptive pricing (Chandon et al., 2000), product (Darke and Ritchie, 2007), promotion (Xie and Peng, 2009), and place (Chan and Wong, 2006) practices as predictors of tourists' trust in Egyptian service providers, overall destination image, and satisfaction. The attached survey scales are adapted from prior studies measuring tourist trust, destination image (e.g., Chen and Tsai, 2007), and satisfaction (Hosany et al., 2016).

The usage of social media for reviews and sharing travel experiences is tested as a moderator of the effects of deceptive practices. This research aims to quantify the destructive impacts of deceptive tactics on critical tourist perceptions and behaviors. A more holistic understanding of tactics' collective imprint emerges by examining multiple deception dimensions simultaneously. This comprehensive approach addresses the limitations of isolated examinations that preclude interactions between mixed elements. While permitting experienced dissemination, they simultaneously concentrate on reputational exposures necessitating strategic vigilance. The integrated predictive model and moderation analysis advance theory by offering a systems-level perspective of the damage caused by deception. Practically, generating empirical proof of undesirable outcomes underscores the self-defeating nature of such practices.

2. Data collection and the study context

This study analyzes deceptive practices tourists face within Egypt's pivotal hospitality sector. As an emerging economy reliant on travel and tourism, the Egyptian hospitality industry, particularly, has struggled with such tactics that undermine development (Tomazos, 2017). Political and economic transformations have challenged hospitality service delivery and reputation management (Salem et al., 2021). Egyptian hospitality businesses also navigate a regulatory environment that is still maturing compared to advanced markets (Elbanna et al., 2015). Cultural influences further define relationships within Egyptian hospitality and how deception occurs and resonates (Eid et al., 2020). Examining deception in the Egyptian context offers the industry insights into addressing unethical behaviors amid volatility crucial for hospitality. Collectivism also shapes deceptive interpretations and consequences for hospitality, customer loyalty and word-of-mouth versus individualist settings. Tailored solutions can be proposed by sourcing primary data within Egypt's deception-susceptible yet tourism-reliant hospitality sector. Findings will guide Egyptian hospitality stakeholders in shedding light on tourism's economic importance through restoring confidence in upholding integrity (Tomazos, 2017). Better comprehending deception trajectories despite dynamic transitions cultivate balanced hospitality growth.

A pilot study was conducted with 35 students in Egypt to test the survey instrument. This enabled the assessment of question clarity and initial scale reliability. The results supported full distribution to tourists through Egyptian tourism agents' networks and online channels. Respondents were screened to target relevant international tourists who visited Egypt independently within the past year and used social media during their visit. Additional criteria were age 18 or older and utilizing hospitality services such as hotels and restaurants. After filtering out incomplete responses, the final sample was 375 surveys with an 85% response rate. This sampling approach ensured respondents had relevant, recent experience with Egyptian tourism services to provide insights into deceptive practices and their impacts.

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3. Data analysis

The current study tested the hypothesized model utilizing partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) path analysis conducted with SmartPLS 4 software. IBM SPSS Statistics 24.0 was used for preliminary descriptive analysis. PLS-SEM was selected for this study for several reasons. First, it facilitates simultaneous assessment of the relationships between constructs in the inner model and the associations between constructs and their corresponding latent indicators in the outer model. Second, PLS-SEM is appropriate for complex research models, particularly mediation and moderation. Third, PLS provides a more user-friendly graphical interface than other path modelling software like AMOS. Fourth, PLS-SEM is a reliable component-based approach extensively utilized in prior studies (Hair et al., 2019). This method follows a two-step process; the validity and reliability of the measurement (outer) model are first examined, then the structural (inner) model is evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships (Hair et al., 2019).

RESULTS
1. Sample profile analysis

The demographic profile of the 375 survey respondents can be described as follows (Table 1): Males made up the majority at 64.8% of respondents compared to 35.2% females. Most respondents (71.5%) were under 25 years of age, with limited representation from older tourists as only 7.7% were aged 40 or above. Over 60% of respondents had a university education, suggesting a relatively high level of education among most participants. However, 27.2% had only secondary education or less, capturing some less educated perspectives. In summary, the sample skewed towards younger males with university degrees, while viewpoints from older tourists and those with lower education levels were underrepresented. The imbalanced demographic profile should be considered regarding the generalizability of the findings.

Table 1. Sample profile

Research sample variables		Sample	
		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	243	**64.8**
	Female	132	**35.2**
	Total	375	**100%**
Age range	less than 25 years	268	**71.5**
	25 and less than 40	76	**20.3**
	40 and less than 55	24	**6.4**
	55 and more	7	**1.9**
	Total	375	**100%**
Education Level	Without secondary	20	**5.3**
	secondary	82	**21.9**
	University education	231	**61.6**
	Master's / PhD	42	**11.2**
	Total	**375**	**100%**

2. Psychometric characteristics of the measurement model

Before hypothesis testing, a measurement (outer) model was developed and evaluated. Since PLS-SEM employs a different SEM approach than CB-SEM, fit indices commonly used in CB-SEM are either unavailable or not recommended (Hair et al., 2019). Based on Hair et al. (2019), model fit in PLS-SEM can be assessed by applying the following criteria: "factor loadings" (λ) should exceed 0.70, "Cronbach's alpha" (α) and "composite reliability" (CR) should surpass 0.70 for "internal consistency reliability," and "average variance extracted" (AVE) should be higher than 0.50 for "convergent validity" (CV). Adequate convergent validity indicates that the indicators of a construct converge or share a high proportion of variance (Hair et al., 2019). As shown in Table 2, the factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, and CR values all exceed 0.70, demonstrating satisfactory internal consistency reliability. Additionally, the AVE values surpass 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity of the outer model. For "discriminant validity" (DV), each construct's AVE should be greater than its highest squared correlation with any other construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) (Table 4). This indicates that constructs are empirically distinct. Furthermore, given various criticisms of Fornell and Larcker's criterion, scholars have proposed examining the "heterotrait-monotrait ratio" (HTMT) of correlations to assess DV more rigorously (Table 5). HTMT values below 0.90 imply satisfactory discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). As shown in Table 4 and Table 5, the AVEs and HTMT values confirm adequate discriminant validity of the outer model.

3. Structural model and hypothesis tests

A structural model must be assessed using the VIF, R2, Q2, and path coefficients because PLS-SEM does not have the global fit indices that CB-SEM provides, such as CFI, TLI, and RMSEA (Hair et al., 2019). For the possibility of "multi-collinearity" among constructs to be avoided, inner VIFs should be <5.0 for items, R2 of 0.20 or more is a highly suitable cut-off in behavioral research, and similarly, the Q2 should also meet the recommended point of 0.0 (Hair et al., 2019) Click or tap here to enter text.. All criteria in Table 6 prove that the structural model fits the data.

Further, Tenenhaus et al. (2005) indicated that the ensuing equation was employed to assess the Goodness of Fit (GoF) of the PLS-SEM model, and values of 0.1, 0.25, and 0.36, respectively, represent a low, medium, and high GoF. The GoF of the suggested model is 0.445, indicating a high GoF index.

$$\text{GoF} = \sqrt{AVE_{avy} \times R^2_{avy}}$$

Table 2. The measurement model statistics

Items	λ	Mean	SD
Product Deceptive (a=0.873, CR = 0.885, AVE = 0.527)			
Product_1	0.778	4.642	0.575
Product_2	0.846	4.450	0.59
Product_3	0.731	4.500	0.638
Product_4	0.740	4.340	0.768
Product_5	0.734	4.242	0.825
Product_6	0.605	4.155	0.824
Product_7	0.616	4.148	0.858
Price Deceptive (a=0.791, CR = 0.866, AVE = 0.620)			
Price_1	0.834	4.623	0.679
Price_2	0.876	4.547	0.689
Price_3	0.744	4.528	0.742
Price_4	0.679	4.396	0.832
Promotion Deceptive (a=0.712, CR = 0.821, AVE = 0.536)			
Promotion_1	0.787	4.075	0.908
Promotion_2	0.759	4.453	0.715
Promotion_3	0.638	4.321	0.842
Promotion_4	0.735	4.151	0.899
Place Deceptive (a=0.844, CR = 0.896, AVE = 0.683)			
Place_1	0.749	4.283	0.855
Place_2	0.837	4.189	0.891
Place_3	0.887	4.283	0.81
Place_4	0.827	4.396	0.809
Customer trust (a=0.931, CR = 0.951, AVE = 0.828)			
Trust_1	0.921	2.925	1.372
Trust_2	0.928	2.877	1.226
Trust_3	0.872	2.623	1.153
Trust_4	0.916	2.836	1.263
Destination image (a=0.909, CR = 0.943, AVE = 0.846)			
Image_1	0.920	3.264	1.291
Image_2	0.952	3.472	1.435
Image_3	0.886	3.415	1.295
Social Media (a=0.957, CR = 0.961, AVE = 0.658)			
Media_1	0.847	3.981	1.019
Media_2	0.810	3.84	0.998
Media_3	0.793	3.701	1.059
Media_4	0.848	3.874	1.068
Media_5	0.842	3.969	1.04
Media_6	0.867	3.802	1.056
Media_7	0.818	3.695	1.118
Media_8	0.860	3.871	1.046
Media_9	0.806	3.698	1.077
Media_10	0.818	3.528	1.137
Media_11	0.753	3.830	1.059
Media_12	0.726	3.660	1.148
Media_13	0.740	3.755	1.114

Note: a= "Cronbach's alpha"; λ = "factor loading"; CR = "composite reliability"; AVE = "average variance extracted"

Table 3. Cross Loadings

	Product Deceptive	Pricing Deceptive	Promotion Deceptive	Place Deceptive	Customer Trust	Destination image	Social Media
Product_1	**0.778**	0.396	0.004	0.051	-0.257	-0.224	-0.217
Product_2	**0.846**	0.344	0.180	-0.080	-0.279	-0.300	-0.212
Product_3	**0.731**	0.152	-0.005	-0.150	-0.081	-0.133	-0.040
Product_4	**0.740**	0.191	0.261	0.115	-0.230	-0.176	-0.008
Product_5	**0.734**	0.163	0.148	-0.019	-0.075	-0.079	-0.033
Product_6	**0.605**	0.096	0.164	-0.089	-0.027	-0.076	-0.036
Product_7	**0.616**	0.153	0.185	-0.041	-0.032	-0.111	-0.056
Price_1	0.289	**0.834**	0.331	0.077	-0.278	-0.225	0.074
Price_2	0.350	**0.876**	0.220	-0.021	-0.371	-0.242	0.034
Price_3	0.151	**0.744**	0.330	0.012	-0.349	-0.316	-0.001
Price_4	0.328	**0.679**	0.515	0.003	-0.221	-0.335	-0.026
Promotion_1	0.270	0.282	**0.787**	0.357	-0.316	-0.429	-0.110
Promotion_2	-0.018	0.411	**0.759**	0.201	-0.241	-0.290	0.034
Promotion_3	-0.003	0.264	**0.638**	0.062	-0.245	-0.342	0.008
Promotion_4	0.196	0.347	**0.735**	0.205	-0.289	-0.426	-0.135

Place_1	-0.054	0.009	0.243	**0.749**	-0.229	-0.237	-0.128
Place_2	-0.079	0.110	0.386	**0.837**	-0.239	-0.307	-0.042
Place_3	-0.044	-0.005	0.248	**0.887**	-0.313	-0.304	-0.154
Place_4	0.117	-0.047	0.103	**0.827**	-0.244	-0.317	-0.297
Trust_1	-0.159	-0.301	-0.369	-0.323	**0.921**	0.705	0.392
Trust_2	-0.301	-0.394	-0.367	-0.195	**0.928**	0.729	0.465
Trust_3	-0.247	-0.412	-0.309	-0.338	**0.872**	0.727	0.419
Trust_4	-0.237	-0.319	-0.330	-0.281	**0.916**	0.701	0.408
Image_1	-0.266	-0.345	-0.442	-0.344	0.739	**0.920**	0.484
Image_2	-0.260	-0.375	-0.543	-0.351	0.787	**0.952**	0.414
Image_3	-0.193	-0.262	-0.441	-0.276	0.637	**0.886**	0.388
Media_1	-0.160	-0.108	-0.274	-0.174	0.482	0.469	**0.847**
Media_2	0.033	0.076	-0.056	-0.159	0.343	0.389	**0.810**
Media_3	-0.228	-0.081	-0.205	-0.206	0.451	0.435	**0.793**
Media_4	-0.228	0.069	-0.037	-0.049	0.266	0.389	**0.848**
Media_5	-0.123	0.118	-0.056	-0.135	0.328	0.405	**0.842**
Media_6	-0.101	0.025	-0.021	-0.292	0.495	0.423	**0.867**
Media_7	-0.230	-0.067	-0.141	-0.084	0.456	0.361	**0.818**
Media_8	-0.079	0.032	-0.005	-0.269	0.379	0.428	**0.860**
Media_9	-0.141	0.078	-0.019	-0.229	0.446	0.328	**0.806**
Media_10	-0.067	0.083	-0.032	-0.022	0.271	0.289	**0.818**
Media_11	-0.127	0.058	0.098	0.003	0.284	0.383	**0.753**
Media_12	-0.099	0.120	0.137	-0.132	0.110	0.198	**0.726**
Media_13	-0.107	-0.014	-0.041	-0.132	0.320	0.268	**0.740**

Table 4. Fornell–Larcker criterion matrix

	Customer Trust	Destination image	Place Deceptive	Pricing Deceptive	Product Deceptive	Promotion Deceptive	Social Media
Customer Trust	**0.910**						
Destination image	0.788	**0.920**					
Place Deceptive	-0.312	-0.354	**0.826**				
Pricing Deceptive	-0.395	-0.359	0.019	**0.787**			
Product Deceptive	-0.262	-0.263	-0.016	0.351	**0.726**		
Promotion Deceptive	-0.378	-0.518	0.294	0.440	0.175	**0.732**	
Social Media	0.464	0.467	-0.190	0.024	-0.161	-0.083	**0.811**

Note: "Values off the diagonal-line are squared inter-construct-correlations, while values on the diagonal-line are AVEs"

Table 5. HTMT Matrix

	Customer Trust	Destination image	Place Deceptive	Pricing Deceptive	Product Deceptive	Promotion Deceptive	Social Media
Customer Trust							
Destination image	0.851						
Place Deceptive	0.351	0.400					
Pricing Deceptive	0.449	0.416	0.125				
Product Deceptive	0.233	0.231	0.145	0.346			
Promotion Deceptive	0.458	0.629	0.386	0.602	0.303		
Social Media	0.464	0.483	0.232	0.125	0.171	0.201	

Note: "For appropriate DV, all HTMT are below 0.90"

Table 6. VIF, R2, and Q2 results

Items	VIF	Items	VIF	Items	VIF	Items	VIF	Items	VIF
Product_1	1.771	Price_3	1.358	Place_4	1.922	Media_2	3.346	Media_11	2.671
Product_2	2.031	Price_4	1.283	Trust_1	3.952	Media_3	3.924	Media_12	3.155
Product_3	1.891	Promotion_1	1.453	Trust_2	4.770	Media_4	4.232	Media_13	2.538
Product_4	1.817	Promotion_2	1.690	Trust_3	2.649	Media_5	4.445		
Product_5	3.002	Promotion_3	1.445	Trust_4	4.750	Media_6	4.578		
Product_6	4.993	Promotion_4	1.422	Image_1	3.234	Media_7	4.119		
Product_7	4.480	Place_1	1.577	Image_2	4.460	Media_8	4.148		
Price_1	2.894	Place_2	1.972	Image_3	2.669	Media_9	3.350		
Price_2	3.170	Place_3	2.425	Media_1	4.103	Media_10	4.640		
Customer trust				**R2**	0.286	**Q2**	0.232		
Destination image				**R2**	0.365	**Q2**	0.304		
Social Media				**R2**	0.243	**Q2**	0.148		

The "Standardized Root Mean Square Residual" (SRMR) was also tested to prove the structure model's validity. SRMR > 0.1 is acceptable (Hu and Bentler, 1998). Our model's SRMR value is 0.098, representing a good model fit. We tested the provided hypotheses for the study, as indicated in Table 7, after demonstrating the validity of the outer and inner models.

Table 7. Hypotheses testing

| The hypothesis	β	t	p	Decision
Direct Paths				
H1-1: Product Deceptive → Customer Trust	-0.143	2.776	0.006	"Supported"
H1-2: Product Deceptive → Destination image	-0.154	3.074	0.002	"Supported"
H2-1: Pricing Deceptive → Customer Trust	-0.271	5.295	0.000	"Supported"
H2-2: Pricing Deceptive → Destination image	-0.144	3.472	0.001	"Supported"
H3-1: Promotion Deceptive → Customer Trust	-0.156	3.350	0.001	"Supported"
H3-2: Promotion Deceptive → Destination image	-0.354	7.931	0.000	"Supported"
H4-1: Place Deceptive → Customer Trust	-0.263	6.382	0.000	"Supported"
H4-2: Place Deceptive → Destination image	-0.250	4.742	0.000	"Supported"
H5: Customer Trust → Social Media	0.253	4.331	0.000	"Supported"
H6: Destination image → Social Media	0.268	3.915	0.000	"Supported"
Indirect mediating Paths				
H6:Product Deceptive -> Customer Trust -> Social Media	-0.036	2.050	0.041	"Supported"
H7:Product Deceptive -> Destination image -> Social Media	-0.041	2.724	0.007	"Supported"
H8:Pricing Deceptive -> Customer Trust -> Social Media	-0.069	3.576	0.000	"Supported"
H9:Pricing Deceptive -> Destination image -> Social Media	-0.039	2.295	0.022	"Supported"
H10: Promotion Deceptive -> Customer Trust -> Social Media	-0.040	2.844	0.005	"Supported"
H11: Promotion Deceptive -> Destination image -> Social Media	-0.095	3.274	0.001	"Supported"
H12: Place Deceptive -> Customer Trust -> Social Media	-0.067	3.693	0.000	"Supported"
H13: Place Deceptive -> Destination image -> Social Media	-0.067	2.817	0.005	"Supported"
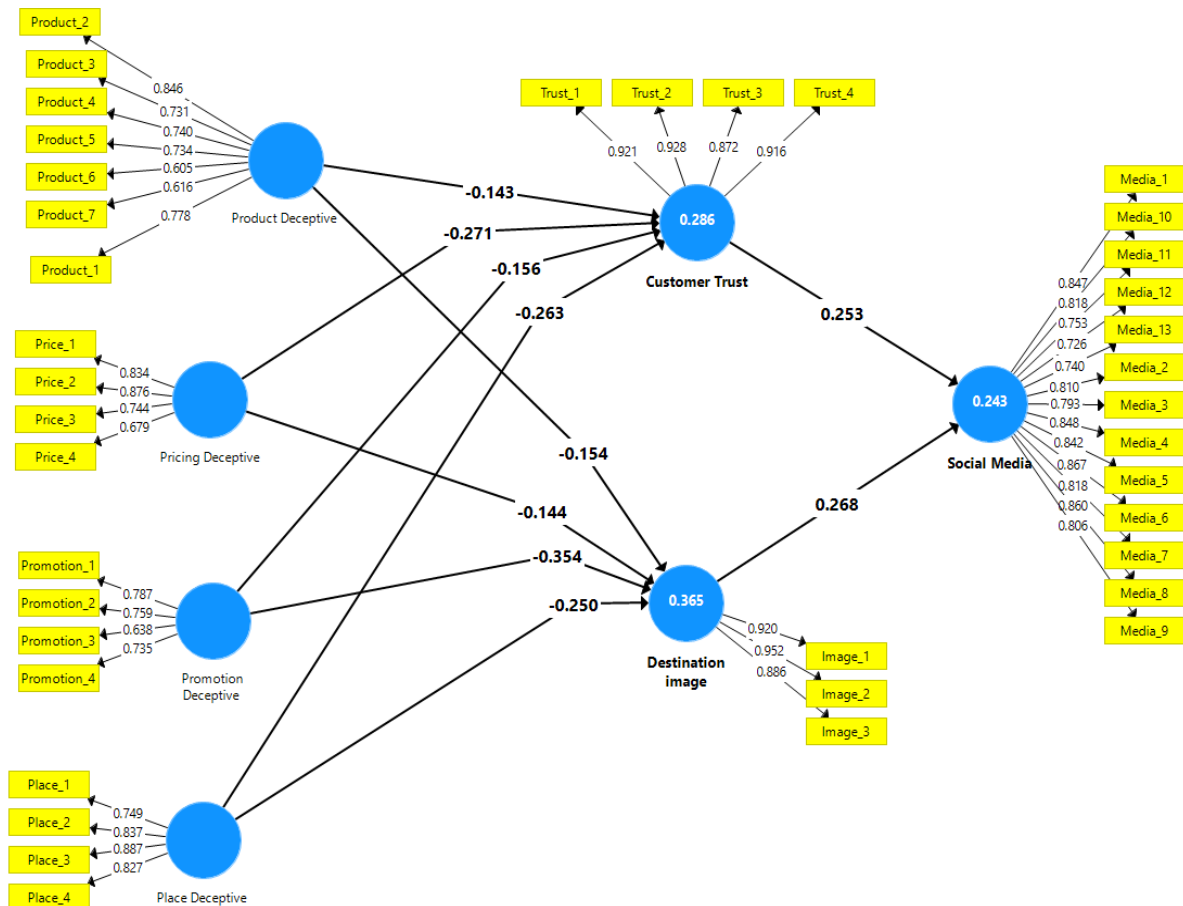
Figure 2. Estimation of structure model

The findings in Table 7 and Figure 2 demonstrate that the product deceptive had a negative impact on customer trust (β =-0.143, t = 2.776, p<0.001) and destination image (β = -0.154, t = 3.074, p< 0.002); thus, H1-1 and H1-2 were supported. The results also showed that deceptive pricing negatively affected customer trust at β = -0.271, t=5.295, p < 0.000, and destination image (β = -0.144, t = 3.472, p< 0.001), confirming H2-1 and H2-2. Similarly, promotion deceptive negatively influences customer trust (β =-0.156, t = 3.350, p<0.001) and destination image (β = -0.354, t = 7.931, p< 0.002); thus, H3-1 and H3-2 were supported. The results showed that place deception had a negative impact on customer trust (β =-0.263, t = 6.382, p<0.000) and destination image (β = -0.250, t = 4.742, p< 0.000), thus supporting H4-1 and H4-2.

The findings demonstrated that customer trust and destination image positively affect social media at β = 0.253, t = 4.331, p< 0.000, and at β = 0.268, t = 3.915, p< 0.000, respectively; thus, H5 and H6 were supported. Additionally,

customer trust mediated the influence of product deception on social media (β = -0.036, t = 2.050, p< 0.041), pricing deceptive on social media (β = -0.069, t = 3.576, p< 0.000), promotion deceptive on social media (β = -0.040, t = 2.844, p< 0.005), and place deceptive on social media (β = -0.067, t = 3.693, p< 0.000), Supporting H6, H8, H10, and H12. While destination image mediated the influence of product deception on social media (β = -0.041, t = 2.724, p< 0.007), pricing deceptive on social media (β = -0.039, t = 2.295, p< 0.022), promotion deceptive on social media (β = -0.095, t = 3.274, p< 0.001), and place deceptive on social media (β = -0.067, t = 2.817, p< 0.005), Supporting H7, H9, H11, and H13.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results reveal that when customers perceive deceptiveness in how destinations market their products and services, this significantly damages their trust in that destination. For example, a study by Kuo et al. (2015) found that hotel website photos that exaggerate or misrepresent the quality of rooms undermine customer trust after they notice the discrepancy upon arrival. The findings also demonstrate that deceptive marketing practices negatively impact customers' overall image of a destination. Even small deceptions in promotional ads or brochures can gradually deteriorate the positive image that a destination has tried to build over many years (Uner et al., 2022). This underscores the importance of transparency and truthfulness in all marketing communications to maintain a strong brand image (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2019). In addition to deteriorating trust and image, the analysis shows deceptive marketing indirectly harms word-of-mouth assessments on social media platforms. Dissatisfied customers who have lost trust due to deception are more likely to spread negative opinions, reviews, and ratings online after encountering deceptiveness (Li and Ma, 2023). This can rapidly spiral through social networks and seriously damage a destination's reputation, as evidenced in a study of fake hospitality reviews (Wang et al., 2021).

The results suggest destination marketing deceptiveness has detrimental downstream ripple effects: initial deception detection erodes trust (Siddiqi et al., 2020), the loss of trust then diminishes favorable image associations (Moon et al., 2019), and this, in turn, manifests in less positive social media evaluations and electronic word-of-mouth (Fang and Xiang, 2023). Collectively, the findings serve as a stark warning of the counterproductive outcomes of using deceptive marketing tactics merely to gain short-term visibility (Kim et al., 2023). The results demonstrate that customer trust is a crucial intermediary mechanism through which destination marketing deceptiveness impacts social media assessments (Xu et al., 2022). When product information is misleading, it damages trust, and in turn, this lowered trust leads to more negative social media evaluations. Similarly, deceptive pricing, promotions, and place marketing indirectly shape social media ratings by first eroding customer trust (Al-Adwan et al., 2022). Beyond trust, destination image emerges as a pivotal mediator (Jadil et al., 2022). Deceptiveness in products, pricing, promotions, and place marketing all indirectly influence social media evaluations by first degrading the overall image of the destination in customers' minds. Social media ratings suffer as the favorable image weakens due to detected deceit (Veloso et al., 2023). Taken together, these findings on mediation effects underscore the vital buffering roles that customer trust and destination image play in the chain reaction set off by marketing deceptiveness (Cao et al., 2022). These intangible assets deteriorate directly and indirectly, translating the negative impacts of deceit further down the line into unfavorable word-of-mouth (Song et al., 2022). The results powerfully demonstrate the upstream importance of maintaining authenticity in all marketing practices to preserve trust, image, and online reputation (Yang and Mundel, 2021).

1. Theoretical contribution

This study makes several vital theoretical contributions. First, it comprehensively examines deceptive practices across the entire marketing mix in hospitality and their impact on tourist perceptions and behaviors. Prior studies have predominantly focused on isolated elements like price or promotion deception. By integrating diverse fraudulent tactics from products to physical evidence, this research provides a holistic perspective on how combinations of practices holistically damage trust and destination image (Fang and Xiang, 2023; Kim et al., 2023). Second, the Egyptian context offers novel insights into these dynamics within an emerging economy's tourism-reliant hospitality sector compared to developed markets (Wang et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2022). Findings demonstrate how deception manifests distinctly in developing nations based on cultural factors and regulation (Kuo et al., 2015; Li and Ma, 2023), contributing to understanding of Egypt's industry given political transformations and economic reliance on travel (Elbanna et al., 2015; Tomazos, 2017). Third, this study addresses unresolved questions regarding relationships between deception, trust, image, and digital sharing. Results reveal trust and image mediate between deceptive practices and online engagement, advancing theoretical models (Al-Adwan et al., 2022; Li and Tsai, 2022). Moreover, cultural contexts shape deception's indirect effects through differential impacts on relationship assets (Jadil et al., 2022). Integrating diverse tactics, the Egyptian setting, behaviors, and local nuances comprehensively advance understanding of this multifaceted phenomenon's systemic outcomes (Cao et al., 2022; Veloso et al., 2023). The proposed integrative model of deceptive marketing's consequences opens avenues for future research (Song et al., 2022; Yang and Mundel, 2021).

2. Practical implications

The results of this study suggest several implications for hospitality practice within emerging economies like Egypt. Given the demonstrated damage of multifaceted deception to trust and destination image, policies are needed to increase oversight and regulation of deceptive marketing tactics. Standards should encompass pricing transparency, accuracy in promotion, and product quality verifications. Training programs can educate tourism marketers on ethical practices and build awareness of the detrimental impacts of deception. The findings also indicate a need to monitor online communications and proactively address negative reviews stemming from perceived deception. Responding quickly and sincerely to rebuild trust is advisable. Marketing campaigns could leverage cultural values of generosity and hospitality to

counteract distrust. The results carry notable implications for hospitality managers. Findings showed how inflated product claims (e.g., exaggerating a hotel's amenities) diminished trust and image. Management must enforce accountability to avoid deception. For example, inspecting rooms quarterly ensures advertised facilities like pools and gyms are adequately stocked and functional. Moreover, unpredictable pricing, such as surprising customers with undisclosed resort fees, also reduced perceptions. Hoteliers should mandate upfront transparency of all obligatory charges. For instance, listing parking, wifi, and amenity costs on booking websites prevents distress later. Unrealistic promotional promises, like incorrectly hyping an attraction's opening hours, similarly impacted relationships. Additionally, promotions now require validation before distribution. For example, verifying an event venue's availability for promoted dates avoids planning disruptions. Obscured location attributes, like failing to disclose a remote property's distance from attractions, further eroded reputation. Also, place disclosures need standardization. For instance, uniformly integrated maps indicating proximity to critical landmarks allow informed selections. Beyond addressing individual issues, emphasizing trust as a core value through ongoing staff education and lead-by-example modelling will optimally restore integrity to strengthen community ties.

3. The study limitation and future research

While this study has made valuable contributions in theory and practice, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations that indicate areas for further investigation. First, the focus on a single country's context, specifically the Egyptian hospitality industry, limits the generalizability of the findings. Comparative analyses across different cultural and developmental settings should be conducted to address this. Exploring other sectors within the tourism industry may also provide additional insights.

Second, by considering factors such as travel motivations or past experiences, we could obtain more nuanced perspectives on the effects of deception. Third, this study primarily examined perceived deception through self-reported survey responses, but incorporating objective behavioral and qualitative methods would complement these self-administered perspectives.

To overcome these limitations, future research should consider extending the sample periods, employing international sampling frames, incorporating new moderators, and using mixed research designs. Doing so can enhance our comprehensive understanding of this significant phenomenon across diverse scenarios. Replicating and expanding upon this study will contribute to the responsible development of the tourism industry, leading to sustained prosperity.

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