

**Letter to Editor**

**HOW ADVERTISING INFLUENCES YOUR CHOICES AND PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR WHILE SELECTING TOOTHPASTE**

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**ABSTRACT**

From television to wall murals, advertising is digital, ubiquitous and a powerful force shaping attitudes and behaviour in today's world. Owing to the rising consumer demands across products and services; the upsurge in competition across markets and companies vying for larger market share, advertisements, more precisely manipulative advertisements have become prevalent and the only means of generating revenues for companies that influence in ways we don't even realise.

**Keywords:** Advertising, Purchasing, Advertising Standards Authority, Toothpaste

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With the deluge of products and services in the market, there has been a significant rise in the growth of advertisements in the last few decades in India. With the growing number of producers and products and technological advancements, the traditional signs and billboards are being replaced by digital signage, projections, and interactive surfaces. From television to wall murals, advertising is digital, ubiquitous and a powerful force is shaping attitudes and behavior in today's world. Owing to the rising consumer demands across products and services; the upsurge in competition across markets and companies vying for larger market share, advertisements, more precisely manipulative advertisements have become prevalent and the only means of generating revenues for companies that influence in ways we don't even realise.

The Indian oral care market is presently estimated at Rs. 4200 crores, of which toothpaste contributes the largest chunk, accounting for approximately 75% of the total market.<sup>1</sup> In this day and age, with a huge range of products in the market, there has been a surge in the number of advertisements too. Do you remember seeing a teeth-whitening ad on television that shows the person with bright, white teeth as more attractive? Or an advertisement claiming to make your teeth whiter in a period of three weeks which will suddenly make you a hero among your family and friends? Ads sell toothpaste, not because of its dental hygiene benefits, but because whiter teeth would presumably increase an individual's sex appeal. Advertisements work on human psychology and appeal to three innate emotions: love, fear, and rage. Commonly, it is difficult to accept that such commercials create significant memories of a product in our mind as we think that we are in complete control of our choices. However, the truth is that it drives our emotions to create a profound effect on how we think and the choices we make.

A few years ago, one of the leading oral hygiene brands in India released an ad which appeared on posters and television claiming that more than 80 percent of dentists recommend its toothpaste which was utterly misleading and was banned by The UK's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The ASA expelled the slogan after discovering that the campaign was in breach of advertising rules. India being a growing economy and a largely populated country, it combines individuals from all sections of the society. Therefore, consumers are susceptible to perplexed and fabricated advertising as they look for best deals at the best price. This becomes an added advantage for organizations desperately looking to increase their sales targets. Despite how much you think you ignore such advertisements, and how little you may believe they affect you, that's not necessarily the case. Although comprehensive and legal framework to regulate deceptive and misleading advertising in India exists, the practice continues almost unabated. Consumers must voice their opinion against unscrupulous companies/organisations violating their rights and report such cases to the enforcement agencies such as The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) and of its supportive organisation, the Consumer Complaints Council (CCC), which play the role of a watchdog to safeguard the rights and interests of people.

**CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

Declare none

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