

# Examining The Role of Incomplete Information in Print Advertising of Travel Agencies and its Effect on Information Search, Consumer Involvement, Information Source Trustworthiness and Purchasing Intention (Case study: Iran's Tourists)

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**Abstract.** With the aim of examining the role of incomplete information in print advertising of travel agencies and its effect on information search, consumer involvement, information source trustworthiness and purchasing intention, the present paper tests six hypotheses. The research sample includes travelers of travel agencies of Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport during 2010-2011. Data collection has been undertaken using questionnaire. From the mentioned sample, questionnaires were distributed among 340 subjects who have been read print advertising of travel agencies. The Structural Equations Modeling (SEM) technique and LISREL software were employed for data analysis. The results indicate that attitude toward incomplete information positively influences information search behaviour and consumer involvement. The consumer involvement positively influences information search behaviour; information search behavior and information source trustworthiness positively influence purchase intention. In spite of negative path coefficient and the T-test, H5 was not supported claiming that attitude toward incomplete information negatively influences information source trustworthiness. It is thus recommended to marketing managers and ad practitioners of travel agencies to insert enough, fair and correct information in the advertising printed in newspapers and magazines and to design attractive and impressive ads for more attraction of targeted customers. It is also recommended to marketing managers to use various channels for information dissemination which makes it possible for consumers to access their needed information.

**Keywords:** Consumer attitude; Consumer involvement, Information search; Information source trustworthiness; Purchase intention.

## 1. Introduction

In the modern era, advertising importance has increased due to the production growth and market fierce competition. Printing is one of the most significant and common advertising tools. Advertising is one of the significant income sources for newspapers and magazines which their cheaper sale price increases publications circulation. Good advertising successfully conceive new customers for buying. Print advertising design must be such that represent the product/ service key features. Sometimes, print advertising in newspapers and magazines are not mirror of product/service features and so contain incomplete information. In this respect, the present research aims at examining the role of incomplete information in print advertising of travel agencies and its effect on information search, consumer involvement, information source trustworthiness and purchasing intention.

## 2. Problem Statement

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Advertising is one of the important communication tools in business world. It is obvious that continuance and development of product/service sale would be possible if customer believes in and make sense of components included in advertising scheme. Printing is one of the most important and common tools of advertising. Franke et al (2004) have claimed that potential benefits of ads are accrued if customers and marketers notice, comprehend and process advertising information [1].

The attractiveness of print advertising is necessary to draw readers' attention and this kind of advertising must contain detailed information about service/product key features. Print advertising of travel agencies in newspapers and magazines usually emphasizes on accommodation and price ignoring detailed illustration of other features so their presented information are incomplete. Now the question is that if the print advertising of travel agencies aim is to distribute information about the extant travel tours, how marketers and advertisers would be sure the readers have obtained enough information from advertisement? Are readers able to access such information through other sources?

Mitra et al (1999) showed that information search is a common method in decreasing consumer perceived risk [1]. Customers may not access to comprehensive information because of available time and budget constraints. Missing information surely influences consumer purchasing intention. What is the attitude of consumer toward incomplete information? Are real necessary information available for decision making? Enormous expenditures are spent for print advertising so the lack of due attention to the field may result in huge waste of money and time. If the print advertising needs mistake correction, such costs must be repaid. Hence the present research objective is to examine the role of incomplete information in print advertising of travel agencies and its effect on information search, consumer involvement, information source trustworthiness and purchasing intention and how travellers perceive incomplete information of print travel agencies advertisement and the research main question is that how incomplete information influence purchasing intention; here it is tried to find appropriate answer for such questions.

### **3. Literature Review**

After literature review it was revealed that no research has devoted to the subject in Iran. Meyer (1981) has indicated that missing information may be perceived as a risk source. In this respect, customers with higher need for cognition are less vulnerable to influence of missing information. Smith and Bush (2002) have found that incomplete information of services are due to information availability after the consumption happening and its difficulty of interpretation they tried to develop an effective communication approach in various purchasing situations for service providers. Meyer has revealed that customers in exposure to incomplete information react in two ways: they try to infer the value of missing information or search the missing information. Bloch (1981) has indicated that consumer involvement could be considered as a factor influencing on consumer behaviour based on enduring and stable framework which varies across people. Celsi and Olson (1988) found that when involvement was increased, consumers paid attention to advertisements related to products as well as relevant information [1].

Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) showed that when it was possible for consumers to evaluate information before their purchasing, advertisings were more believable. If information is not available before purchasing, it will be more opportunity for information presentation. In situations where consumers have not access to information before purchasing, but are able to interpret it easily after purchasing, with unsatisfied expectations, ads would have a deterministic impact [2]. Some researchers as Bansal et al and East et al have claimed that information obtained through seeking other consumers opinions in order to find more awareness about the product/service are more effective on consumer behaviour than casual oral information [3].

Cleland et al (2002) in their research on advertising validity showed that programs and advertised products at best case were not satisfied their advertising promises and at worst case such claims were not trustable [4]. Among the cases in which consumers are more inclined to seek others opinions and experiences, are persons who have in-depth involvement in purchase decision making [5].

### **4. Conceptual Model**

The research framework is based on studies of Jane Lu Hsu and Roxy Hsien-Chen Mo (2009) and Simona Romani (2006). For Cox (1967), incomplete information is a source of uncertainty. Consumers are always inclined to higher their certainty through information handling. The information handling is one of the most common strategies in risk reduction. The risk thus is lowered with more complete information. Mitra et al (1999) showed that consumers would collect a range of information for variety of future purchase intentions. Researches results indicate that consumers who believe that missing information are important in print advertising, have higher involvement with print ads. In contrast, some consumers who ignore missing information show lower involvement [1].

The higher individual involvement, the more they are motivated in data collection and processing in relation to specific product or brand [6].

If information are presented in misguiding, incomplete, diffused and opaque manner, customers will become distrusted to information sources and their purchasing intention will be weakened [7].

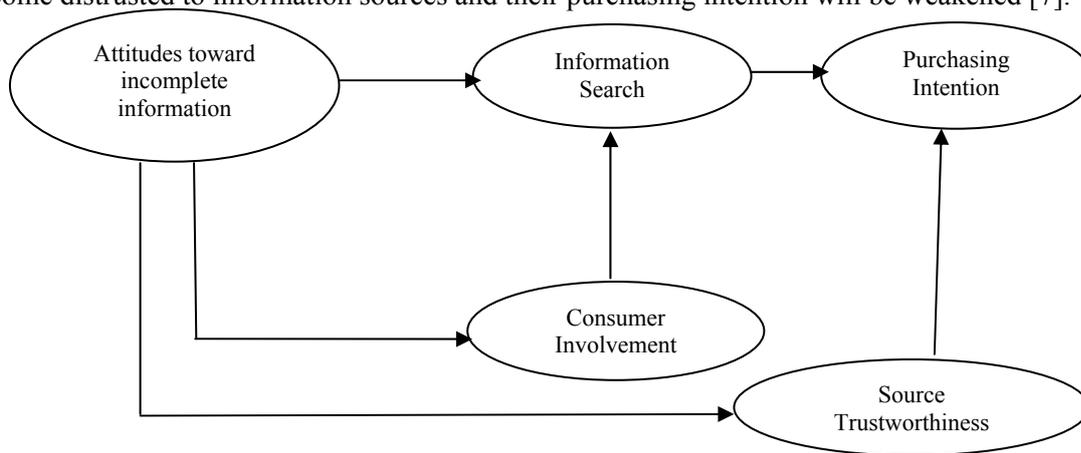


Figure1.conceptual model [1]

## 5. Hypotheses

H1: Attitudes toward incomplete information in print advertising of travel agencies positively influence information search.

H2: Information search positively influences travellers' purchasing intention.

H3: Traveller's involvement positively influences the degree of information search.

H4: Attitudes toward incomplete information in print advertising of travel agencies positively influence travellers' involvement.

H5: Attitudes toward incomplete information in print advertising of travel agencies negatively influence information source trustworthiness.

H6: Information source trustworthiness positively influences purchase intention.

## 6. Methodology

The study is as a cause-effect research and the considered data are used in the examination of sample characteristics distribution through sampling, so the research also has scaling (grounding) nature. According to the study purpose, the research is an applied research. Statistic sample includes travel agencies of Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport. From the mentioned sample, questionnaires were distributed among persons who had been read print advertising of travel agencies in newspapers, magazines and other printed media. So the in-reach sampling method was employed.

McQuitty suggested that it is important to determine the minimum sample size required in order to achieve a desired level of statistical power with a given model prior to data collection [8].Schreiber et al mentioned that although sample size needed is affected by the normality of the data and estimation method that researchers use, the generally agreed-on value is 10 participants for every free parameter estimated [9].Although there is little consensus on the recommended sample size for SEM (Sivo et al ,2006), Garver

and Mentzer (1999), and Hoelter (1983) proposed a 'critical sample size' of 200. In other words, as a rule of thumb, any number above 200 is understood to provide sufficient statistical power for data analysis [10].

As a whole, the sample volume was calculated based on Relation 1:

$$5q \leq n \leq 15q \quad (1)$$

The questionnaire include 18 items. Based on the above relation, with respect to 15 observations for each item, the maximum number of subjects is 270. For higher certainty, 26% more questionnaires were distributed. In this way, 340 subjects are considered as the sample volume. Distributing 35 questionnaires each with 18 questions, alpha Cronbach coefficient was calculated as 0.727. Consequently with complete distribution of questionnaires (340 questionnaires), it was 0.845.

## 7. Data Analysis

In the research, structural equations modelling (SEM) technique and LISREL software have been employed in the evaluation of model components relation. In the structural equations,  $\gamma$  is the path coefficient between an exogenous hidden variable and an endogenous hidden variable,  $\beta$  is the path coefficient between an endogenous hidden variable and another endogenous hidden variable. If the t-test between two variables is larger than 1.96, the null hypothesis claiming no relation between two hidden variable will be rejected and its alternate hypothesis will be accepted showing that there is a meaningful relation between two hidden variables.

Table 1 shows LISREL outputs for the research hypotheses. According to Table 1:

V1= attitude toward incomplete information

V2= information search

V3=consumer involvement

V4= information source trustworthiness

V5=purchase intention

Table1: The LISREL output for the research hypotheses

Hypothesis	Effect	Error level	Path coefficient	t-test	Critical value	Results
1	$v_1 \rightarrow v_2$	0/05	$\gamma_1=0/39$	4/78	1/96	Support
2	$v_2 \rightarrow v_5$	0/05	$\beta_1=0/59$	5/81	1/96	Support
3	$V_3 \rightarrow v_2$	0/05	$\beta_2=0/60$	5/64	1/96	Support
4	$V_1 \rightarrow v_3$	0/05	$\gamma_2=0/44$	6/44	1/96	Support
5	$V_1 \rightarrow v_4$	0/05	$\gamma_3=-0/07$	-1/17	1/96	Not-Support
6	$V_4 \rightarrow v_5$	0/05	$\beta_3=0/27$	4/98	1/96	Support

## 8. Conclusion

Advertising is applied in media with information carefully selected and designed to attract audiences. Owing to limited space for print advertising to present the products or services, information is far from complete in magazine advertisements. The objectives of this study were to examine how consumers perceived missing information in print advertising of travel agencies and further to reveal how missing information affected decisions.

Based on the present research findings, it has to be said that the higher consumer attitude toward incomplete information, more they are involved and more time they will spend for information search. Consequently, the higher the involvement, the more information from various sources will be sought. Information search positively influences purchase intention. H5 was rejected saying that attitudes toward incomplete information negatively influence information source trustworthiness. But it is obvious that information source trustworthiness positively influences purchasing intention. Regarding the mean values of questionnaire parameters, the most common sources used by travellers in the information search process are respectively asking from travel agencies responsible persons, oral (word of mouth) advertising, traveller past experiences, websites, newspapers and magazines. The use of these sources is included in the questionnaire.

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