



CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS THE USE OF EXAGGERATED BENEFITS IN THE ADVERTISEMENT OF TOOTHPASTE BRANDS IN YENAGOA, BAYELSA NIGERIA

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Abstract

The researcher evaluated consumer perception and behaviour towards the use of exaggerated benefits in the advertisements of toothpaste brands in Nigeria. Perception theory and elaboration likelihood model served the theoretical purpose for the study. The survey research design was employed with a study population of 524,400 from which a sample size of 373 was arrived at using the Australian online sample size calculator. The multi-stage sampling technique was employed, while questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Results indicated that 63.5% of the respondents affirmed that they always come across toothpaste brands' advertisements very frequently, with TV (82.7%) being the major source of exposure to the advertisements. This shows that the respondents' level of exposure to toothpaste brands' advertisements is very high. At a mean of 3.5, the respondents recognize exaggerated benefit claims in toothpaste advertisements to a high extent. It was also found in the study that the respondents perceive the use of exaggerated benefits claims in the advertisements of toothpaste brands to be deceptive, misleading, annoying and untrustworthy at a mean of 2.9. Further result showed that, at a mean of 3.0, exaggerated benefit claims in toothpaste advertisements have influenced the consumers' purchase decisions of toothpaste brands. Brand reputation, brand consistency and availability, quality, price and recommendations influence the consumers' choice of toothpaste brands. The researcher, concluded that, the use of exaggerated benefits in toothpaste advertisement affects consumers' trust in toothpaste brands, thereby, can lead to unrepeated patronage and brand disloyalty. It was recommended that, toothpaste manufacturers should refrain from making exaggerated or scientifically unsubstantiated claims in their advertisements. Also, toothpaste brands should emphasis the attributes of their products in their marketing strategies, as a way of ensuring alignment between advertising messages and actual product performance.

Keywords: Consumer, Behaviour, Toothpaste, Advertisement, Bayelsa

Introduction

Advertisement plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour by influencing perceptions, attitudes, and purchase intentions. It serves as a vital source of information, allowing consumers to become aware of various products and brands. Through strategic messaging and the use of brand ambassadors, such as celebrities, brands enhance their appeal and recognition among target audiences (Suguna & Vikashini, 2024; Etumnu et al., 2026). Sakthi (2022) notes that the buying behaviour of customers are largely influenced by advertisements till date. However, Suguna and Vikashini (2024) claimed that not all advertisements adhere to ethical standards; some may be misleading, exaggerating product benefits or making false claims. Such practices can manipulate consumer perceptions and potentially harm their interests. This is why Mohammed (2018) opines that false or misleading advertisements have, in the recent past been on the rise as a result of businesses seeking to compete for customers. In his study, he found that while misleading advertisements tend to provide overtly more positive information than is necessary, such positivity tends to result in negative experience for customers.

When advertisers engage in misleading or false advertising, consumer choice is affected because consumers are unfairly convinced to believe in the messages of the advertisers, which affect their judgment. Misleading advertising either compels consumers to purchase items at a higher price or at a lesser quality than what they wanted, or to purchase the wrong product or service (Kariyawasam & Wigley, 2017). In the world of competition and greed to earn a huge chunk of profit, some of them do not put the health of the consumers under consideration, they want to sell their products off at any cost. As a result, they indulge in promoting products through advertisements with false information (Sakthi, 2022).

In Yenagoa, Nigeria, the toothpaste market is primarily led by both international and local brands that are fiercely competing for consumer loyalty. Consequently, advertisements have become increasingly dramatic, often highlighting benefits that exceed realistic expectations.

However, as noted by Schiffman and Wisenblit (2015), consumer behaviour is influenced by a variety of psychological, social, and cultural factors, and advertising significantly influences perceptions and purchasing decisions. Okoro and Ekanem (2020) contend that the advertising environment in Nigeria offers a distinctive context, where regulatory oversight by organizations such as the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON, previously APCON) is still limited, granting brands some flexibility in bending the truth.

Some of the notable toothpaste brands in Nigeria with their slogans include: Pepsodent, with the slogan ““Gets Your Teeth Their Whitest””; Colgate “Stronger, healthier gums.”; “It stays on the job fighting cavities”; Sensodyne “Stop the pain, start the soothing”; Maclean “Did you Maclean your teeth today Daisy?”; Close-Up “The Closer, The Better”; Dabur Herbal “Go natural with Dabur”; Oral-B “Recharge your smile”; Longrich “a remarkable blend of tooth protection and care”; Aquafresh Toothpaste “Feel good protection”.

Although, exaggeration is common in advertising, there seems to be a few or no studies in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, that have specifically examined consumer perception and behaviour regarding exaggerated benefits of oral care products’ advertisement, thereby, highlighting a void this study intends to address. It is therefore, against this backdrop, that this study was carried out to evaluate consumer perception and behaviour towards the use of exaggerated benefits in the advertisement of toothpaste brands in Nigeria, with focus among consumers in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Statement of Problem

In Nigeria, the advertising of toothpaste has become increasingly aggressive, with brands promoting exaggerated benefits that may lack clinical validation or regulatory endorsement. This issue is particularly concerning in a context where consumer education and awareness differ significantly due to socio-economic and literacy gaps (Oluwafemi & Adebayo, 2018). Research indicates that vulnerable consumers, particularly those with lower educational attainment, are more inclined to accept such claims at face value, which could result in hope defeat, distrust, and dissatisfaction after their purchases (Bello, 2021). While exaggeration in advertising is a worldwide issue, its influence may be more pronounced in developing nations like Nigeria, where the enforcement of advertising regulations is inconsistent. Despite the existence of regulatory bodies such as the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), the enforcement of advertising standards, particularly for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) brands remain inadequate, thereby, permitting some brands to continue spreading misleading information (Okoro & Ekanem, 2020).

Moreover, there could be an increasing concern that ongoing exposure to exaggerated claims may not only mislead consumers but also undermine brand credibility and erode consumer trust over time. Nevertheless, there is a dearth in empirical research in this regard, investigating how consumers in this population interpret these exaggerated messages, and how such interpretations affect their purchasing

behaviour and loyalty towards toothpaste brands, is still limited. The lack of this data signifies a considerable void in the literature concerning marketing and consumer behaviour. In the absence of insights into the psychological and behavioural effects of these marketing tactics, brand managers may achieve immediate profits but jeopardize long-term brand equity. Simultaneously, regulators seem deprived of a solid evidence foundation to formulate more stringent policy guidelines. Consequently, this study aimed to investigate consumer perceptions and behaviours regarding the use of exaggerated claims in toothpaste advertisements.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study was to evaluate consumer perception and behaviour towards the use of exaggerated benefits in the advertisements of toothpaste brands in Nigeria. Specific objectives were to:

1. Find out the level of exposure of consumers in Bayelsa to brands of toothpastes' advertisements.
2. Ascertain the perceptions of consumers in Bayelsa about the use of exaggerated benefits claims in the advertisements of toothpaste brands.
3. Examine whether exaggerated benefit claims in toothpaste advertisements influence the purchase decisions of toothpaste brands among consumers in Bayelsa

Literature Review

Conceptual

Exaggerated/Misleading Advertisement

This is a form of advertising that conveys a false impression or there is a significant chance that confusion is caused or that information is misleading and not just an abstract risk to a reasonable person viewing the advertisement. Falsity or confusion can be either in the advertisement's literal or implied meanings. Whether the advertisement has caused any harm or injury to consumers is not necessary. Misleading advertising includes exaggerating and overstating, expressing unrealistic attributes of the product, use of professional concepts for more effect, fake licenses, false warranties, use of cinematic tricks and misleading images, discounts, and gifts. Misleading advertisements cause viewers to misunderstand or make incorrect decisions. False advertisements are those that are inconsistent with facts (Afolayan & Awwal-Bolanta, 2024).

Misleading advertisement aims to showcase an advertisement to be the best in the market in order to increase sales. One of the most common methods is product exaggeration, but it cannot be a little exaggeration it has to be full on otherwise the advertisement would not get the expected attention (Gendre et al., 2018). It is mostly misleading claims that have been differentiated from puffing. Puffing refers to exaggerated claim of a product based on the sellers' opinion or taste (Rabiatuladawiah & Rahman, 2018), for example, when an advertisement promotes and exaggerates the benefits of a health supplement and downplays the side effects. Advertisements that are recognized as misleading by customers make them sensitive to all forms of advertising. Saeed et al. (2013) stated that the misrepresentation of information in advertising can be oral or written. Misleading advertisements encourage irresponsible behaviour or represents people in an irresponsible way claimed that it is very difficult to assess the impact of misleading advertisement on consumer's behaviour due to the complexity of features and consumers' purchase for a variety of reasons. Ahmed et al. (2022) argued that sometimes advertisements may try misleading two different people, but this will only affect one's economic behaviour while the other economic behaviour will not be affected.

False Advertising

False advertising is a form of advertising that is used in a false, misleading or unproven way to attract customers, where advertisers do not disclose the full truth about product features or information. In most countries, the use of false advertising is illegal. It is illegal to misrepresent a product's quality, specification, composition, manufacturer, price or place of origin (Mohammed, 2018). It is said that there are three approaches of false advertising, and these approaches are what shapes a consumer mind globally. The three means or approaches are fraud, falsity, and misleading. The common views concerning components of advertising communication are that they consist of the advertiser, the message itself and resultant consumer beliefs regarding a false advertisement (Mohammed, 2018). Early contributors like Nelson (1974) in Ahmed, Othman and Jaafar (2022) stated that false advertising is a contest among marketers. Hasan, Subhani and Mateen (2011) defined false advertising as an activity of lying, deceiving and give out false information. When advertisements suggest a customer what to buy then a customer is considered vulnerable. False advertisements that engages in the act of untruthfulness affects a consumer's choice. The consumer's choice is affected due to the fact that these consumers were unfairly convinced and misinformed by the message that advertisers displayed and that affects their judgments (Kariyawasam & Wigley, 2017).

Influence of Brand Advertisement on Consumer Behaviour

Brand advertisement has become an increasingly popular marketing tactic in recent years, as it has been proven to have a major impact on consumer behaviour. Using stories to establish an emotional connection between a brand and its customers can result in improved brand loyalty, good brand connotations, and, eventually, increased sales. Consumer behaviour has been found to be significantly influenced by brand narrative. Consumers are more likely to develop positive views toward a brand when they are exposed to a brand narrative that resonates with their emotions, values, and aspirations. Storytelling can affect consumers' intents to purchase from a business and cultivate long-term loyalty (Scott, 2017). When customers can see themselves in the brand's story, they are more likely to form a personal connection with the brand and establish loyalty. This can result in more repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth referrals (Jesús & Yagüe, 2019).

Empirical Review

Mohammed (2018) in his study "Impact of misleading/false advertisement to consumer behaviour" suggested that misleading and false advertising changes consumers' behaviour by causing them not to trust any kind of advertising, even genuine one. It found that while misleading advertisements tend to provide overtly more positive information than is necessary, such positivity tends to result in negative experience for customers.

In the study by Ayar (2024), it was revealed that deceptive adverts made by influencers negatively affect their attractiveness and significantly reduce purchase intentions. In contrast, exaggerated advertisements do not affect purchase intention. As expected, influencers' attractiveness is positively related to purchase intention.

Abdulbaqi (2020) found that there was a positive correlation between deceptive advertising and the buying behaviour among university students, and also, there was positive correlation between advertising deception and word of mouth that affect buying behaviour among university students.

Nessah (2024) in the study entitled "theoretical study on advertising deception and its impact on consumers", revealed that deceptive advertising uses various misleading techniques such as false promises, fake testimonials, partial disclosures, incomplete descriptions, false comparisons, bait-and-switch tactics, and visual deceptions to influence consumer behaviour by creating false desires and exaggerating product benefits. It was also indicated that deceptive advertising damages organizational trust and reputation,

reducing customer support and brand loyalty; it distort societal values and beliefs, fostering negativity and reducing social cooperation and stability; it negatively affects consumers' mental health, causing frustration and disappointment. Also, it was found that deceptive advertising undermines consumer confidence in their decision-making abilities, harming relationships with advertisers. It was therefore, concluded that advertising deception negatively affects both consumer psychology and the organization's reputation, in addition to a decline in customer support and loyalty to the brand.

The findings of Maheen and Mehrukh (2023) depicted that advertisers make use of moral decoupling strategies in developing countries as it becomes easier for the consumers to get influenced by a transgressor. After identifying the deception in an advertisement, it becomes necessary to analyse the role of consumers' ethical decision-making abilities in order to determine their buying behaviours. Moral intensity, perceived risks and moral judgements have a significant impact on consumers' ethical decision-making abilities. However, consumers' perception regarding a deceptive claim was not found to have any significant impact on their buying behaviour. The relation only becomes significant in the presence of consumers' ethical decision-making abilities.

Meanwhile, Jindal and Singla (2018) revealed in their study that preference to product attributes, inducement by advertisements, misleading advertisements, sticking to the brand already using, and decision after comparing different source were the factors derived out of consumer purchase behaviour. The study concluded that features and TV advertisements emerged as the major factors determining the consumer purchase behaviour.

Theatrical Framework

The theory of perception and elaboration likelihood model formed the theoretical foundation for this study.

Theory of Perception

Propounded by Immanuel Kant in 1902. According to Kant, imagination forms images in perception. He further opines that imagination is an essential element of perception itself (Kant, 2012). While the main idea occupies the view that images are produced through our receptive sensible capacities, Kant differs as he maintains that 'something more' is needed.

This theory is relevant to this study in that it underscores the varying views, opinions, reactions, and conceptions of people towards a particular course. Therefore, the views, interpretations, reactions and opinions of toothpaste consumers in Bayelsa towards the use of exaggerated benefit claims in toothpaste advertisements was examined given that consumers receive, react and interpret media messages differently.

Elaboration Likelihood Theory

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) or theory of persuasion is a dual process theory developed by Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo in 1980 that attempts to explain how attitudes are formed and changed by processing stimuli (Asemah et al., 2022). According to Inyang (2020), the impression of this theory is that the persuasion level of a message can affect the desired effect of the message.

Thus, Yocco (2014) avers that "the elaboration likelihood theory attempts to explain how attitudes are shaped, formed and reinforced by persuasive arguments. The basic idea is that when someone is presented with information, some level of "elaboration" occurs". 'Elaboration in this context means the effort someone makes to evaluate, remember and accept or reject a message.

In this context, the persuasion level of the use of exaggerated benefits claims in toothpaste advertisements by various brands can affect the desired effect of the target message.

Methodology

Research Design

Survey research design which according to Mills (2024), one of its key strengths lies in its ability to provide a snapshot of trends or opinions within a population, thereby, allowing the researcher to generalize findings and make informed decisions, was employed for the study. The survey method was chosen because of its wide view and accommodative nature to measure human opinion and perception (Alaekwe et al., 2025). Survey research design which according to Mills (2024), one of its key strengths lies in its ability to provide a snapshot of trends or opinions within a population, thereby, allowing the researcher to generalize findings and make informed decisions, was employed for the study. The survey method was chosen because of its wide view and accommodative nature to measure human opinion and perception.

Sampling Technique and Instrument for Data Collection

Multistage sampling technique was employed to select the representatives of the sample. The first stage, there are 21 communities within the study area namely; Igbogene, Yenegwe, Akenfa, Edepie, Agudama, Akenpai, Etegwe, Okutukutu, Opolo, Biogbolo, Yenizue-Gene, Kpansia, Yenizue-Epie, Okaka, Azikoro, Ekeki, Amarata, Onopa, Ovom, and Swali. In the second stage, the researcher purposively selected six towns: Ovom, Amarata, Onopa, Ekeki, Kpansia and Yenizue-Epie. The justification for the selection of the towns was based on proximity, accessibility, linkage and connectivity of the towns to each other. In stage three, the selected towns were used to divide the sample size in order to ascertain the number of persons that were selected from each of the towns. In stage four, the researcher purposively sampled 62 respondents in each community. Questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. The questions were structured in a closed-ended format using the 4-point Likert scale. The questionnaire contained questions like yes” “no” “can’t say; and Likert scale questions such as “very high” “high” “moderate” “low” “strongly agree”, agree, “disagree” and “strongly disagree”. Simple percentages and mean analysis were used to analyse the data.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data generated from the field was presented in tables using numbers, frequency and mean analysis. Out of the 373 distributed instruments, 364 (97.6%) copies were retrieved and analysed. This means that 9 (2.4%) copies were invalid for the analysis as a result of inaccuracies and inconstancy of the respondents, while the return rate was 97.6%.

Research Question One: What is the level of exposure of consumers in Yenagoa to brands of toothpastes’ advertisements?

Table 1: Responses of respondents on whether they have come across any toothpaste brands’ advertisement before?

| Items | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Yes | 364 | 100 |
| No | 0 | 10 |
| Total | 364 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey 2025

All the respondents are exposed to toothpaste brands’ advertisements.

Table 2: Responses of respondents on their sources of exposure to toothpaste brands' advertisements?

| Items | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|------------|------------|
| TV | 301 | 82.7 |
| Radio | 16 | 4.3 |
| Social media | 21 | 5.8 |
| Newspaper/Magazine | 12 | 3.3 |
| Billboard | 14 | 3.9 |
| Total | 364 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey 2025

The analysis indicated that a majority (82.7%) of the respondents are exposed to toothpaste brands' advertisements on TV. This implies that TV is the major source of the respondents' exposure to toothpaste brands' advertisements, followed by social media.

The cluster table format was used to provide answers to the question.

Table 3: Respondents' responses on how frequent they come across toothpaste brands' advertisements

| Items | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|------------|------------|
| Very Frequently | 231 | 63.5% |
| Frequently | 100 | 27.5% |
| Rarely | 21 | 5.8 |
| Can't Say | 12 | 3.3 |
| Total | 364 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 3 shows that 63.5% of the respondents affirmed that they always come across toothpaste brands' advertisements very frequently. This therefore, means that the majority of the respondents have a very high level of exposure to toothpaste brands' advertisements.

Research Question Three: What are the perceptions of consumers in Yenagoa about the use of exaggerated benefits claims in the advertisements of toothpaste brands?

The cluster table format was used to provide answers to the question.

Table 5: Responses of respondents on their perception about the use of exaggerated benefits claims in the advertisements of toothpaste brands

| Option | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | Decision |
|--|-----|-----|----|----|------------|-----------------|
| I feel the use of exaggerated benefits in toothpaste advertisements is deceptive | 185 | 156 | 10 | 13 | 3.4 | Accepted |
| I think the use of exaggerated benefits in toothpaste advertisements is misleading | 161 | 195 | 3 | 6 | 3.4 | Accepted |
| I believe think exaggerated benefits in toothpaste advertisements are not credible | 167 | 177 | 9 | 11 | 3.3 | Accepted |
| I find exaggerated benefits in toothpaste advertisements annoying | 153 | 156 | 31 | 24 | 3.2 | Accepted |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------|-----------------|
| | | | | | | |
| I trust the exaggerated claims in toothpaste advertisements | 22 | 26 | 156 | 160 | 1.8 | Rejected |
| I feel the relevant regulatory bodies should enforce penalty against the use of exaggerated benefits in toothpaste advertisements | 177 | 170 | 10 | 7 | 3.4 | Accepted |
| I think am very much comfortable with the exaggerated benefit claims used in toothpaste advertisements | 26 | 31 | 129 | 178 | 1.7 | Rejected |
| Grand Mean | | | | | 2.9 | Accepted |

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Decision rule: Given that the benchmark of a 4-point Likert scale for decision is 2.5, it means that if the calculated mean is 2.5-4.0, then the item in question is accepted. However, if the calculated mean is 1-2.4, then the item in question is rejected.

Result of the mean analysis on the perception perceptions of consumers in Yenagoa about the use of exaggerated benefits claims in the advertisements of toothpaste brands indicated that at a mean of 2.9, which is above the benchmark rule shows that the respondents perceive the use of exaggerated benefits claims in the advertisements of toothpaste brands to be deceptive, misleading, annoying, and untrustworthy.

Research Question Four: What influence does exaggerated benefit claims in toothpaste advertisements have on the purchase decisions of toothpaste brands among consumers in Yenagoa? The cluster table format was used to provide answers to the question.

Table 6: Responses of respondents on the influence exaggerated benefit claims in toothpaste advertisements have on their purchase decisions of toothpaste brands

| Option | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | Decision |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|-----------------|
| I have bought a toothpaste brand because of the benefits I got from the brands' advertisement | 121 | 152 | 51 | 30 | 2.9 | Accepted |
| Exaggerated benefit claims in a toothpaste brand advertisement has convinced me into recommending the brand to a friend/family | 111 | 131 | 77 | 45 | 2.8 | Accepted |
| My choice of toothpaste brand has always been influenced by the exaggerated claims in the brands' advertisements | 21 | 30 | 162 | 151 | 1.8 | Rejected |
| My choice of toothpaste brand is influenced by brand reputation | 139 | 161 | 40 | 24 | 3.2 | Accepted |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|----|----|------------|-----------------|
| My choice of toothpaste brand is influenced by brand consistency and availability | 200 | 170 | 1 | 2 | 3.5 | Accepted |
| Quality influence my choice of toothpaste brand | 188 | 145 | 14 | 17 | 3.4 | Accepted |
| Price and recommendations influence my choice of toothpaste brand | 149 | 178 | 25 | 12 | 3.2 | Accepted |
| Grand Mean | | | | | 3.0 | Accepted |

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Decision rule: Given that the benchmark of a 4-point Likert scale for decision is 2.5, it means that if the calculated mean is 2.5-4.0, then the item in question is accepted. However, if the calculated mean is 1-2.4, then the item in question is rejected.

Result of the analysis indicates that, at a mean of 3.0, exaggerated benefit claims in toothpaste advertisements have influenced the consumers' purchase decisions of toothpaste brands.

Discussion of Findings

Analysis showed that all the respondents are exposed to toothpaste brands' advertisements. TV (82.7%) is the major source of the respondents' exposure to toothpaste brands' advertisements, followed by social media. 63.5% of the respondents affirmed that they always come across toothpaste brands' advertisements very frequently, which means that the majority of the respondents have a very high level of exposure to toothpaste brands' advertisements.

Result of the mean analysis on the perceptions of consumers in Yenagoa about the use of exaggerated benefits claims in the advertisements of toothpaste brands indicated that at a mean of 2.9, which is above the benchmark rule shows that the respondents perceive the use of exaggerated benefits claims in the advertisements of toothpaste brands to be deceptive, misleading, annoying and untrustworthy. The respondents were of the opinions that the relevant regulatory bodies should enforce penalty against the use of exaggerated benefits in toothpaste advertisements. Comparing this result to previous findings, Maheen and Mehrukh (2023) found that consumers' perception regarding a deceptive claim was not found to have any significant impact on their buying behaviour. The relation only becomes significant in the presence of consumers' ethical decision-making abilities.

These findings was also highlighted in Nessah (2024) which indicated that deceptive advertising damages organizational trust and reputation, reducing customer support and brand loyalty; it distort societal values and beliefs, fostering negativity and reducing social cooperation and stability; it negatively affects consumers' mental health, causing frustration and disappointment. Also, it was found that deceptive advertising undermines consumer confidence in their decision-making abilities, harming relationships with advertisers.

This result reflects the theory of perception which served as one of the theoretical frameworks for the study. The respondents perceive the use of exaggerated benefits claims in the advertisements of toothpaste brands to be deceptive, misleading, annoying and untrustworthy. Also, the elaboration likelihood model underscores these findings. This is because, the persuasion level of the use of exaggerated benefits claims in toothpaste advertisements by various brands can affect the desired effect of the target message. Result revealed that at a mean of 3.0, exaggerated benefit claims in toothpaste advertisements have influenced the consumers' purchase decisions of toothpaste brands as they have bought a toothpaste brand

because of the benefits they got from the brands' advertisement; they have been convinced by exaggerated benefit claims in a toothpaste brand advertisement leading to them recommending the brand to a friend/family. However, the respondents indicated that their choice of toothpaste brand is not always influenced by the exaggerated claims in the brands' advertisements. Instead, brand reputation, brand consistency and availability, quality, price and recommendations influence the consumers' choice of toothpaste brands. This result agrees with the findings of Jindal and Singla (2018) which revealed that preference to product attributes, inducement by advertisements, misleading advertisements, sticking to the brand already using, and decision after comparing different source were the factors derived out of consumer purchase behaviour. The study concluded that features and TV advertisements emerged as the major factors determining the consumer purchase behaviour. Similarly, Maheen and Mehrukh (2023) found that moral intensity, perceived risks and moral judgements have a significant impact on consumers' ethical decision-making abilities.

However, Nessah (2024) concluded that advertising deception negatively affects both consumer psychology and the organization's reputation, in addition to a decline in customer support and loyalty to the brand. Corroborating further, Ayar (2024) revealed that deceptive adverts made by influencers negatively affect their attractiveness and significantly reduce purchase intentions. In contrast, exaggerated advertisements do not affect purchase intention. As expected, influencers' attractiveness is positively related to purchase intention. Mohammed (2018) found that while misleading advertisements tend to provide overtly more positive information than is necessary, such positivity tends to result in negative experience for customers.

Conclusion

When advertisers engage in misleading or false advertising, consumer choice is affected because consumers are unfairly convinced to believe in the messages of the advertisers, which affect their judgment. Exaggerated advertising can result in misinformation, distortion of consumer trust, and ultimately, result in a negative perception of the brand. This practice is an unethical practice that does not reflect products' features/attributes. From the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that the use of exaggerated benefits in toothpaste advertisement affects consumers' trust in toothpaste brands, thereby, can lead to unrepeatable patronage and brand disloyalty.

Recommendations

Given the strength of the findings of this study, the researcher thus, put forward the following recommendations:

1. There is need for toothpaste brands to implement responsible and ethical advertising practices. This is because, high visibility present opportunities for brand engagement. Therefore, marketers must guarantee that the contents of their advertisements is accurate, verifiable, and not misleading in order to uphold consumer trust.
2. Toothpaste manufacturers should refrain from making exaggerated or scientifically unsubstantiated claims in their advertisements. Rather, they should concentrate on conveying authentic product benefits that are backed by clinical evidence or consumer testimonials.
3. Advertisers should embrace transparent messaging strategies and ensure that all claims made in promotional contents are clearly articulated and substantiated. This is because, building trust through honest communication will foster long-term brand loyalty.
4. Toothpaste brands should emphasise the attributes of their products in their marketing strategies, as a way of ensuring alignment between advertising messages and actual product performance.

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