

Isn't It a Fake Video? Understanding Consumer Brand Hate and Distrust in the Age of Deepfakes

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Abstract— This paper examines the creation of deepfake videos and their impact on consumer hate toward brands. A qualitative study, based on semi-structured interviews with twelve consumers, analyzed their reactions to a deepfake video shared on YouTube. Findings show how such manipulated content can trigger or amplify negative emotions—including distrust, skepticism, and active resistance—depending on consumers' prior brand perceptions. The study underscores deepfakes' influence on brand perception, ethical evaluations, and trust in digital media, ultimately fostering or intensifying consumer hate. Practically, it offers insights for brand managers and communication professionals, advocating proactive reputation management, media literacy programs, and transparent strategies to counter deepfake risks.

Keywords—Brand hate, deepfake videos, qualitative study, consumer distrust

I. INTRODUCTION

Emotions serve as a key motivator behind all human actions [9]. When it comes to brands, consumers can experience both positive and negative emotions [12]. For a long time, negative emotions toward brands were largely overlooked [3]. However, various studies have highlighted the importance of emotions in consumer decision-making [8]. Recently, brand hate has been underestimated, as many consumers chose to remain silent [1]. Yet, with the rapid rise of Internet usage, consumer voices have grown stronger, reshaping their relationship with businesses [16]. In truth, the presence of negative feelings such as hate is not the core issue. The main challenge for companies lies in neglecting these emotions instead of addressing them directly. According to reference [23], hate is a complex emotion composed of four key feelings: anger, disgust, contempt, and fear.

Recent advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have made it possible to produce highly realistic fake audio and video content. These fabricated media—known as deepfakes—are created by digitally replacing an individual's face or voice to depict actions or statements that never actually occurred [19]. Deepfakes are generated using machine learning techniques and sophisticated algorithms that allow them to closely mimic genuine recordings [14]. The term "deepfake" itself originates from the fusion of "deep learning" and "fake" [14]. Initially, deepfakes emerged by swapping celebrity faces into explicit videos, but they soon began to feature political figures as well [4].

With the emergence of artificial intelligence, it has become easier for people to create fake videos about brands. Deepfakes are widely used across various online communication platforms, especially social media, due to the increasing simplicity of their creation [14]. According to literature, reference [21] have been investigated how political brand hatred and personal moral awareness impact voters' willingness to share political deepfake content. However, few studies have explored deepfake videos in the context of brands, and their potential to reinforce consumer hate toward brands. To fill this research gap, this paper aims to understanding the influence of deepfakes videos on consumer hate towards brand. The research question is as follow: How deepfakes videos reinforce consumer hate towards brand?

The structure of this paper is as follows: we begin by presenting the literature review, followed by the research methodology. Next, we discuss the key findings, and we conclude with the theoretical and practical implications, along with suggestions for future research.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. *Brand hate*

Hate is a deeply rooted and universally experienced human emotion, considered among the most powerful [23]. While people may openly express anger, they seldom admit to feelings of hatred. Instead, they often claim to reject immoral behavior without harboring ill will toward the individual responsible. In cases of personal hatred, many suppress or deny these emotions, often invoking religious or moral principles where hatred is deemed unacceptable [17]. However, when societal pressures are relaxed, individuals may feel freer to display strong emotions like anger more openly.

According to reference [23], reference [17] views brand hate as the “consumers’ detachment from a brand and its associations as a result of consumers’ intense and deeply held negative emotions such as disgust, anger, contempt, devaluation and diminution ...” (p. 432). Building on this, reference [23] offered several important insights into the nature of hate. He pointed out that hate and love are closely linked emotions, and individuals may quickly shift from one to the other depending on context or experiences. Furthermore, hate can be triggered even after a period of affection or admiration. Importantly, Sternberg argued that hate should not be seen merely as the opposite or absence of love. Rather, it is a complex, multifaceted emotion that can exist either independently or alongside love, depending on the situation [23].

B. *Deepfakes videos*

Deepfake technology has become a significant area of interest in the context of technology-based advertising. As noted by reference [22], online videos can provide users with misleading or distorted experiences. The term "deepfake" originates from a blend of "deep learning" and "fake" [14]. This technology utilizes artificial intelligence (AI), deep learning, and machine learning algorithms to merge, replace, or overlay existing images, audio, and video in order to generate synthetic content that closely resembles a particular person [14]. Essentially, deepfakes involve the creation of altered videos containing fabricated information through advanced AI techniques. These tools allow for the realistic insertion or replacement of individuals in media in which they were never actually present. The resulting content can be highly convincing, making it capable of deceiving both viewers and institutions by closely imitating real-life scenarios [22]

Deepfake manipulations can be grouped into several common types. One involves swapping faces or identities, where a neural network maps the facial movements of a person in an original video onto another person’s face, making it appear as though the second person is performing the same actions or speaking the same words. Another technique is facial reenactment, which transfers expressions, eye movements, and head gestures from a source individual to someone else in a target video. Lipsyncing or voice swapping is also widespread; it alters the mouth region of the person in the video to match a specific audio input, making it look like they are saying something they never actually said [19].

C. *Consumer Reactions to Brands Associated with Deepfake Video Manipulations*

Fake content has been around for decades, influencing countless individuals. With the advent of the internet and the growth of social media, misinformation has developed into more sophisticated and varied forms. A significant body of research has emerged to investigate the factors that lead to the spread of fake news online, as well as its consequences [21].

One of the advantage of deepfake video for advertising is that deepfake technology enables companies to break down language barriers by seamlessly translating videos into multiple languages. Using AI, the lip movements and facial expressions of speakers can be adjusted to match the new language, creating a natural-looking result [13].

This allows businesses to produce multiple localized versions of an advertisement from a single original recording. For instance, a brand ambassador or animated character can deliver customized messages to different audiences [19]. Furthermore, ads can be tailored to align with individual consumer preferences or objectives, enhancing personalization.

Previous studies has empirically demonstrated the harmful social impacts of deepfakes, including the development of negative perceptions toward both the videos themselves and the individuals featured in them [7].

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection

For data collection, we conducted an in-person focus group involving six participants. A key selection criterion for inclusion in the study was that participants had not previously viewed the video, ensuring unbiased initial reactions. The objective of this study is to focusing on comprehending Consumer Brand Hate and Distrust in the Age of Deepfake Videos. For instance, Facebook informed The Washington Post that a manipulated video of CEO Mark Zuckerberg— appearing to say, “Whoever controls the data controls the future”—would remain on Instagram despite potential fact-checking flags identifying it as false. This deepfake, created by artists using a 2017 recording, was intended to highlight the persuasive potential of synthetic media and Facebook’s policies regarding their dissemination.

Following reference [20], our sampling approach was guided by two principles: diversification and saturation [20]. First, in line with reference [18], we ensured diversity across clearly defined variables to capture a broad spectrum of attitudes related to the study topic. Second, as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), saturation was considered achieved once data began to repeat, and no new themes or insights emerged. The presence of data redundancy signaled that sufficient depth had been reached in the analysis [10].

We asked eight participants about their attitudes toward a speech after showing them a video as illustrated in appendix 1. Afterward, we revealed that the video was not real (deepfake video) to observe their reactions. The study was conducted using a focus group consisting of eight individuals who had not seen the video prior to the session.

B. Data Analysis

Our qualitative data analysis followed a systematic three-phase coding procedure to ensure methodological rigor. We commenced with open coding, conducting inductive analysis of raw textual data to surface initial themes. Emergent themes often demand further theoretical scrutiny, which led us to the axial coding phase where we organized preliminary codes into conceptually meaningful categories that aligned with our research framework. The final selective coding stage facilitated cross-study comparison and synthesis of key findings. Two researchers to enhance reliability conducted the coding process independently. We calculated inter-coder agreement and achieved an 85% level of consistency in theme identification, confirming the robustness of our coding procedure. We employed QDA Miner software, which provided quantitative validation by detecting recurrent textual patterns and analyzing word frequency distributions (see Appendix 2).

IV. Results and discussion

A. Before Realizing the Video Was Fake

According to our qualitative study, participants expressed varying attitudes toward the video featuring Mark Zuckerberg before being informed that it was a deepfake. These reactions reflected differing levels of consumer trust and brand perception, revealing early signs of consumer hate. Some participants refused to believe the video's authenticity, attributing their skepticism to Facebook's (Meta's) positive brand image. One participant remarked: “I can't believe Zuckerberg would say something like that so openly. It's terrifying to think Facebook has that much control over our data and admits it so shamelessly... This is not true, I believe in Meta.” This suggests a degree of brand loyalty that served as a buffer against negative reactions. According to reference [15], having loyal customers is essential for building a strong customer base and achieving greater market share.

However, other participants readily believed the content, aligning it with their existing negative perceptions of the brand. One participant stated: “This confirms what I already suspected—that they only care about power and control, not about users or privacy.” This reaction reflects a pre-existing consumer hatred, rooted in distrust and skepticism about Facebook’s intentions. In fact, consumers express negative emotions toward a

brand when they dislike it, whereas feelings of affection and strong attachment are shown when they love the brand [1].

The video also triggered calls for consumer action, such as boycotting the platform. As one participant put it: “After hearing this, I don't want to use Facebook anymore. They're clearly abusing our trust and exploiting data for their own gain.” This illustrates an escalation from negative attitude to active resistance, a hallmark of brand hate. In fact, several research on brand hate contributes to the discussion on its consequences by exploring how it directly influences business customer behaviors such as filing complaints, engaging in boycotts, and seeking retaliation [5]. Additionally, some participants viewed the content as deeply unethical, especially regarding data exploitation. One noted: “It's unethical and dangerous for someone in his position to talk about controlling the future through data like it's a business strategy.” These responses collectively reveal how deepfake content—regardless of its authenticity—can reinforce or amplify consumer hatred toward a brand perceived

B. *After Learning the Video Was Fake*

The participants' reactions after learning that the video was fake reveal a complex emotional and cognitive journey, shedding light on how deepfakes can trigger and reshape consumer hate. The first reaction—“I'm shocked. It felt so real. It really fooled me. I'm now questioning how much of what I see online is even true.”—reflects a moment of surprise and reflection. This response illustrates a disruption of trust in visual media and highlights the perceptual uncertainty caused by hyper-realistic deepfake technology.

In the second response—“That's manipulative! I was angry at Zuckerberg, but now I'm angry at whoever made this video to spread lies.”—we observe a clear redirection of anger. Initially, the participant's hatred was aimed at the brand figure (Zuckerberg), but upon discovering the manipulation, the emotional response is transferred to the content creators. The participant frames the creation of the video as a deliberate act of deception, intensifying feelings of betrayal. Deepfakes are highly deceptive, and as the technology continues to advance, they may eventually become indistinguishable from reality [2].

The third reaction—“This makes me distrust everything on social media—even legitimate content. It's exhausting to have to fact-check everything.”—expresses a sense of fatigue and disillusionment. The emotional weight of needing to constantly verify information becomes burdensome, leading to a breakdown in the perceived reliability of all digital content. This kind of reaction reflects the long-term reputational risk that deepfakes pose to platforms and brands alike. Finally, the fourth response—“Even though it was made to prove a point, using someone's face like that crosses a line. It's still misleading and harmful.”—demonstrates ethical concern. The participant acknowledges the intent behind the video but condemns the method, highlighting a moral boundary that was violated. Referring to literature, the lifelike, artificial alteration of expressive behavior introduces new societal and ethical challenges. One major issue is the question of authenticity—since expressive behaviors are typically seen as honest reflections of a person's emotional state, the capacity to manipulate them at will creates opportunities for misleading others [11].

V. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

First, our findings contribute to the evolving literature on brand hate by demonstrating that consumer hatred can be triggered, intensified, or redirected through deepfake content, even when the brand itself is not the source. This extends existing theories by introducing synthetic media as a new antecedent of brand hate, adding to factors like service failure, unethical behavior, or perceived betrayal. Second, this study reinforces the dual role of consumer trust as both a buffer (brand loyalty protecting against hate) and a catalyst (existing distrust amplifying hate). Third, this paper introduces the concept of perceptual uncertainty as a cognitive outcome of encountering deepfakes. This advances marketing theory by identifying how hyper-realistic synthetic content challenges epistemic trust in digital communication—a relatively new and under-theorized area in marketing literature. Finally, our findings suggest that ethical judgments about media manipulation play a critical role in shaping consumer responses.

VI. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This paper has several practical implications. First, this paper allows brands that must prepare for reputational risks caused by deepfakes, even when not responsible for their creation. This calls for proactive crisis communication strategies, including real-time content verification tools and transparent public responses to mitigate backlash and redirect consumer anger appropriately. Second, platforms like Meta should invest in digital literacy education for users, helping them develop critical media consumption skills. By acknowledging the rise of synthetic media, companies can build credibility and position themselves as protectors of truth, potentially regaining lost trust. Third, the finding of our research noticed that brand loyalty can act as a psychological shield suggests that maintaining consistent, positive brand equity is vital. Trust-building efforts—such as privacy protection, ethical leadership, and transparency—can inoculate brands against the impacts of mislead.

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Appendix I

PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

Participants	Age	Gender	Profession
Participant 1	24	Female	Student
Participant 2	45	Male	Employee
Participant 3	32	Female	Director
Participant 4	52	Male	Employee
Participant 5	41	Female	Director
Participant 6	25	Male	Student
Participant 7	47	Female	Responsible of HR
Participant 8	29	Male	Employee

Appendix 2
CODING THEMES

The screenshot displays a document editor interface with a text document open. The document contains several paragraphs of text, each with a coding theme applied to it. The themes are listed in a sidebar on the right side of the document. The themes include:

- Perceived Arrogance or Manipulation
- Loss of Trust in Media or PI
- Call for Boycott
- Concern About Ethical Boundaries
- Distrust and Anger

The text in the document includes:

"I honestly felt betrayed hearing those words come from Zuckerberg. It confirmed every suspicion I had about how Facebook handles our data. It's like they've stopped even trying to hide their abuse of power."

"This video just reinforces how much control they really have. I felt an overwhelming sense of anger—he spoke like someone who thinks he's untouchable, like users don't matter anymore."

"When I heard him say that, I felt a rush of distrust. If this is what their CEO truly believes, then I want nothing to do with that company. They clearly don't have our best interests at heart."

"It's terrifying that someone who runs one of the biggest platforms in the world would talk about data like that. It made me angry and disappointed—how could we let things get to this point?"

"He sounded so cold and calculating, like people were nothing more than data points to manipulate. It was unsettling, and I immediately felt disgusted by the arrogance in his tone."

"The way he spoke about controlling the future using data was extremely disturbing. It felt like he saw himself as a puppet master. That level of arrogance is horrifying."

"This only validates what many of us already think—that Facebook is more concerned about dominating markets and influencing people than protecting our privacy or well-being."

"I listened to the whole clip in disbelief. It was like a dystopian speech. I couldn't believe someone would admit to that kind of manipulation so casually."

"As soon as I heard that, I said to myself, I'm done. I logged into my account just to delete it. If this is what they represent, then I can't be part of it anymore."

"That video made me so uncomfortable that I talked to my friends about quitting Facebook altogether. We can't keep giving our time and data to companies like this."

"After watching that, I felt a responsibility to act. If we just sit by and keep using Facebook, we're enabling this kind of abuse. I don't want to be complicit."

"I've tolerated a lot from social media, but this was the last straw. It's time we boycott these platforms until they're held accountable for what they do with our data."

"There's something deeply wrong with a person in that position talking about controlling people through data as if it's just business. It felt unethical and downright scary."

"It wasn't just disturbing—it was morally offensive. You can't claim to be leading a global community and then talk about people like they're numbers to be managed."