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Feature Article

### **How Infomercials Influence Your Purchasing Decisions This Easter**

Easter in Fiji is a time of celebration, reflection, and togetherness. Families gather for church services, prepare elaborate meals, and open their homes to loved ones. With this comes increased spending on food, household items, decorations, and gifts.

However, this seasonal demand also creates an opportunity for aggressive marketing. While many Fijians are already well versed with traditional advertising and marketing methods, infomercials are a newer, lesser-known phenomenon in the world of marketing.

For those who are unaware, infomercials are long-form information/ demo-based advertisements, traditionally on TV, but now increasingly on digital platforms such as Tiktok. These products can be for kitchen gadgets that promise perfect meals, cleaning tools that claim instant results, and products designed to make hosting effortless. While appealing, these offers are carefully designed to influence behaviour.

This feature article examines how infomercials, particularly those amplified during high-spending seasons like Easter, can influence consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions. It highlights the tactics used in these advertisements, explains why consumers are more vulnerable during this period, and provides practical guidance to help Fijians make informed, confident choices.

#### **Infomercials vs. Regular Advertising: The “Expert” Illusion**

Infomercials differ significantly from traditional advertisements. Instead of delivering a quick message, they create a narrative designed to build trust and urgency over time.

One common tactic involves the use of actors dressed to resemble professionals, such as scientists, chefs, or technicians. These individuals often appear to have expertise in the area of the product or service they are selling. For example, if it is an exercise equipment being sold, a personal trainer or body-builder will often be seen promoting the product and providing testimony. In reality, infomercials often (but not always) utilize actors, and their qualifications are not confirmed. Despite this, the visual impression alone can strongly influence viewers’ trust and make the product seem more reliable.

Another technique is the use of scientific and technical language. Advertisements may include terms like “advanced nano-technology” or “bio-active cleaning system” to give the impression of sophistication and innovation. However, such phrases are often vague, lack proper evidence,

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or have little relevance to the product's actual performance. Their primary purpose is to impress rather than inform.

Infomercials also rely heavily on demonstrations to persuade audiences. These demonstrations often feature side-by-side comparisons and dramatic results that appear convincing at first glance. However, they can be misleading due to carefully controlled conditions, selective editing, or even manipulation of competing products to exaggerate differences. As a result, the outcomes shown may not reflect real-world use.

Together, these strategies create a powerful impression that the product is effective and endorsed by experts. In many cases, however, this perception is deliberately constructed and not based on solid evidence, highlighting the importance of critical evaluation by consumers.

### **Common Marketing Tactics: Beyond the "Sales Pitch"**

Infomercials and "Live" social media sales use psychological triggers that are often so subtle we don't realize we are being influenced. Here is how these tactics look in practice:

- **Price Anchoring (The "Special Price"):** Instead of just saying "Was \$150," modern ads often compare their price to "high-end retail stores" or overseas prices.  
*The Reality:* You might see a kitchen blender advertised for \$89 with the claim that "comparable professional models cost over \$300." This makes the \$89 feel like a steal, even if the build quality is significantly lower than the \$300 model it's being compared to.
- **The "But Wait" Bonus (The Hidden Cost of "Free"):** In Fiji, this often appears as a "Holiday Bundle." For example, if you buy a set of non-stick pots for Easter, they might throw in a "free" 10-piece container set.  
*The Reality:* Often, the cost of the "free" items is already built into the price of the main product. Furthermore, these "bonus" items may be of lower quality, or you might find that there are additional undisclosed charges.
- **Artificial Scarcity (The "Limited Stock" Pressure):** On platforms like TikTok or Facebook Live, this isn't just a countdown timer; it's the presenter saying, "I only have 5 of these left in the Suva warehouse, first 5 to comment 'MINE' gets the discount!"  
*The Reality:* This creates a "herd mentality." Because you see others commenting, you feel a panic to buy immediately. In many cases, the "limited stock" is simply a way to stop you from checking if the same item is available for less at a local hardware store or supermarket.

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- **Emotional Persuasion (Solving "Hidden" Problems):** These ads often target the stress of being a "perfect" host. They show a person struggling, sweating, or failing to clean a house or cook a meal for guests, followed by the "magic" solution.  
*The Reality:* They exaggerate a common frustration, like the difficulty of cleaning a burnt pot, to make their product feel like a necessity rather than a luxury. They sell the relief of a stress-free Easter, not just a cleaning tool.

### **The Easter Influence: Why Consumers Are More Vulnerable**

During Easter, purchasing decisions are often driven by emotion rather than logic.

- **Host Anxiety**

Advertisements target the fear of being judged by friends and families. For example, a phrase such as; “*Don’t let a poor tool ruin your Easter meal,*” seems specifically designed to appeal to the anxieties faced by people who are hosting family get-togethers.

- **The Bundle Trap**

Easter-themed bundles combine one useful product with several low-quality or unnecessary items, increasing the overall price without adding real value.

- **Rise of Digital Infomercials**

Social media platforms such as TikTok and Facebook Live have modernised infomercials. Real-time selling, influencer endorsements, and limited-time deals create a sense of urgency that reduces critical thinking.

In these moments, convenience and emotion can outweigh careful evaluation.

### **Promoting Ethical Advertising in Fiji**

Traders play a critical role in promoting ethical advertising in Fiji, by ensuring fairness and honesty in the marketplace. Businesses are reminded of their obligations to uphold ethical standards in all marketing practices, as these efforts contribute to a more trustworthy and transparent commercial environment.

One key responsibility is the substantiation of claims. Any statement made in advertising, such as “cleans twice as fast,” must be supported by credible evidence. If a claim cannot be verified or proven, it should not be used in promotional materials. This ensures that consumers are not misled and can make informed decisions based on accurate information.

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Transparency is another essential principle. Traders must clearly state all terms and conditions associated with their products or services. Hidden costs, vague refund policies, and fine print can erode consumer trust and create confusion. By being open and clear, businesses demonstrate respect for their customers and foster stronger relationships.

Finally, fair competition is a cornerstone of ethical advertising. When businesses promote their products honestly and avoid deceptive tactics, they contribute to a level playing field in the market. Ethical advertising not only enhances a company's reputation but also builds long-term credibility and strengthens consumer confidence across the marketplace.

### **Consumer Checklist: Making Smarter Choices**

To avoid falling into common infomercial traps, consumers are encouraged to:

#### **✓ Follow the 3-Hour Rule**

Wait at least three hours before making a purchase. This helps reduce impulse decisions driven by urgency.

#### **✓ Compare Locally**

Check for similar products in reputable local stores, as opposed to online ones, where warranties and after-sales support are not often available.

#### **✓ Verify Claims**

Look for independent reviews or evidence before trusting product promises.

#### **✓ Read the Fine Print**

Pay attention to additional fees, return policies, and conditions.

#### **✓ Report Misleading Advertising**

If an offer seems deceptive or too good to be true, report it to the Council to protect others.

### **Final Word: Informed Choices Lead to Better Outcomes**

Infomercials are designed to do more than sell, they are crafted to influence how you as consumers think, feel, and act. Through authority, urgency, and emotional appeal, they can make products seem essential, especially during high-pressure seasons like Easter. However, informed consumers are empowered consumers.

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By taking a moment to pause, question, and compare, one can make decisions based on value rather than persuasion. At the same time, continued awareness and responsible reporting can help promote a marketplace built on transparency, fairness, and trust.

This Easter, enjoy the celebrations, but let informed decision-making guide your purchases, not the pressure of a “limited-time offer.”

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