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The impact of stealth marketing on enhancing the psychological factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior: An analytical study of the opinions of a sample of employees and customers of major retail stores in the city of Baghdad

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Abstract

The research aims to understand the impact of stealth marketing in enhancing the psychological factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior in major retail stores studied in the city of Baghdad. The research poses the question: What is the effect of stealth marketing on enhancing the psychological factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior? To achieve the research objectives, the researcher adopted the descriptive analytical method and used a questionnaire as the main tool for data collection. The research examined the opinions of a sample of customers of those surveyed stores, with (450) customers being surveyed and (310) questionnaires being retrieved valid for statistical analysis. The research concluded with several findings, the most important being that the responses of the customers of the surveyed stores indicate that stealth marketing is used as one of the contemporary non-traditional promotional methods, focusing on promotion in unexpected and surprising ways. Stealth marketing techniques have successfully attracted customers by using emotional stimuli to introduce the store's brand and encourage customers to engage with it continuously. Additionally, the research provided many recommendations.

Keywords: Stealth marketing, psychological factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior, major retail stores in the city of Baghdad

Introduction

There has been a growing interest in studying modern marketing concepts and applying them in various types of organizations. The reason behind this interest is that these concepts consider the customer as the core of organizational operations and the key to their success and advancement. Furthermore, the intense competition in the business environment and the numerous challenges, particularly the constant race among organizations to retain their customers by continuously meeting their needs and requirements to the fullest extent possible, have created a need to adopt modern marketing practices. These practices help organizations attract new customers and thus enhance their market share in the sector in which they operate. At the forefront of these practices is stealth marketing, a modern marketing practice and a different creative approach. Organizations resort to this type of marketing to attract customers without their awareness and in a non-traditional manner. From this standpoint, the intellectual framework and primary goal of this study revolve around understanding the concept of stealth marketing as a modern marketing strategy and how it influences the enhancement of psychological factors affecting consumer purchasing behavior. The reason for the researcher's choice of this study topic is its importance, the novelty of its variables, and the scarcity of studies that have worked on linking the variables addressed by the current study.

Section One: Methodological Framework

First: Research Problem

The rapid developments in the contemporary business environment and the intense

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competition among organizations in the markets are among the most significant challenges affecting business organizations in general, and major retail stores spread across various regions in particular. These developments impact the psychological factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior, which is often subject to change. Consequently, these stores are in dire need of adopting new marketing concepts to attract new customers, thereby enhancing their position and competitive strength among organizations. They have started to rely on modern marketing techniques that subconsciously influence consumers' purchasing behaviors toward their products or services, known as stealth marketing. This contemporary strategy involves promoting products implicitly, without relying on traditional marketing methods, to positively affect the psychological factors of customers' purchasing behavior. Based on the above, the research problem is crystallized in the central question: "What is the effect of stealth marketing on enhancing the psychological factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior?"

Second: Research Importance

The importance of this research lies in constructing a

knowledge framework on the topics of stealth marketing and the psychological factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior. Additionally, it aims to enrich Iraqi libraries and universities with this effort and encourage stores to adopt innovative and distinguished models of stealth marketing to enhance the psychological factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior.

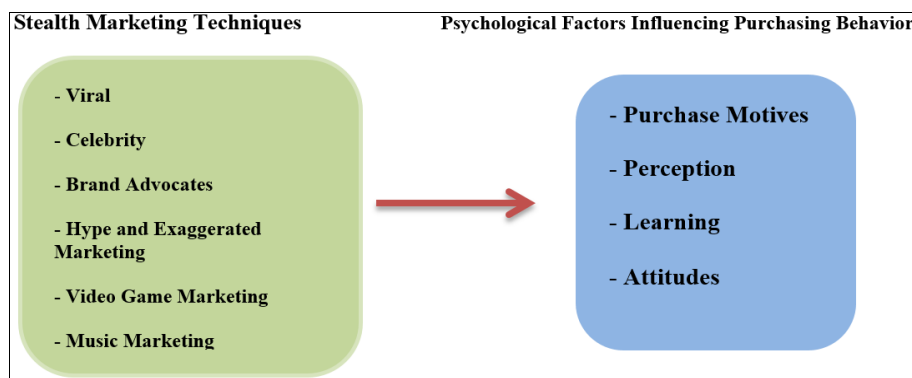
Third: Research Objectives

By understanding the research problem and its importance, the research objectives can be outlined as follows: to determine the effect of stealth marketing on enhancing the psychological factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior in the surveyed stores, and to provide a set of conclusions and recommendations that may benefit the surveyed organizations.

Fourth: Research Framework and Hypotheses

1. The Hypothetical Framework of the Study

In light of the research problem and objectives, a hypothetical framework has been prepared to illustrate the relationship between the variables (Figure 1):



Source: Prepared by the researcher

Fig 1: Hypothetical Study Framework

2. Research Hypotheses

Based on the research model and in line with the research problem, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Main Hypothesis (H1): Stealth marketing techniques significantly affect the psychological factors influencing the purchasing behavior of customers in the surveyed stores. This main hypothesis branches into the following sub-hypotheses:

- **Sub-hypothesis (H1-1):** Stealth marketing techniques significantly affect customers' perception.
- **Sub-hypothesis (H1-2):** Stealth marketing techniques significantly affect customers' purchase motives.
- **Sub-hypothesis (H1-3):** Stealth marketing techniques significantly affect customers' learning.
- **Sub-hypothesis (H1-4):** Stealth marketing techniques significantly affect customers' attitudes.

Fifth: Research Methodology

The researcher adheres to scientific principles to determine the appropriate methodology that the study will follow in describing, uncovering, and analyzing the phenomenon to achieve generalizable results. Since the study will be

conducted through a questionnaire aimed at describing and correlating the study topic "The Impact of Stealth Marketing on Enhancing the Psychological Factors Influencing Consumer Purchasing Behavior," the study will adopt a descriptive analytical methodology. This methodology allows for the analysis of the survey data to achieve the research outcomes.

Sixth: Research Scope

The research was conducted over a period from [start date] to [end date]. The study focused on a group of major stores in Baghdad as its community, involving a sample of their customers totaling (310) individuals. The research is cognitively defined by two variables: stealth marketing and the psychological factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior, including their respective sub-dimensions. Second Axis: The Theoretical Framework

Firstly: The Concept of Subliminal Marketing

Marketing organizations seek to reach consumers by adopting modern and non-traditional marketing methods, one of which is subliminal marketing. According to Webster's dictionary, "subliminal" means an action that is

secretive or imperceptible to avoid detection. The roots of subliminal marketing can be traced back to the early twentieth century, with the terminology and rules established by researcher Marian Webster through her efforts to clarify the mechanisms and practices of this type of marketing. She stated that subliminal marketing refers to actions and procedures executed secretly or gradually without anyone's awareness, thus avoiding scrutiny in its application as much as possible (Abdullah, 2022:10) ^[9]. However, subliminal marketing did not gain widespread popularity until the 1990s. In 1997, Red Bull launched its famous campaign 'Red Bull Gives You Wings,' which used a blend of guerrilla marketing tactics and product placement to generate buzz around its brand. Today, organizations face extensive market expansion and suffer from the ineffectiveness of traditional advertising methods they use. This has driven them to seek modern advertising methods to cope with the market expansion, which poses a threat to them (Kumar & Thomas, 2023:279) ^[41]. Moreover, in the twenty-first century, customers are

exposed to unprecedented amounts of advertising messages, leading to increasing disdain and many attempts to avoid listening to advertising messages from any source. This has negatively affected organizations' ability to efficiently convey their advertising messages. Therefore, organizational management strives diligently to reach customers by amplifying the image of their products in customers' minds through the use of unconventional, effective, intelligent, and entertaining marketing practices in a manner that addresses consumers' unconscious side to effectively deliver their message (Mohammed, 2020:65) ^[7]. Subliminal marketing has been used by organizations to overcome customer resistance to traditional advertising messages, adopting it as a deliberate response capable of penetrating customers' defensive fortifications and reaching them unexpectedly and with unconventional methods (Raouf, 2018:7) ^[10]. Table (1) illustrates the concept of subliminal marketing according to various researchers' perspectives:

Table 1: Definitions of subliminal marketing from various researchers' perspectives

S.	The researcher, Year, Page	Concept
1.	Manika, <i>et al.</i> , 2021, 32 ^[20]	"A promotional approach that aims to deceive consumers using unconventional marketing methods that they are not easily aware of.
2.	Abdelwahid and Suleiman, 2021:7	A way to increase market share and outpace competitors before they realize how it happened.
3.	Al-Ramidi and Ismail, 2023:8 ^[2]	A set of implicit advertising practices aimed indirectly at persuading the audience to purchase a specific product or service."

Source: Table compiled by the researcher based on the cited sources.

Secondly: Stealth Marketing Techniques

Studies on stealth marketing in general and its specific techniques have varied. The current study adopted techniques similar to those used in the study by Al-Khafaji (2022) ^[11] as most suitable, having been applied in a service organization and proven successful in the Iraqi environment. These techniques will be elucidated as follows:

1. Viral Marketing

With the continued expansion of internet usage, the need for modern marketing techniques has arisen. One such technique is viral marketing, which heavily relies on the internet and social media platforms to disseminate marketing messages online to promote products. It's worth noting that the concept of viral marketing was first articulated by media critic Douglas Rushkoff in 1994 in his book "Media Virus". He described how promotional messages reaching internet users can rapidly influence them to share these messages with others, thus spreading like a virus. One of the earliest references to viral marketing was by Tim Draper in the mid-1990s to describe the strategy of Hotmail, which began offering free email addresses on the internet. Every message sent through Hotmail included a promotional statement at the bottom: "Get your free email address." Users of Hotmail forwarded these messages to their friends and acquaintances, who in turn opened and read the messages, clicked on the link, and signed up for their own Hotmail account. This strategy led to rapid adoption of the service, demonstrating the effectiveness of viral marketing in penetrating local and global markets (Natsir, 2010: 229) ^[21]. Hotmail's founders, Bhatia and Smith, were able to grow the site to 100,000 subscribers

within a month, and it continued to grow rapidly due to advertisements displayed with email, reaching over 12 million subscribers within less than 18 months of launching the campaign. Viral marketing strategy can be a double-edged sword, particularly when information spreads beyond the organization and its products, making it difficult to control. Therefore, viral marketing campaigns should be carefully studied before implementation (Khalil & Abbas, 2022: 679) ^[4].

"Given the importance of viral marketing and its adoption as a covert marketing technique, it has been defined by several researchers. Mishra (2020:6) ^[22] defines it as creating buzz around a specific brand in a way that engages the public in discussions and promotes it without them realizing they are exposed to a promotional message. Kotler *et al.* (2021:502) ^[23] view viral marketing as the digital version of word-of-mouth marketing, involving highly contagious videos, advertisements, and other marketing content that consumers actively seek out or share with friends.

2. Celebrity Marketing

The use of celebrities in advertising dates back to the early 20th century when organizations began employing famous actors and actresses in print and commercial advertisements. However, celebrity marketing truly took off in the 1980s and 1990s, when organizations began using sports stars, musicians, and other celebrities to endorse their products and services (Al-Qarmouti *et al.*, 2023:151) ^[5]. Companies have since leveraged celebrities as marketing tools to generate profits, relying on their well-known and distinguished names across various fields. These celebrities, respected and admired by their audiences, have the ability to

influence and attract them through their lifestyles or distinctive social habits that diverge from mainstream norms, as well as their high public awareness (Abu Al-Azz *et al.*, 2023:755) ^[6].

The concept of celebrity marketing refers to a marketing strategy involving the endorsement or promotion of products by a celebrity. The idea behind celebrity marketing is that consumers are more likely to purchase a product or service if it is associated with a respected or admired celebrity ((Sousa *et al.*, 2021:76) ^[30], Keke (2022:258) ^[31] sees celebrity marketing as a nascent form of internet marketing, involving collaborations between influencers and companies where influencers help shape consumer purchasing behavior by promoting brand awareness."

3. Brand Ambassadors

Brand ambassadors are individuals employed by organizations to promote their products. The organization's engagement in this practice has significantly increased due to the widespread use of the internet and social media, enhancing the role of these ambassadors. Consumers look to the behavior of these ambassadors to assess the brand and its quality, influencing their purchasing decisions (Lee *et al.*, 2022:1356) ^[32]. Armstrong & Kotler (2022:165) ^[24] refer to brand ambassadors as the recruitment of individuals to spread word-of-mouth about the organization's brand. Marketing through brand ambassadors is not a new concept; it dates back to the early 20th century, specifically in 1920, when organizations began hiring individuals to promote their products in public places like parks and train stations, referred to as 'human billboards' wearing signs advertising the organization's products (Yamaguchi, 2022:54) ^[33]. An example of this approach is Macy's, which faced a significant inventory problem with a surplus of white gloves. To clear the stock, Macy's employed 25 respectable-looking women to wear these gloves in crowded public places near train and subway stations, successfully clearing the inventory within a short period. Since then, the use of brand ambassadors has become widespread among organizations (Mohammed, 2020:78) ^[7].

4. Amplified Marketing

Amplified marketing refers to covert promotional campaigns where companies exaggerate product descriptions to subtly influence customers. According to Zhechev (2015:5) ^[34], stores create short films exaggerating the capabilities of their products. For instance, in 2011, BMW released a commercial for its new i8 car, emphasizing how it could steal jewelry, while actually promoting BMW's Connected Drive services for car control and assistance (Khalef & Saadi, 2020:36) ^[19]. Awasthi & Choraria (2015:215) ^[35] describe amplified marketing as using exaggerated advertising techniques to promote a product or service, such as making overstated claims about product benefits, creating detailed and attention-grabbing advertisements, or using celebrity endorsements to create hype and excitement around the product. Meanwhile, Naim (2002:2) ^[8] views amplified marketing as presenting exaggerated claims about product benefits, which can lead to a misleading impression among customers regarding products promoted in this manner by organizations."

5. Video Game Marketing

Organizations have traditionally integrated their brands into TV programs and movies as part of their promotional strategies. However, disappointing results from many of these efforts and skepticism about the effectiveness of traditional TV advertising by practitioners led some organizations to seek another lifeline from the frustrations encountered with conventional media. They found their solution in video games (Stag & Anderson, 2012:349) ^[16]. Video game marketing is a marketing technique that involves promoting video games and advertising them to consumers to create excitement and anticipation around new releases, as well as increase profits for video game companies (Nguyen *et al.*, 2016:701) ^[37]. It represents a modern marketing technology that appeals to today's youth, effectively delivering advertising messages more precisely and integrating them as part of an entertainment experience (Zackariasson & Wilson, 2009:33) ^[38]. An example of this technique is the widespread marketing of the UniCredit Group in popular video games like 'FIFA 15', a soccer simulation game released in late 2014, which attracted significant interest from its target audience. As a result, the game allowed direct interaction with the brand integrated into the game itself, unlike traditional ads that often frustrate viewers as intrusive to the content presented on TV programs (Raouf, 2018:174) ^[10].

6. Music Marketing

Music marketing is a marketing technique involving the use of music to promote products. Its goal is to create a positive association between the brand and music, ultimately increasing brand awareness and achieving organizational goals (Nguyen *et al.*, 2016:5) ^[37]. It is also known for embedding promotional messages in songs and musical compositions to establish emotional connections with their target audience (Abdullah & Alwan, 2022:250) ^[9]. The speed and type of musical rhythms used by organizations have a significant impact on consumer behavior and emotions, prompting organizations to choose music that suits them to enhance their identity and ensure they impact consumer awareness and purchasing behavior. Hence, prominent rap musicians who have long been associated with the corporate world have integrated brand-boosting songs into rap music as a lifestyle. Examples of the use of rap music and its role in achieving increased company sales include Motorola, which saw a significant increase in demand for its products after its name was featured in a rap song (Al-Khafaji, 2022:37) ^[11]. The increased use of rap and pop music has attracted the attention of global companies to the possibility of utilizing these musical genres to deliver advertising messages to specific demographics interested in this type of music. Therefore, Mercedes-Benz included lyrics about the advantages of Mercedes cars in a rap song that gained popularity among many individuals (Al-Sayyid, 2023:2128) ^[12].

Thirdly: Consumer Buying Behavior Concept

The concept of consumer buying behavior began to evolve in the early twentieth century as a result of various individual research efforts over time to study this topic. The study by George Katona and John Howard emerged as one of the most important studies that directed researchers'

attention towards consumer buying behavior, emphasizing its critical importance in marketing science, in addition to its relevance and connection to other sciences such as psychology and sociology. Psychological studies provided the foundational basis on which researchers study consumer buying behavior (Al-Zu'bi, 2009:120) ^[13]. The 1960s marked the actual beginning of the evolution of consumer buying behavior, particularly in the United States, with American researchers integrating behavioral sciences into management practices (Ghazal, 2019:56) ^[14]. This realization led organizations to understand that marketing activities are more than mere sales efforts. Satisfying customer needs and desires and achieving their complete satisfaction is much more effective than simply focusing on persuading them to make a purchase (Abu Jalil *et al.*, 2013:31) ^[15]. Marketers realized that any organization cannot achieve its goals without first modifying the desires and needs of its customers in target markets, striving to better satisfy these needs than their competitors. Thus, the marketing orientation emerged, which involves segmenting customers into various categories based on their needs and desires, forming the foundation for designing organizational policies and programs. Consequently, these new marketing trends spread and were adopted by many, especially as marketing starts with the customer—the starting and ending point for marketers. Studies related to consumer behavior have shown that customers are complex individuals influenced by many factors, necessitating marketing activities to begin with information gathering before organizations introduce and present their products in markets, followed by designing marketing strategies starting from designing and developing new products. This process continues beyond production to include distribution operations and understanding customer feedback on products. This concept of marketing activities, which evolved through several stages starting from the production concept, then the sales concept, and the marketing concept, to social responsibility. Due to the developments in the concept of consumer buying behavior, various definitions have emerged, generally addressing whether the purchase decision relates to a specific service or commodity. The concept of consumer buying behavior refers to the purchasing behavior of final consumers (Individuals and groups) who buy products for personal consumption purposes (Kotler *et al.*, 2024:162) ^[25].

Fourthly: Psychological Factors Influencing Consumer Buying Behavior

Consumer purchasing decisions are influenced by various psychological factors such as perception, learning, attitudes, and motivations. Therefore, in our study, we will address these factors due to their common use by researchers in marketing studies, whether describing, interpreting, or predicting consumer behavior.

1. Buying Motivations

Buying motivations significantly impact consumer behavior. Each customer has basic needs they wish to satisfy, such as food, clothing, and shelter, which are essential needs. Needs can also be categorized based on urgency, where individuals prioritize their needs to fulfill essential and important ones. Some studies indicate that motivation isn't necessarily

fulfilled through purchasing different products, whether necessary or not. It can also be satisfied simply by gaining information out of curiosity or the desire to learn more about a product (Armstrong & Kotler, 2022: 171) ^[24]. Therefore, most researchers emphasize that motivations can lead to interactions with salespeople or marketers to gather information about a product. Understanding motivations is fundamental in uncovering human behavioral secrets, as it is a psychological factor driving behavior towards achieving specific goals (Al-Hamdani, 2016: 66) ^[16]. Many definitions of motivations have been cited in management literature, focusing on human motivations in general and specifically on purchasing motivations. The concept of buying motivations refers to the basic stimuli that prompt a person to take action, including physical needs on one hand and self-perception and social relationships on the other (Avetisyan, 2022: 9) ^[39].

2. Perception

Understanding customer behavior starts with understanding how individuals perceive the events around them. Perception relies on sensory organs—the senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell) through which customers comprehend surrounding events. The environment surrounding customers is filled with numerous stimuli competing to capture their attention at any given time. Customers cannot focus on all stimuli simultaneously (Anisha & Kalaivani, 2016: 15) ^[40]. Perception not only depends on physical stimuli but also on verbal stimuli or interactions with individuals in workplaces or markets. For instance, when a customer meets a sales representative, their perception or understanding might lead them to believe the representative is deceitful or exploitative, while another customer perceives the representative as providing services or assistance to meet consumer needs and desires (Solomon *et al.*, 2022: 219) ^[28]. Hence, the nature of things is not perceived uniformly by all customers, depending on their interpretation of stimuli perceived through their senses (Al-Hamdani, 2016: 68) ^[16]. Despite numerous attempts by researchers and scientists to define perception specifically, they have not succeeded due to the complexity of the perceptual concept, primarily focusing on individual dimensions. The concept of perception refers to the process by which customers gather and interpret information about a product, often through advertisements, promotional offers, and social media reactions. Consequently, customers form a clear picture of the product and establish an impression that influences their purchasing behavior (Kumar & Finance, 2022: 42) ^[41].

3. Learning

The concept of learning is widely debated among researchers from various psychological, social, cognitive, and political perspectives. Researchers can be classified into two main viewpoints regarding the concept of learning: psychologists who focus on individual-level learning and management scholars who emphasize organizational-level learning as a whole (Al-Kubaisi & Daham, 2007: 138) ^[17]. Every individual learns from their life experiences, regardless of the outcome of those experiences. If the outcome is positive, they tend to repeat the same behavior pattern when faced with similar situations. Conversely, if

the outcome is negative, they refrain from repeating the action and may modify their behavior and attitudes accordingly. Learning implies the customer's ability to apply previous information and knowledge to future behavior in making purchasing decisions. Therefore, learning is the personal change in customer behavior resulting from acquiring new experiences, skills, and modifying previous experiences that help in selecting products that meet their requirements and desires (Pride & Ferrell, 2016: 201) ^[42].

Overall, learning theories affirm that human behavior is learned, often based on personal direct experience and the experiences of others, such as colleagues, classmates, or friends. It is essential for marketers in organizations to refrain from relying on misleading advertisements that include inaccurate information about product specifications and features because customers are rational and cannot be deceived by flashy and glamorous advertisements (Saxena, 2016: 213) ^[43]. If a salesperson manages to deceive a customer through attractive advertising and successfully capture their attention and curiosity to purchase the product, without a doubt, the truth about the product will be revealed after its trial. If the product is poor, it will generate negative reactions from the customer, who will share these negative attitudes with all acquaintances and friends. Therefore, advertisers must present their advertisements with innovative ideas and in an attractive artistic format capable of attracting attention, provided that the advertisements contain truthful information about the product (Kotler *et al.*, 2019: 157) ^[26].

The concept of learning refers to consumers acquiring knowledge and information about products they are interested in. This knowledge comes from a variety of sources, including personal experience, word-of-mouth recommendations, online reviews, and advertising (Qazzafi, 2020: 1207) ^[44].

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4. Situations

Customers are influenced by everything around them and everyone surrounding them. Through this influence, in addition to customer perception and learning, specific situations are formed for them that can be either positive or negative. If a group of customers were asked about their opinions on a specific brand, for example, some may

support the brand and express positive views about it as a good brand, thus their stance would be positive. Others may take an opposing stance because they have tried some products of this brand but found them not fully satisfying their needs, leading to a negative stance. There are also those who remain neutral and have no stance towards this brand due to their lack of previous knowledge about it (Anisha & Kalaivani, 2016: 155) ^[40].

Today's business world has become well-versed among senior business executives and officials in commercial organizations because the complex realities of customers are now well-known to decision-makers regarding communication, advertising, or managing needs (Ben Zawi, 2017: 44) ^[18]. These situations can result from learning and tend to solidify over time, pushing the customer to act positively or negatively towards a specific product. Situations guide their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and behaviors, influencing their decisions on which advertisements to read or watch, how they react to sales representatives, where they shop, where they eat, and which brands they prefer and purchase (Solomon *et al.*, 2023: 224) ^[29].

The concept of situations refers to the individual's positive or negative feelings and inclinations towards a specific product or idea (Kotler *et al.*, 2020: 157) ^[27].

The third axis: The field framework

The field framework includes testing the main hypothesis and the hypotheses derived from it:

- **Main Hypothesis (H1):** Subliminal marketing techniques morally influence the psychological factors influencing the purchasing behavior of customers in the researched stores. The following sub-hypotheses branch from it:
- **Sub-hypothesis 1 (H1-1):** Subliminal marketing techniques morally influence customer perception.

A multiple linear regression equation was prepared to estimate customer perception through six subliminal marketing techniques (viral, brand ambassadors, celebrity marketing, taste and sensory marketing, video game marketing, music marketing), to determine the extent of their impact on customer perception. Table (2) presents the results of this impact.

Table 2: Results of the impact of each subliminal marketing technique on customer perception.

Variables	Regression Coefficient (β)	T-value	(Sig.)	F-value	(Sig.)	Adjusted R ²
XX1	0.198	3.199	0.002	15.681	0.000	0.222
XX2	0.013	0.189	0.850			
XX3	0.246	3.836	0.000			
XX4	0.264	3.700	0.000			
XX5	-0.134	-1.827	0.069			
XX6	-0.056	-0.712	0.477			

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher using SPSS software.

From Table (2), it is observed that the model stability of the regression equation is indicated by the significant F-value of (15.681) at a 5% significance level. This suggests the possibility of estimating customer perception through the six covert marketing techniques. Furthermore, the T-values at a 5% significance level for Virality, Celebrity Marketing, Sensory and Sensation Marketing indicate that these

dimensions within covert marketing techniques have a significant impact on customer perception. The positive regression coefficients (β) for Virality, Celebrity Marketing, and Sensory and Sensation Marketing indicate a positive effect. This means that the presence of these techniques in the study area's commercial centers enhances customer perception. However, the negative β coefficients for Video

Game Marketing and Music Marketing indicate a negative effect, though not statistically significant. Moreover, the adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R²) of (0.222) indicates that covert marketing techniques explain 22.2% of the variance in customer perception, thus

supporting the hypothesis. Additionally, a simple linear regression equation was developed to estimate customer perception through the combined covert marketing techniques, as shown in Table (3), presenting the impact results.

Table 3: Results of the combined impact of covert marketing techniques on customer perception

Variables	Regression Coefficient (β)	T-value	(Sig.)	F-value	(Sig.)	(R ²)
X	0.357	6.703	0.000	44.936	0.000	0.127

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher using SPSS software.

From Table (3), it is noted that the model stability of the regression equation is indicated by the significant F-value of (44.936) at a 5% significance level. This signifies the possibility of estimating customer perception through the combined covert marketing techniques. Additionally, the T-value of (6.703) at a 5% significance level indicates that the effect is significant. The positive β coefficient of (0.357) suggests a positive effect, meaning that the availability of combined covert marketing techniques in the study area's commercial centers enhances customer perception. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R²) of (0.127) indicates that covert marketing techniques explain

12.7% of the variance in customer perception.

Sub-Hypothesis 2 (H1-2): Covert marketing techniques significantly influence purchase motivations among customers.

A multiple linear regression equation was prepared to estimate purchase motivations among customers through the six covert marketing techniques (Virality, Brand Ambassadors, Celebrity Marketing, Sensory and Sensation Marketing, Video Game Marketing, Music Marketing), aiming to determine their impact. Table (4) presents the impact results.

Table 4: Results of the impact of covert marketing techniques on purchase motivations among customers.

Variables	Regression Coefficient (β)	T-value	(Sig.)	F-value	(Sig.)	(Adjusted R ²)
XX1	0.238	3.685	0.000	10.346	0.000	0.154
XX2	-0.098	-1.339	0.181			
XX3	0.143	2.133	0.034			
XX4	0.169	2.268	0.024			
XX5	0.083	1.088	0.278			
XX6	-0.055	-0.674	0.501			

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher using SPSS software.

From Table (4), it is observed that the model stability of the regression equation is indicated by the significant F-value of (10.346) at a 5% significance level. This implies the possibility of estimating purchase motivations among customers through the six covert marketing techniques. Additionally, the T-values at a 5% significance level for each of Virality, Celebrity Marketing, and Sensory and Sensation Marketing indicate that these dimensions within covert marketing techniques have a significant effect on purchase motivations among customers. The positive β coefficients for Virality, Celebrity Marketing, and Sensory and Sensation Marketing suggest a positive effect, meaning that the availability of these techniques in the study area's

commercial centers enhances purchase motivations among customers. However, the negative β coefficients for Brand Ambassadors and Music Marketing indicate a negative but non-significant effect. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R²) of (0.154) indicates that covert marketing techniques explain 15.4% of the variance in purchase motivations among customers, thereby accepting Sub-Hypothesis 2.

A simple linear regression equation was also prepared to estimate purchase motivations among customers through the combined covert marketing techniques, aiming to determine their overall impact. Table (5) presents the impact results.

Table 5: Results of the impact of combined covert marketing techniques on purchase motivations among customers

Variables	Regression Coefficient (β)	T-value	(Sig.)	F-value	(Sig.)	(R ²)
X	0.331	6.146	0.000	37.779	0.000	0.109

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher using SPSS software.

From Table (5), it is observed that the model stability of the regression equation is indicated by the significant F-value of (37.779) at a 5% significance level. This implies the possibility of estimating purchase motivations among customers through the combined covert marketing techniques. Additionally, the T-value of (6.146) at a 5% significance level indicates that the effect is significant. The positive β coefficient (β) indicates a positive effect, meaning that the availability of combined covert marketing

techniques in the study area's commercial centers enhances purchase motivations among customers. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R²) of (0.109) indicates that covert marketing techniques explain 10.9% of the variance in purchase motivations among customers.

Sub-Hypothesis 3 (H1-3): Covert marketing techniques significantly impact customer learning.

A multiple linear regression equation was prepared to

estimate customer learning through the six covert marketing techniques (Virality, Brand Ambassadors, Celebrity Marketing, Sensory and Sensation Marketing, Video Game

Marketing, Music Marketing), aiming to determine their overall impact. Table (6) presents the impact results.

Table 6: Results of the impact of combined covert marketing techniques on customer learning.

Variables	Regression Coefficient (β)	T-value	(Sig.)	F-value	(Sig.)	(Adjusted R2)
XX1	0.291	4.457	0.000	9.007	0.000	0.135
XX2	-0.127	-1.710	0.088			
XX3	0.153	2.254	0.025			
XX4	0.175	2.325	0.021			
XX5	-0.067	-0.863	0.389			
XX6	-0.070	-0.847	0.398			

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher using SPSS software.

From Table (6), it is noted that the model stability of the regression equation is indicated by the significant F-value of (9.007) at a 5% significance level. This implies the ability to estimate customer learning through the six covert marketing techniques. Additionally, the T-values at a 5% significance level for each of Virality, Celebrity Marketing, and Sensory and Sensation Marketing indicate that these dimensions within covert marketing techniques have a significant impact on customer learning. The positive β coefficients (β) for Virality, Celebrity Marketing, and Sensory and Sensation Marketing suggest a positive effect, meaning that the availability of these techniques in the study area's commercial centers enhances customer learning. Conversely, the negative β coefficients for Brand

Ambassadors, Video Game Marketing, and Music Marketing indicate a negative effect, though not statistically significant. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R2) of (0.135) indicates that covert marketing techniques explain 13.5% of the variance in customer learning.

Sub-Hypothesis 3 (H1-3): Covert marketing techniques significantly impact customer learning.

A simple linear regression equation was prepared to estimate customer learning through the combined covert marketing techniques, aiming to assess their overall impact. Table (7) presents the impact results.

Table 7: Results of the impact of combined covert marketing techniques on customer learning.

Variables	Regression Coefficient (β)	T-value	(Sig.)	F-value	(Sig.)	(R2)
X	0.221	3.972	0.000	15.779	0.000	0.049

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher using SPSS software.

From Table (7), it is noted that the model stability of the regression equation is indicated by the significant F-value of (15.779) at a 5% significance level. This implies the ability to estimate customer learning through the combined covert marketing techniques. Additionally, the T-value of (3.972) at a 5% significance level indicates that the effect is significant. The positive β coefficient (β = 0.221) suggests a positive effect, meaning that the availability of combined covert marketing techniques in the study area's commercial centers enhances customer learning. However, the adjusted

coefficient of determination (Adjusted R2) of (0.049) indicates that covert marketing techniques explain only 4.9% of the variance in customer learning.

Sub-Hypothesis 4 (H1-4): Covert marketing techniques significantly impact customer attitudes.

A multiple linear regression equation was prepared to estimate customer attitudes through the six covert marketing techniques, aiming to assess their overall impact. Table (8) presents the impact results.

Table 8: Results of the impact of combined covert marketing techniques on customer attitudes.

Variables	Regression Coefficient (β)	T-value	(Sig.)	F-value	(Sig.)	(Adjusted R2)
XX1	0.247	3.864	0.000	11.713	0.000	0.172
XX2	-0.101	-1.386	0.167			
XX3	0.229	3.459	0.001			
XX4	0.098	1.326	0.186			
XX5	-0.006	-0.084	0.933			
XX6	0.025	0.310	0.757			

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher using SPSS software.

From Table (8), it is noted that the model stability of the regression equation is indicated by the significant F-value of (11.713) at a 5% significance level. This implies the ability to estimate customer attitudes through the combined covert marketing techniques. Additionally, the T-value at a 5% significance level indicates that the dimensions (viral marketing, celebrity marketing) within covert marketing

techniques have a significant impact on customer attitudes. The positive β coefficients for viral marketing and celebrity marketing indicate a positive effect, suggesting that the availability of these techniques in the study area's commercial centers enhances customer attitudes. However, the negative β coefficients for brand ambassador marketing and video game marketing indicate a negative but non-

significant effect. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R²) of (0.172) indicates that covert marketing techniques explain 17.2% of the variance in customer attitudes, thereby accepting Sub-Hypothesis 4. Based on the results of the four sub-hypotheses, the main

Hypothesis 4 can be accepted. A simple linear regression equation was also prepared to estimate customer attitudes through the combined covert marketing techniques to determine their overall impact. Table (9) presents the impact results.

Table 9: Results of the impact of combined covert marketing techniques on customer attitudes

Variables	Regression Coefficient (β)	T-value	(Sig.)	F-value	(Sig.)	(R ²)
X	0.331	6.156	0.000	37.891	0.000	0.110

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher using SPSS software.

From Table (9), it is observed that the model stability of the regression equation is indicated by the significant F-value of (37.891) at a 5% significance level. This suggests the ability to estimate customer attitudes through the combined covert marketing techniques. Additionally, the T-value at a 5% significance level (6.156) indicates that the effect is significant. The positive β coefficient (0.331) indicates a positive effect, implying that the availability of combined covert marketing techniques in the study area's commercial centers enhances customer attitudes. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R²) of (0.110) indicates that covert marketing techniques explain 11% of the variance in customer attitudes.

Axis IV: Conclusions and Recommendations

Firstly: Conclusions

Below are the conclusions drawn from the hypotheses testing results in sequential order:

1. The use of non-traditional and contemporary covert marketing techniques, such as promotion through videos, advertisements, purposeful marketing content, and leveraging celebrities with rational presentations of product features and benefits without exaggeration, had a significant impact. It effectively provided information about the offered products, deepened awareness and understanding among store customers about these offers, and directed their purchasing behavior towards products that satisfy their material and psychological needs.
2. The choice of purchasing certain products by store customers was influenced by positive word-of-mouth spread by friends and celebrities on social media platforms about the products' offers. This contributed significantly to building positive perceptions of the researched stores among customers, which played a major role in their purchasing decisions.
3. Relying on advice from friends and celebrities, along with their actual experiences with the stores, proved to be a genuine source of accurate information about products. This direct knowledge and goodwill helped customers make purchases from the stores and repeat their buying behavior for those products from the same stores.
4. There was no substantial and effective impact observed from marketing through video games, music, or brand ambassadors in enhancing purchasing behavior among the researched store customers.

Secondly: Recommendations

1. First Recommendation: Stores should pay more attention to all covert marketing techniques to enhance their

effectiveness and impact on the purchasing behavior of store customers. These innovative promotional techniques rely on excitement and surprise for customers, particularly in marketing through video games, brand ambassadors, and music.

Implementation Mechanism

- a) Employ individuals with the ability and talent to promote offers presented by these stores in a non-traditional manner, both inside and outside the store.
- b) Create innovative advertisements and broadcast them as video games on social media platforms or through display screens inside stores to capture customers' interest, deepen their awareness and knowledge, build a positive perception of the store, and motivate them to purchase promoted products through these techniques.
- c) Focus on creating musical advertisements as a covert marketing method through music, as they are enjoyable, likable, and credible among various segments of customers.

2. Second Recommendation: Continuous attention should be given to factors influencing customer purchasing behavior, understanding them, and exploring how to stimulate behavior towards making purchases, especially considering that these factors are interconnected, and each factor contributes to others because behavior is the result of their interaction.

Implementation Mechanism

- a. Place high importance on forming a clear impression and image of stores and their offers by deepening customers' awareness, which serves as the starting point for purchasing behavior. This can be achieved by providing information about store offers through employing various covert marketing techniques, which are crucial promotional tools for deepening awareness, stimulating purchasing motives, and building positive perceptions.
- b. Stores should actively work to enhance the learning factor as a significant influencer of purchasing behavior by providing customers with positive experiences through offering products of appropriate quality and price, delivering services, and providing a shopping environment that offers enjoyment and comfort. This aims to prolong customers' stay in the store to acquire a distinctive and enjoyable shopping experience that will benefit them in future interactions with the store.

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