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Consumer Protection in Advertising of the Future in the Context of Economic Instability

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Abstract: The aim of the research is to analyze the evolving landscape of advertising in the context of economic instability. The authors focused to achieve the following research objectives: to explain the effect of economic instability upon deceptive advertising practices; to outline future advertising technologies; to describe the potential improvements of consumer rights protection regulations; and to reveal the role of social media in shaping advertising practices. The research included a sample size of 123 respondents from different regions of Ukraine (Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv, Poltava, Dnipro). The data was collected through online questionnaire and face-to-face interviews between January and June, 2022. Data analysis was carried out through quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings showed that economic instability is characterized by introduction a number of deceptive advertising practices. They include: false advertising, bait-and-switch, hidden fees, misrepresentation of endorsement, false comparison, manipulative visuals, deceptive comparison, and false sense of urgency. There are ten advertising technologies that will be widely used in the future: augmented reality, virtual reality, artificial intelligence personalization, 3D holographic advertisements, voice-activated ads, neuromarketing analytics, smart wearable integration, interactive digital billboards, Internet of Things, and emotionally responsive ads. According to the research, enhancement of consumer rights regulation requires flexibility, increased consumer protection, transparency, support for vulnerable customers, consumer education, data protection, interagency collaboration, alternative dispute resolution, long-term focus, and assessment of the regulation impact. The authors outlined the measures that may contribute to protection of consumer rights on social media (increased awareness, real-time monitoring and response, control over misinformation or scams, consumer education, prioritizing consumer protection reforms, creation of consumer advocacy groups). The outcomes can be implied for the development of effective regulations considering future advertising practices to protect consumers. Besides, the outcomes can be used for the designing of consumer education program to train individuals to navigate the rapidly evolving economic environment.

Keywords: amendment, compensation, consumer education, deceptive advertising, ethics, legislation, manipulation.

Introduction

Today, global economic conditions are marked by significant instability due to a number of factors such as geopolitical tensions, inflationary pressures, and volatile financial markets (Nicola et al., 2020). The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought supply chain disruptions and labor shortages, while rising interest rates and fluctuating commodity prices contribute to economic uncertainty. Ongoing trade disputes and geopolitical conflicts, such as the war in Ukraine, further destabilize economies by affecting global trade and investment flows (Mbah & Wasum, 2022). This environment of unpredictability poses some challenges for businesses, and they may increase in future due to rapid technological changes, globalization, and financial crises. These conditions lead the difficulty of maintaining business ethics since the digital environment is full of opportunities for misinformation and manipulation (Svabova et al., 2020). At the same time, the ease of creating and disseminating content online can lead to deceptive practices, such as exaggerated claims or misleading advertisements (Cheng, 2020). The dynamic nature of digital platforms also presents some problems related to preservation of ethical standards, investment in transparency, and continuous adaptation of business ethical practices to the evolving digital landscape.

Obviously, guiding conduct and decision-making within companies requires the implementation of ethical business practices (Gheraia, Saadaoui, & Abdelli, 2019). Since business ethics aligns with moral principles and societal expectations, it helps establish a framework for responsible behavior, fostering trust and credibility with customers, employees, and other stakeholders. Ethical business practices help companies build and maintain positive reputations, attract and retain customers, and increase loyalty among stakeholders (Cheng, 2020). Business ethics reflects the diverse and dynamic nature of global business practices and ethical expectations vary widely across different cultures, industries, and regions, requiring companies to navigate a complex pattern of local and international norms. During the periods of economic instability, such as recessions or financial crises, ethical behavior becomes even more important (Svabova et al., 2020). Companies adhering to strong ethical standards are likely to make more reasonable decisions, avoid risky practices, and establish greater trust among investors, customers, and employees. Ethical business conduct actually contributes to stabilization of markets by ensuring transparency.

Ethical advertising involves presenting accurate information about products and services, avoiding deceptive practices, and respecting consumers' privacy (Shabbir et al., 2019). It also helps prevent the exploitation of vulnerable populations and ensures that marketing messages are not manipulative, thereby contributing to a fair market. Moreover, business ethics in advertising support compliance with legal standards and industry regulations designed to protect consumers (Cheng, 2020). Ethical practices include disclosing any potential conflicts of interest, being transparent about sponsored content, and avoiding exaggeration or false claims about products (Lee & Jin, 2019). These ethical guidelines not only help companies avoid legal consequences but also promotes a field where businesses compete based on the true merits. In a digital age where information spreads rapidly, maintaining ethical standards in advertising is essential for upholding trust, fostering consumers' loyalty, and achieving sustainable business success.

Therefore, the topic of protection of consumer rights is essential for ensuring that individuals are treated fairly in the market and are safeguarded against fraud (Cheng, 2020). Consumer rights protection is an important area of a functioning economy, fostering trust between buyers and sellers. When consumers feel secure in their transactions, they are more likely to engage in commerce, which stimulates economic growth and innovation. Understanding the issues related to consumer rights helps identify systemic challenges and regulatory gaps that might leave consumers vulnerable to deceptive practices, unsafe products, or unfair terms. Also, the recent findings prove that studying consumer rights protection problems contributes to social justice by advocating for the vulnerable populations who are often affected by unfair practices (Lee & Jin, 2019). It ensures that all consumers, regardless of their socio-economic status, have access to safe, reliable products and services, and that they are equipped with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions. This field of study also supports the development of accurate legal frameworks and consumer education programs, empowering individuals to assert their rights and seek compensation when necessary. Definitely, a thorough examination of these issues helps create a more transparent and accountable market, leading to a fair and inclusive society.

Research Problem

The legislative framework for the protection of consumer rights in Ukraine is based on several acts regulating the relationship between consumers and producers, sellers or service providers. The main legislative act is the Law of Ukraine "On the Protection of Consumer Rights", adopted on May 12, 1991, which was repeatedly amended and supplemented to take into account new realities and market challenges (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1991). This law defines the basic rights of consumers, the obligations of producers and sellers, mechanisms for protecting consumer rights, as well as responsibility for the violation of these rights. In addition to this law, the protection of consumer rights is also regulated by other regulatory acts, in particular the Civil Code of Ukraine (2003), the Economic Code of Ukraine (2003) and a number of specialized laws, such as the Law of Ukraine "On Advertising" (1996), the Law of Ukraine "On State Market Supervision and Control of Non-Food Products" (2010) and others (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1996; Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2010). Bodies involved in the protection of consumer rights include the State Service of Ukraine for Food Safety and Consumer Protection, as well as the court system, which considers disputes between consumers and business entities. Public organizations that provide advice to consumers and help protect their rights also play an important role (Chyzhov, 2021).

The protection of consumer rights in today's dynamic market refers to different research in economic, social, and legal fields (Howells, 2020). A number of topics include consumer rights and e-commerce, which focuses on challenges and protections for online shoppers, and data privacy and protection, ensuring consumer data is secured in the digital age (Rösner, Haucap, & Heimeshoff, 2020). Product safety standards and fair pricing were studied by Ruohonen (2022). False advertising and misleading claims are areas where legal frameworks play an important role in preventing deceptive marketing practices (Muela-Molina, Perelló-Oliver, & García-Arranz, 2021). At the same time, some works were devoted to consumer education and awareness programs empowering individuals with knowledge of their rights, and mechanisms for access to compensation and dispute resolution (Makanyeza et al., 2021). Other essential areas include sustainable and ethical consumerism, counterfeit goods and intellectual property rights (Muehlfeld & Wang, 2022), consumer rights in healthcare services (Muela-Molina et al., 2021), and telecommunication services and consumer rights (Bisping & Dodsworth, 2019).

When it comes to advertising, the focus of investigation shifts to analyzing truthfulness, transparency, and ethical standards in the messages consumers receive (Makanyeza et al., 2021). Muela-

Molina, Perelló-Oliver, and García-Arranz (2021) studied the regulation of false advertising and explained it as a fundamental practice, preventing misleading advertisements. Comparative advertising rules were the topic of researches of del Barrio-García, Muñoz-Leiva, and Golden (2020). The protection against subliminal advertising and the regulation of hidden messages in ads were described by Kyrylenko (2021). Some scholars paid the attention towards the influence of social media influencers on advertising standards (Maslowska, Ohme, & Segijn, 2021; Yousef, Dietrich, & Rundle-Thiele, 2021). Protection of children's right in advertising was described by Verdoodt (2019). At the same time, a number of findings were devoted to health and wellness advertising which must be truthful, avoiding deceptive claims about health-related products and services (Muela-Molina et al., 2021). Teona, Ko, and Kim (2020) stated that environmental claims in advertising require verification to prevent greenwashing. Furthermore, regulations for advertising of financial products were outlined by Dogra and Sharma (2019). Besides, certain studies evaluated the impact of startup technology innovations on customer participation, value co-creation, and consumer purchase behavior (Ebrahimi et al., 2022).

In this context, Ukrainian scholars oriented towards studying legal regulations of the consumer protection with regard to Ukraine's obligation of adaptation to the EU legislation (Holovko-Havrysheva, 2020) and the creation of an institute of financial ombudsman as a guarantee of effective customers rights` protection in Ukraine (Horbova et al., 2019; Khanyk-Pospolitak, 2019). Yanyshen (2019) investigated legal principles protection of consumer rights of financial services in details and Mangora (2021) described the mechanism of legal regulation of state protection of consumer rights in Ukraine. Administrative and legal bases of consumer rights protection on the Internet was revealed in the recent findings of Ukrainian authors (Padalka et al., 2019; Shymon et al., 2020). At the same time, some sources determined consumer perception of the brand on the basis of a large number of factors, including personal and psychological factors (Vartanova & Korol, 2021).

Research Focus

When analysing the characteristics and trends of protection of consumer rights in the advertising of the future in conditions of economic instability, the research focused, firstly, on the effect of economic instability on deceptive advertising practices because economic downturns often create an environment where consumers are more vulnerable due to financial stress and uncertainty (Ghosh, 2022). Businesses may apply deceptive advertising to maintain revenue, leveraging consumers' anxieties and reduced purchasing power (Cheng, 2020). Secondly, it is necessary to study the key characteristics of future advertising technologies since these technologies may potentially shape how advertisements are created, targeted, and delivered (Hoffman et al., 2021). Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and advanced data analytics are able to enhance advertising effectiveness (Lee & Cho, 2019) but also pose new risks for consumer manipulation and privacy (Yun et al., 2020). Thirdly, based on the literature sources analysis, it was found that studying the adaptation of regulatory frameworks is important to address the risks of new advertising technologies effectively. Some scientific works prove that traditional regulations may be insufficient to overcome all the complexities introduced by emerging technologies (Hoffman et al., 2021). As advertising evolves with advancements such as AI-driven targeting, immersive media, and real-time data collection, these new technologies amplify risks like invasive data practices, targeted misinformation, and algorithmic manipulation (Hoyer et al., 2020; Lee & Cho, 2019). The given research is to explain that this adaptation is an important factor to maintain fair advertising practices and safeguarding consumer rights. And, fourthly, considering the role of social media platforms and influencers, a number of works are oriented towards the examination of their contribution to mitigation of deceptive practices, and development of various strategies to ensure that consumer rights are protected (Maslowska et al., 2021; Yousef et al., 2021). As a result, it is essential to create effective regulations and protections regarding the unique challenges posed by social media and influencer-driven marketing. Therefore, the study requires to conduct a systemic analysis of these aspects to present the comprehensive picture of protection of consumer rights in the advertising where the particular attention is paid towards the future conditions of economic instability.

Research Aim and Research Questions

The *aim of this research* is to analyze the evolving landscape of advertising in the context of economic instability, identify emerging risks to consumer rights, and propose effective measures to safeguard these rights in the future. At the same time, the authors focused to answer the following *research questions*:

1) How does economic instability affect the frequency and types of deceptive advertising practices?

2) What are the key characteristics of future advertising technologies, and how might they challenge existing consumer protection regulations during economic instability?

3) How can regulatory frameworks be adapted to effectively address the risks posed by new advertising technologies and practices in unstable economic conditions?

4) What role do social media platforms and influencers play in shaping advertising practices, and how can their influence be regulated to protect consumer rights during economic instability?

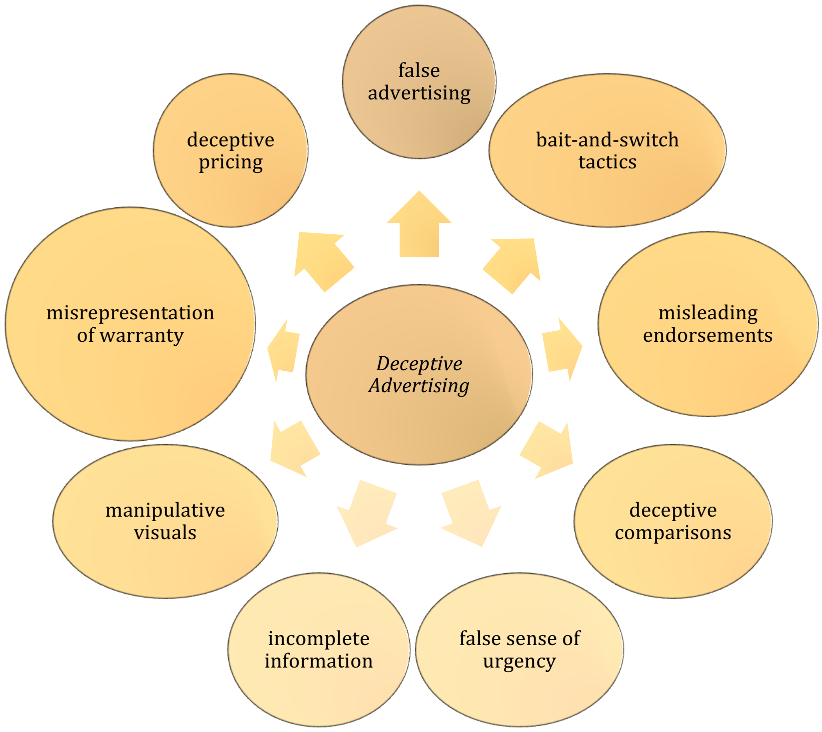
Addressing these research questions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and solutions related to consumer rights protection in the advertising of the future in conditions of economic instability.

Literature Review

Deceptive advertising practices refer to marketing strategies that deceive consumers by presenting false, exaggerated, or misleading information about products or services (Cheng, 2020; Ukaegbu, 2020). These practices aim to manipulate consumer perceptions and influence purchasing decisions by providing an inaccurate representation of the product's features, benefits, or pricing. Deceptive advertising undermines consumer trust and leads to financial harm, as individuals may make purchasing decisions based on misinformation (Ukaegbu, 2020). Examples include false claims about product effectiveness, hidden fees, and misleading endorsements, all of which compromise the integrity of advertising and the fairness of the marketplace. Deceptive advertising practices is represented by several types, including false advertising (Muela-Molina et al., 2021), bait-and-switch tactics (Herweg & Rosato, 2020), and misleading endorsements (Karagür et al., 2022). False advertising involves making unsubstantiated claims about a product's benefits or effectiveness, such as exaggerated performance claims (Muela-Molina et al., 2021). Bait-and-switch tactics occur when consumers are enticed with a low-priced offer but are then pressured to purchase a more expensive item (Herweg & Rosato, 2020). Misleading endorsements involve using testimonials or endorsements that are not genuine or are selectively presented to create a false impression of the product (Karagür et al., 2022). Some scholars differentiate the following: deceptive comparisons (Ukaegbu, 2020), false sense of urgency (Hussian et al., 2021), incomplete information and manipulative visuals (Sanak-Kosmowska & Wiktor, 2020). Some findings indicate deceptive pricing and misrepresentation of warranty as types of deceptive advertising practices (Caled & Silva, 2022). Each of them undermines consumer rights and highlights the importance of accurate regulatory frameworks to combat such tactics effectively. Figure 1 represents the types of deceptive advertising practices violating consumer rights.

Figure 1

Types of Deceptive Advertising Practices



Source: Author's development

A number of works were devoted to future advertising technologies (Hoffman et al., 2021; Lee & Cho, 2019). It was found that they are characterized by advanced personalization and targeting capabilities driven by AI and machine learning (Lee & Cho, 2019). These technologies may analyze vast amounts of data from various sources, including browsing history, social media interactions, and purchase behavior, to create highly personalized advertisements tailored to individual consumers' preferences and needs (Boerman, Kruikemeier, & Bol, 2021). AI-driven algorithms predict consumer behavior and preferences with increasing accuracy, enabling advertisers to deliver relevant content at the right time and place (Lee & Cho, 2019). This level of personalization may make advertising more efficient and effective, but it also raises significant concerns about privacy and data security. Another characteristic of future advertising technologies is the integration of immersive experiences through AR and virtual reality (VR) (Alcañiz, Bigné, & Guixeres, 2019). AR and VR enable advertisers to create interactive and engaging experiences that allow consumers to visualize products in their own environment or explore virtual worlds. It was found that in the future advertising will integrate with the Internet of Things (IoT) and smart devices (Tariq et al., 2020). IoT allows advertisements to be incorporated into everyday devices, such as smart refrigerators, wearables, and home assistants, providing contextually relevant ads based on real-time data. This integration contributes to the creation of new opportunities for advertisers to reach consumers in innovative ways, but it also necessitates careful consideration of user consent and data privacy.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that with the rise of voice-activated devices and virtual assistants like Google Assistant, voice search optimization can become a critical component of advertising strategies (Canziani & MacSween, 2021). Davenport, Guha, Grewal, and Bressgott (2020) state that automated, data-driven ad buying becomes even more sophisticated, enabling precise targeting and optimization of advertisement placements in real-time. Future ads will increasingly feature interactive elements that engage consumers directly (Dwivedi et al., 2021). This includes shoppable videos, gamified content, and interactive infographics that encourage user participation and enhance the overall advertising experience. Obviously, these characteristics can reshape the advertising industry, driving more personalized, engaging, and ethical advertising practices that align with the evolving expectations of consumers in a technologically advanced world.

According to some recent findings, future advertising technologies may enhance the protection of consumers' rights by promoting greater transparency and personalization (Bleier, Goldfarb, & Tucker, 2020). AI and machine learning algorithms analyze vast amounts of data to deliver highly relevant and personalized advertisements, ensuring that consumers receive information tailored to their specific needs and preferences (Boerman et al., 2021). This increased relevance can lead to more informed purchasing decisions and reduce the likelihood of consumers being misled by irrelevant or deceptive advertising. Additionally, blockchain technology provides a fixed record of advertising transactions, allowing consumers to verify the authenticity and origin of advertisements (Lemos et al., 2022). This transparency can help combat fraudulent practices and ensure that consumers are not subjected to false information.

To address the challenges posed by advanced advertising tactics, several amendments should be introduced into consumer rights protection legislation. These amendments were described in recent findings and the authors focus on transparency, data privacy, ethical use of AI, and clear mechanisms for compensation (Rodrigues, 2020). Besides, Matnuh (2021) explains that suggested amendments include strengthening enforcement mechanisms and increasing penalties for companies found guilty of violating consumer protection laws through deceptive advertising or unethical use of data. The special attention is drawn towards consumer education (Makanyeza et al., 2021; Nyland & Tran, 2019). It was found that investment in public awareness campaigns to educate consumers about their rights related to data privacy and advertising is important condition of sucessful business. Some outcomes stressed on the importance of corporate training on ethical advertising practices and compliance with consumer protection laws (Ahmed et al., 2019).

Currently, the scholars investigate the role that social media platforms and influencers play in shaping modern advertising practices (Maslowska et al., 2021). Tariq, Taimoor, Najam, Law, Hassan, and Han (2020) prove that the interactive nature of social media allows for real-time feedback and engagement, fostering a two-way communication channel between brands and consumers that traditional advertising mediums cannot match. Some works are devoted to deceptive advertising practices on social media (Domenico et al., 2021; Muela-Molina et al., 2021; Ukaegbu, 2020). These practices use the interactive and engaging nature of social media platforms to manipulate consumer perceptions and behaviors. For example, exaggerated benefits, hidden sponsored content, undisclosed sponsorships, and camouflaged advertisements are often used on social media. These authors also explained the violation of consumer rights through collecting and using consumer data without proper consent or through deceptive means, microtargeting exploits, and deepfakes. Definitely, these practices lead to significant financial and emotional harm of consumers. As social media continues to be a dominant advertising platform, it is important for regulatory bodies to enforce accurate guidelines and for consumers to remain aware in identifying deceptive advertising.

Materials and Methods

The study was based on three methodological approaches (regulatory theory (Auxtova, Brennan, & Dunne, 2021), behavioral and ethical approaches (Lee & Jin, 2019; Mpinganjira & Maduku, (2019)) to analyze the complex interconnection between advertising practices, consumer rights, and economic conditions. Regulatory theory enabled to examine the role of laws, regulations, and policies in protecting consumer rights. The researchers analyzed the existing consumer protection legislation, assessed their effectiveness in current economic conditions, and proposed improvements for future scenarios. Behavioral approach helped explore how consumers make decisions and how they are influenced by deceptive advertising practices, particularly during economic instability. This approach contributed to explanation how economic downturns impact consumer behavior and their attitudes to deceptive advertising. Behavioral approach became the basis for conducting the experiments to observe consumer behavior in controlled environments as well. At the same time, ethical approach outlined the moral principles and ethical considerations involved in advertising and consumer rights protection. Applying this approach, the study was aimed at evaluation of the ethical implications of advertising practices and development of ethical guidelines for future advertising in unstable economic conditions. Analysis of specific cases of ethical violations in advertising enabled to provide the fundamentals for the moral responsibilities of advertisers and regulators which can be incorporated into the Ukrainian legislation. These three methodological approaches described brought a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in protecting consumer rights in the evolving landscape of advertising, especially under conditions of economic instability. Each approach offers unique instruments of data collection and analysis during the research.

The use of methodological approached were aimed at the achievement of expected outcomes. Firstly, the effect of economic instability upon the frequency and types of deceptive advertising practices was presented. The results were used to predict the negative impact of deceptive advertising practices upon consumer rights and prepare business to economic instability. Secondly, the key characteristics of future advertising technologies were outlined. Further, the authors explained the measures needed to improve the existing consumer protection regulations during economic instability. Here, the special attention was paid towards considering various advertising technologies, their positive and negative impact upon consumer behavior. Thirdly, the peculiarities and trends of adaptation of regulatory frameworks were revealed to address the risks posed by new advertising technologies. Besides, the recommendations for policymakers were given. And fourthly, the role of social media platforms and influencers in shaping advertising practices was described and the authors investigated the steps used to regulate to protect consumer rights during economic instability.

Sample and Participants

The study involved a diverse sample of the Ukrainian population related to the field of protection of consumer rights such as consumers (43,9 %), civil servants or regulators (9,8 %), employees of advertising agencies (5,7 %), legal experts (4,9 %), economists (3,2 %), social media influencers (8,1 %), business representatives (14,6 %), and media analysts (9,8 %). Besides, the population differed in age, gender, education level, professional background, and geographic location to show a comprehensive picture of the problem protection of consumer rights in advertising in the Ukrainian context. The research included a sample size of 123 respondents from different regions of Ukraine (Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv, Poltava, Dnipro). Researchers select the population using systemic sampling method on the basis of the sampling interval (k = 12). The sample size (n) was calculated by dividing the total population size (N = 1476) by sampling interval (k):

$$n = \frac{N}{k}$$

Table 1 shows the populations according to the categories and their contribution to the research.

Table 1

The Study Population

Category	Contribution	Number
Consumers	Participated in surveys and interviews to demonstrate their perceptions and behaviors; Reported examples of misleading or deceptive advertising	54
Civil servants	Offered information about the existing regulatory frameworks and their effectiveness; Provided the data on regulatory actions taken against deceptive advertising practices.	12

Employees of advertising agencies	Shared information about current advertising practices and emerging trends; Provided case studies on successful and unsuccessful advertising campaigns.	7
Legal experts	Conducted legal analyses of consumer protection laws and their application to advertising; Provided expert opinions and recommendations for improving legal frameworks.	6
Economists	Analyzed the relationship between economic instability and efficiency of protection of consumer rights.	4
Social media influencers	Shared their experience on advertising and consumer engagement on social media platforms.	10
Business representatives	Offered perspectives on how consumer protection laws impact their advertising practices; Provided data on industry-specific advertising challenges and solutions.	18
Media analysts	Analyzed the role of media in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors; Provided the information on effectiveness of different communication strategies in advertising; Offered recommendations on how to strengthen protection of consumer rights through improvement of transparency and honesty in advertising.	12
	TOTALLY	123

Source: Author's development

Instruments and Procedures

The data was collected through online questionnaire and face-to-face interviews between January and June 2022. The questionnaire included the sections related to consumer rights awareness, perception of advertising and experience of misleading advertisements, consumer response and effectiveness of complaint mechanism, impact of misleading advertising, including financial loss and psychological effect, social media advertising, and suggestions for improvement. The form used a mix of question types, including multiple-choice, Likert scales, and open-ended questions to capture a range of responses. Face-to-face interview was conducted using open-ended questions to encourage participants to share their thoughts freely. The researchers used prompts and follow-up questions to study specific areas in details. The interviews were recorder with the participant's consent for further accurate data collection. Post-interview process included the transcription of conversations to capture participants' words and meaning.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out through two groups of methods – quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative methods statistically analyzed the data to identify patterns and trends related to protection of consumer rights and advertising tactics. Also, importantly, quantitative analysis allowed for generalizations across larger populations and helped in drawing objective conclusions based on measurable data. In contrast, qualitative data analysis focused on exploring the depth and complexity of consumer experiences and perceptions related to deceptive advertising practices. This approach provided rich, contextual information how consumers interpreted their rights, responded to misleading advertisements, and engaged with consumer protection mechanisms in unstable economic conditions. While qualitative analysis did not offer statistical generalizability, it uncovers the subjective aspects of consumer protection that quantitative methods may disregard.

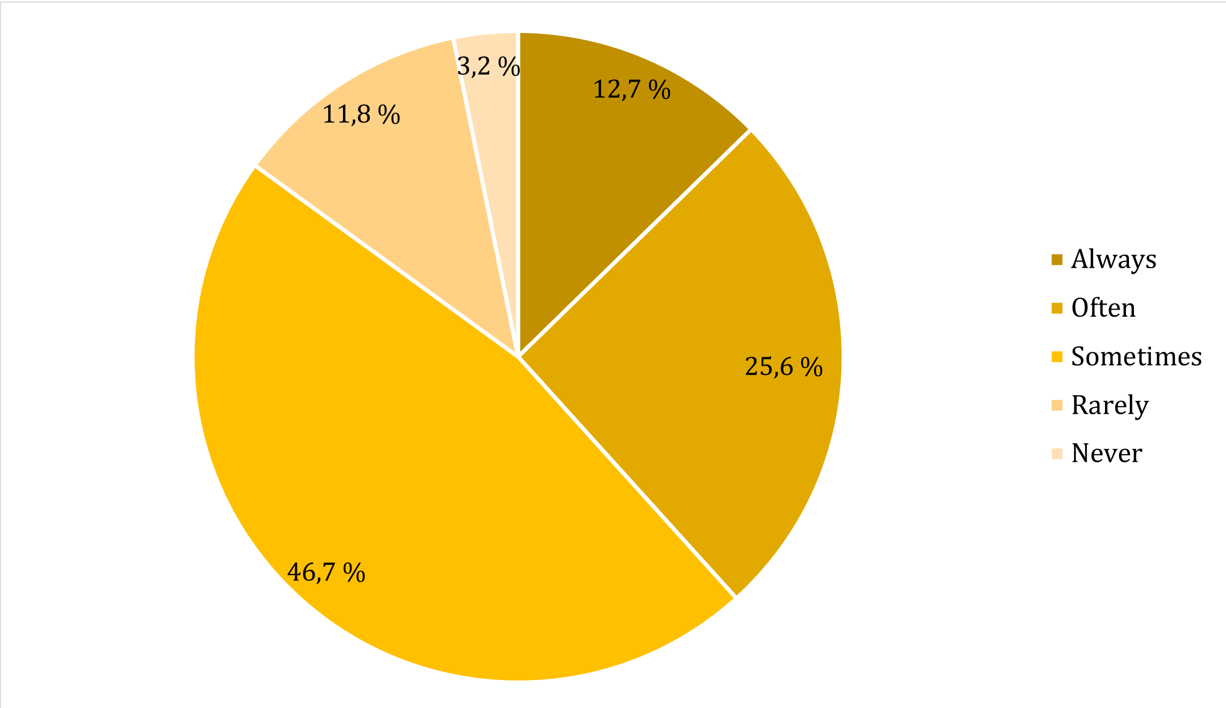
Results

Impact of economic instability on the frequency and types of deceptive advertising practices

The findings showed that consumers quite frequently encounter deceptive advertising, where companies use misleading claims, exaggerated benefits, or hidden information to manipulate consumer perceptions. Participants explained that the rise of digital marketing and social media has further amplified the reach and impact of deceptive advertising, making it more challenging for consumers to differentiate truth from manipulation. Therefore, 25,6 % of respondents stated that they often identified deceptive advertising practices. 46,7 % of individuals admitted that sometimes they faced deceptive advertising. At the same time, only 3,2 % of people never encountered misleading in advertisements. This proved the topicality of the deceptive advertising practices and its impact upon protection of consumer rights. Figure 2 presents the frequency of deceptive advertising practices according to survey participants.

Figure 2

Frequency of Deceptive Advertising Practices

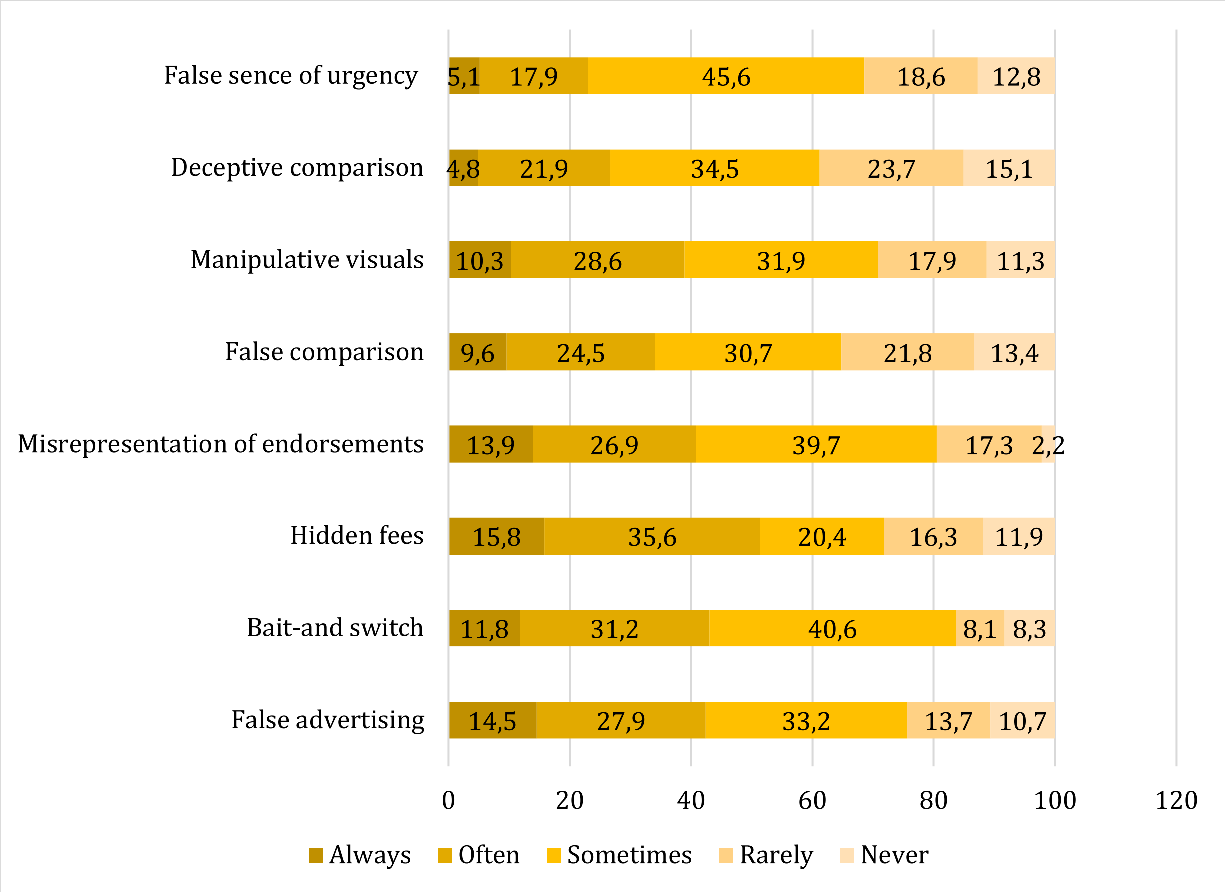


Source: Author's development

Also, the study was oriented towards the analysis of types of deceptive advertising practices which lead to make consumers uninformed or incorrect purchasing decisions. The researchers revealed eight key deceptive advertising practices: false advertising, bait-and-switch, hidden fees, misrepresentation of endorsement, false comparison, manipulative visuals, deceptive comparison, and false sense of urgency. According to respondents, hidden fees (35,6 %), bait-and-switch (31,2 %), and false advertising (27,9 %) are faced most often. Participants admitted that stating it has features or benefits that it does not possess, exaggerating the original price to make the discount seem larger, trying to sell them a more expensive product once they are in the store or on the website are the most common techniques used by sellers and they violate consumer rights since they harm consumers by leading them to make purchases based on inaccurate or incomplete information, and the use of these advertising practices is often regulated by consumer protection laws. Figure 3 shows the types of deceptive advertising practices according to respondents.

Figure 3

Types of Deceptive Advertising Practices



Source: Author's development

Future advertising technologies and their impact upon the existing consumer rights protection regulations

The results enabled to outline 10 key technologies that can be potentially widely used in the future. These technologies include: (1) AR advertisement; (2) VR advertisement; (3) AI personalization; (4) 3D holographic advertisements; (5) Voice-activated ads; (6) Neuromarketing analytics; (7) Smart wearable integration; (8) Interactive digital billboards; (9) IoT integration; (10) Emotionally responsive ads. The technologies described are based on digital information and allow consumers to interact with products in fully virtual environment or suggest using deep learning algorithms to create highly personalized content based on individual user preferences, behaviors, and data. These qualities require improvement in the existing consumer protection regulations. The findings revealed that they must concern stricter data protection regulations, consumer consent, regulation of advertisement content, ethical use of data, content accuracy, consumer education and support, regulation of presence in public spaces, establishment of ethical standards, improved security standards to counteract cyberattacks, and prohibition to use emotional manipulation, particularly for vulnerable population. Table 2 shows the impact of future advertising technologies upon consumer rights protection regulation.

Table 2

Impact of Advertising Technologies upon Consumer Rights Protection Regulations

Future advertising technologies	Impact upon the existing consumer protection regulations
AR advertisement	Transparency and disclosure requirements; Stricter data protection regulations; Consumer consent; Regulation of in-app purchases.

VR advertisement	Updating the existing regulations to ensure clear and conspicuous disclosures in VR environments; Transparent data collection; Regulation of VR content; Anti-discrimination laws.
AI personalization	Stricter data protection regulations; Studying the unique ways in which AI is used to deceive consumers; Harmonization of legislation.
3D holographic advertisements	Regulation of placement and intensity of holographic ads; Making holographic content inclusive.
Voice-activated ads	Monitoring how the platforms use voice data and how they implement advertising policies.
Neuromarketing analytics	Data privacy Informed concern; Establishment of ethical standards;
Smart wearable integration	Attention to consumers' health concerns; Consumer education and support; Ethical use of data.
Interactive digital billboards	Content accuracy; Regulation on presence in public spaces; Information about data collection practices.
IoT integration	Privacy and data security; Data ownership control; Improved security standards to counteract cyberattacks.
Emotionally responsive ads	Informed consent; Providing clear information on how data is gathered and used; Prohibition to use emotional manipulation.

Source: Author's development

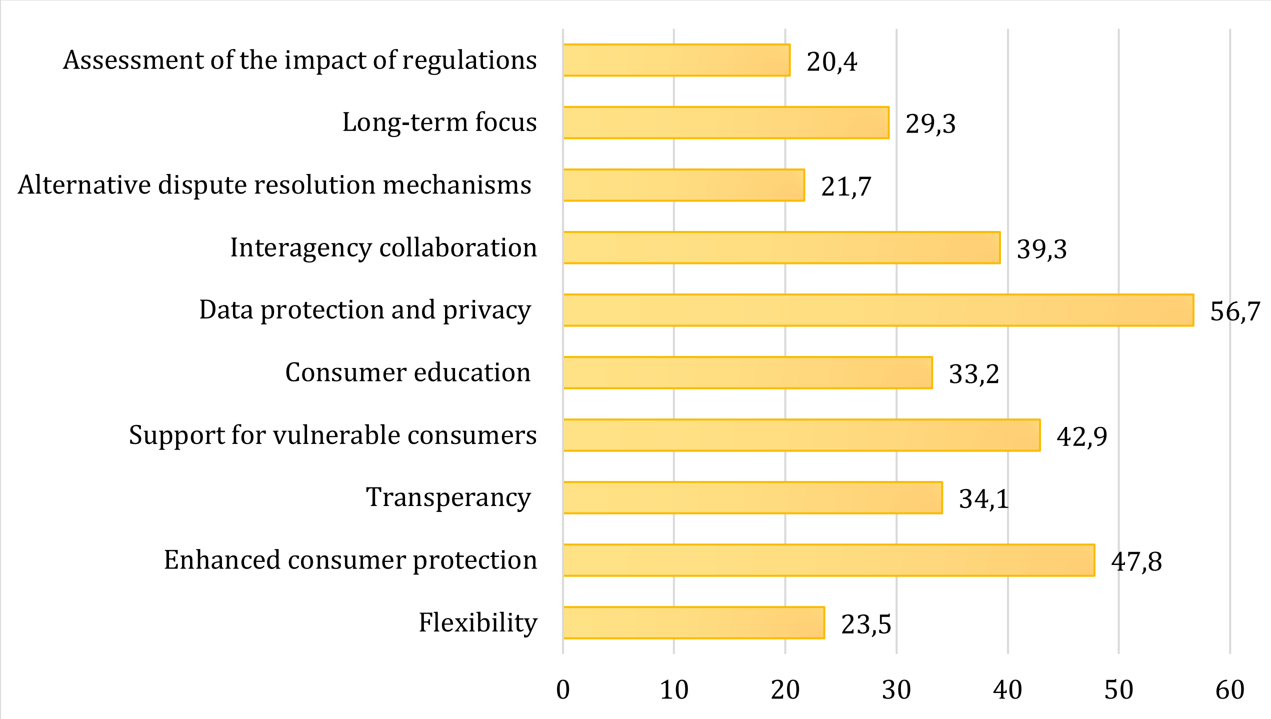
Improvements of regulatory frameworks in unstable economic conditions

The findings proved that unstable economic conditions require improving consumer rights regulatory frameworks. Participants were asked about possible measures to enhance consumer rights regulation and they described the following: flexibility (23,5 %), enhanced consumer protection (47,8 %), transparency (34,1 %), support for vulnerable customers (42,9 %), consumer education (33,2 %), data protection and privacy (56,7 %), interagency collaboration (39,3 %), alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (21,7 %), long-term focus (29,3 %), and assessment of the impact of regulation (20,4 %). Figure 4 shows possible improvements of consumer rights protection regulations.

Flexibility is related to adaptive regulations that can be quickly adapted to changing economic conditions, allowing for swift updates to consumer protection laws as needed. At the same time, it establishes mechanisms for proactive consumer protection, such as monitoring for emerging issues and implementing effective instruments to mitigate risks before they escalate. Enhanced consumer protection concern reinforcement of safeguards to protect consumers from unfair practices, fraud, and exploitation, particularly in sectors most affected by economic instability. Also, it deals with the development of temporary regulatory measures to address specific consumer vulnerabilities during economic crises. Transparency is considered to define as clear and accurate explanation of information about consumer rights, particularly during economic disruptions. Support for vulnerable consumers is provided for specific consumer groups who may be disproportionately affected by economic instability, such as low-income individuals, the elderly, or those with disabilities. Participants admitted that consumer education is important since its helps inform consumers about their rights and how to protect themselves during economic instability.

Figure 4

Possible Improvements of Consumer Rights Protection Regulations



Source: Author's development

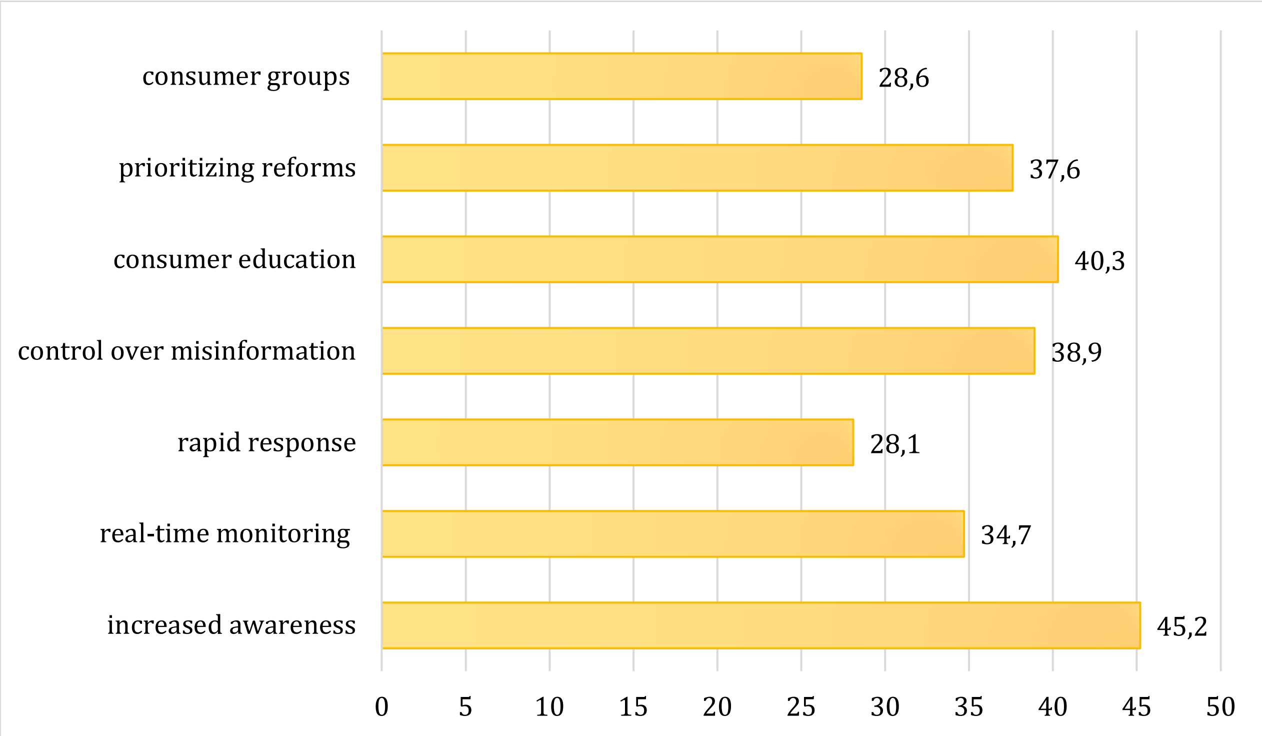
Strengthening regulations related to data protection and privacy is important to safeguard consumer information, particularly as digital transactions and online interactions increase during economic crises. These provisions, according to respondents, may ensure that consumers have control over their personal data and are informed about how their information is used, shared, and protected. The findings showed that fostering collaboration between consumer protection agencies, regulatory bodies, and other relevant organizations helps solve complex consumer issues and share information. Besides, work with international counterparts contribute to improvement of consumer rights legislation as well. Other improvement includes the implementation of alternative dispute resolution, such as mediation or arbitration, to resolve consumer disputes efficiently and fairly. Here, various digital platforms can be used that makes it easier for consumers to seek compensation. Focus on long-term ensures that consumer rights regulations remain effective in both stable and unstable economic conditions. At the same time, regular assessment of the impact of regulations on consumer rights helps make necessary adjustments to address evolving economic and technological landscapes.

Role of social media in shaping advertising practices and their influence on consumer protection regulations during economic instability

The study demonstrated that social media has a profound influence on consumer protection regulations, especially during periods of economic instability. Participants agreed that the dynamics of social media highlights the need for stronger regulations. As a result, the following measures must be taken: increased awareness, real-time monitoring and response, control over misinformation or scams, consumer education, prioritizing consumer protection reforms, creation of consumer advocacy groups to mobilize public support quickly and effectively. The findings showed that social media significantly impacts consumer protection regulations during economic instability. While it offers opportunities for greater transparency and rapid response, it also presents challenges in regulation and enforcement, particularly in combating misinformation. Therefore, social media acts as both a catalyst for regulatory change and a platform for consumer education during times of economic uncertainty. Figure 5 gives the information on the role of social media in shaping advertising practices and their influence on consumer protection regulations during economic instability.

Figure 5

Measures to be Implemented in Consumer Rights Protection Regulations under the Effect of Social Media



Source: Author's development

Therefore, the study on protection of consumer rights in the advertising of the future in conditions of economic instability demonstrated the significance of the topic and outlined the main improvements should be implemented in consumer rights regulations in the Ukrainian context. The results presented the role of deceptive advertising and analyzed the types of deceptive advertising practices affecting protection of consumer rights.

Discussion

According to the analysis of scientific sources, it was found that economic instability refers to a situation where an economy experiences significant disruptions that lead to uncertainty and unpredictability in economic conditions (Nicola et al., 2020). This instability manifests in various forms, including volatile inflation rates, high unemployment, rapid changes in currency value, financial market turbulence, or a sudden contraction in economic activity (Sun & Wang, 2021). Economic instability is characterized by introduction a number of deceptive advertising practices that manipulate consumer perceptions and influence their purchasing decisions in unstable conditions (Ukaegbu, 2020). Studying deceptive advertising practices in details the findings showed that they exist in different types, including false advertising (Muela-Molina et al., 2021), bait-and-switch tactics (Herweg & Rosato, 2020), and misleading endorsements (Karagür et al., 2022). Other scholars describe deceptive comparisons (Ukaegbu, 2020), false sense of urgency (Hussian et al., 2021), incomplete information and manipulative visuals (Sanak-Kosmowska & Wiktor, 2020). Besides, deceptive pricing and misrepresentation of warranty are defined as types of deceptive advertising practices (Caled & Silva, 2022). In comparison, the researchers revealed eight key deceptive advertising practices: false advertising, bait-and-switch, hidden fees, misrepresentation of endorsement, false comparison, manipulative visuals, deceptive comparison, and false sense of urgency. Participants admitted that deceptive advertising practices influence purchases sine they use inaccurate or incomplete information.

The literature analysis confirmed that future advertising technologies are characterized by advanced personalization and targeting capabilities driven by AI and machine learning (Lee & Cho, 2019). A number of recent works describe the use of AR and VR in advertising to create interactive and engaging experiences (Alcañiz et al., 2019). Other technologies include IoT (Tariq et al., 2020), voice-activated devices and virtual assistants (Canziani & MacSween, 2021), automated, data-driven advertising (Davenport et al., 2020). Besides, the scholars stress on the role of advanced advertising technologies in promoting greater transparency and personalization (Bleier et al., 2020), analyzing vast amounts of data (Boerman et al., 2021), and verification of authenticity and origin of advertisements (Lemos et al., 2022). The survey conducted among 123 participants showed that there are ten key technologies that will be widely used in the future: AR; VR; AI personalization; 3D holographic advertisements; voice-activated ads; neuromarketing analytics; smart wearable integration; interactive digital billboards; IoT; and emotionally responsive ads. Moreover, the findings demonstrated that these technologies impact the consumer rights protection regulations and suggest implementing the following: stricter data protection regulations, consumer consent, regulation of advertisement content, ethical use of data, content accuracy checking, consumer education, regulation of presence of advertisements in public spaces, establishment of ethical standards, improvement of security standards, and prohibition to use emotional manipulation.

Currently, in Ukraine, a number of legislative acts exists that regulate the relationship between consumers and producers, sellers or service providers (the laws of Ukraine "On the Protection of Consumer Rights", "On Advertising", "On State Market Supervision and Control of Non-Food Products". Also, the Civil Code and the Economic Code of Ukraine offer a number of specialized laws oriented towards the protection of consumer rights. At the same time, it was proved that consumer rights protection is an important area of a functioning economy since it stimulates economic growth, financial stability, and innovation (Nyland & Tran, 2019; Yanyshen, 2019). But the unstable economic conditions require improvement of consumer rights regulations to balance relations between buyers and sellers. According to the research, enhancement of consumer rights regulation requires the following: flexibility, increased consumer protection, transparency, support for vulnerable customers, consumer education, data protection and privacy, interagency collaboration, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, long-term focus, and assessment of the impact of regulation.

Studying the role that social media in shaping modern advertising practices that that affect relations between buyers and sellers significantly through real-time feedback and engagement, fostering a two-way communication channel between brands and consumers (Maslowska et al., 2021; Tariq et al., 2020). But it was revealed that social media apply various deceptive advertising practices which manipulate consumer perceptions and behaviors (Domenico et al., 2021; Muela-Molina et al., 2021; Ukaegbu, 2020). As social media continues to be a dominant advertising platform, it is important for regulatory bodies to enforce accurate guidelines and for consumers to remain aware in identifying deceptive advertising. As a result, the outcomes enumerated the measures to be taken. They must include the following: increased awareness, real-time monitoring and response, control over misinformation or scams, consumer education, prioritizing consumer protection reforms, creation of consumer advocacy groups to mobilize public support quickly and effectively. Definitely, these measures may contribute to protection of consumer rights in the advertising of the future in conditions of economic instability.

Conclusions and Implications

Deceptive advertising practices beings a central aspect of the research topic refer to marketing strategies that deceive consumers by presenting false, exaggerated, or misleading information about products or services. These practices aim to manipulate consumer perceptions and influence purchasing decisions by providing an inaccurate representation of the product's features, benefits, or pricing. Deceptive advertising practices include several types, such as false advertising, bait-and-switch tactics, misleading endorsements, deceptive comparisons, false sense of urgency, incomplete information and manipulative visuals, deceptive pricing and misrepresentation of warranty. Each of them undermines consumer rights and highlights the importance of accurate regulatory frameworks to combat such tactics effectively. Considering future advertising technologies, it was found that they are characterized by advanced personalization and targeting capabilities. These technologies may analyze vast amounts of data from various sources, including browsing history, social media interactions, and purchase behavior, to create highly personalized advertisements tailored to individual consumers' preferences and needs. In the future, the following advertising technologies will be widely used: AR; VR; AI personalization; 3D holographic advertisements; voice-activated ads; neuromarketing analytics; smart wearable integration; interactive digital billboards; IoT; and emotionally responsive ads. The findings proved that these technologies impact the consumer rights protection regulations.

Addressing the challenges posed by advanced advertising tactics, several amendments should be introduced into consumer rights protection legislation. These amendments include strengthening enforcement mechanisms and increasing penalties for companies found guilty of violating consumer protection laws through deceptive advertising or unethical use of data. The special attention is drawn towards consumer education. It was found that investment in awareness campaigns to educate consumers about their rights related to data privacy and advertising are important within the frameworks of consumer education. At the same time, studying the role that social media play in shaping modern advertising practices it was revealed that the interactive nature of social media allows for real-time feedback and engagement, fostering a two-way communication channel between brands and consumers that traditional advertising mediums cannot match. But social media may implement certain deceptive advertising practices that may manipulate consumer perceptions and behaviors. To counteract this, consumers rights protection regulation must consider increased awareness, real-time monitoring and response, control over misinformation or scams, consumer education, and creation of consumer advocacy groups.

As advertising becomes increasingly sophisticated, incorporating emerging technologies such as AR, VR, and AI, the potential for deceptive practices grows. Moreover, in the unstable economic environment, consumers are particularly vulnerable to these tactics, as financial pressures lead them to make impulsive decisions. Therefore, the research outcomes may be implied in the development of effective regulations considering current and future advertising practices to protect consumers, even during periods of economic uncertainty. Besides, the outcomes may be used for the designing of consumer education program to train individuals to navigate the rapidly evolving economic environment. Considering the requirement that people must be aware in protecting their rights in the face of both advanced advertising practices and economic instability, such educational program will help study the strategies for enhancing consumer literacy, digital competence, and legal knowledge. In addition, the study can be used for improvements of the existing consumer rights regulatory frameworks to make them flexible and responsive, ensuring that consumer rights are not violated even as new advertising techniques emerge, and economic conditions change.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research should be aimed at examination of the specific impacts of advanced advertising technologies, such as AI-driven personalization, neuromarketing, and interactive platforms, on consumer rights. These technologies are rapidly evolving, and their implications for consumer protection are not yet fully understood. Research should focus on how these technologies can be regulated effectively to prevent consumer exploitation. Additionally, exploring the ethical considerations and potential biases in AI-driven advertising should provide the information about new areas where consumer rights need safeguarding. Another aspect for further research is a comparative analysis of how different countries protect consumer rights in the face of economic instability and advanced advertising techniques. Such a study should identify the best practices and regulatory models that are most effective in maintaining consumer rights during economic downturns. In the future, the special attention must be paid towards studying consumer rights protection in Ukraine during the war due to the specific challenges that conflict brings to the market. The war has created an environment of economic instability, disruption of supply chains, and significant shifts in consumer behavior and market dynamics, which can lead to increased vulnerability to deceptive practices and exploitation. In such context, the protection of consumer rights becomes not only a matter of economic fairness but also a critical issue of social justice and stability.

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