

# Miscommunication in Mass Communication in Advertising - A Farce or a Fact

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## Abstract

*The purpose of advertising is to persuade the audience and to bring in some awareness amongst the people. The role of an advertisement is mainly to induce the customer by catching his/her attention and driving towards the advertised product or service. This calls for a need to professionally phrase the message to be conveyed through advertising as a mass media. Communication plays a dominant role in advertising of product or services. Although this awareness is brought, many advertisements can be misinterpreted by the audience and mislead them. Sometimes the message or information about the utility of the product may not reach the target audience as desired or is liable to be mis-communicated. This paper attempts to highlight the communication used in advertising of personal care brands or FMCG. Today's customers are confused about deciding between reliable and unreliable products. This is mainly due to advertisements that give information about the product. Many a time different companies advertise the same product highlighting different aspects which leaves the customer totally confused. The consumer is not able to choose and take an informed decision based on the advertisements and what they claim to be. This calls for a need to make an empirical study. The findings of this study will be useful for customers to ensure that they don't get misled.*

**Key Words:** Communication, Miscommunication, Advertisement, Product, Customers.

## 1. Introduction:

Communication in an advertisement is done primarily to persuade the prospective buyers and entice and lure them to make the purchase. Communication plays a dominant role in advertising of products and services. At the same time many advertisements can be misinterpreted by the audience and mislead them. Sometimes the message or information about the utility of the product may not reach the target audience as desired or be mis-communicated. By doing so, advertisements by and large mislead and misconstrue the buyer.

In today's world, subliminal techniques are used in advertising and for propaganda purposes. Sometimes, subliminal messages in advertisements circumvent the critical functions of the conscious mind and they end up being more powerful and convincing than the ordinary suggestions. This leads to a persuasive or an influenced communication to the buyer leading to buying a product or service.

Certain products like fairness creams claim to show overnight results for a fairer complexion and success in life. Similarly, certain celebrity endorsed products promise instant results. These misleading promises compel consumers to buy the product.

## 2. Literature Review:

Burke et al. (1988) examined four types of claims: no attribute information, truth, expansion implications, and inconspicuous qualification implications. They find that expansion and inconspicuous qualification implications increase respondents' "false attribute beliefs about headache pain relief, side effects, and speed of relief.

Pechmann (1996), a company claims that it charges the lowest rate for a particular service but does not mention that it charges more than competitors for other required services. Due to erroneous inferences, respondents tend to believe that this company has the lowest overall price. Erroneous inferences can expand beyond the claimed attributes.

Barone and Miniard (1999), expose respondents to a partially comparative advertisement containing a combination of comparative and non-comparative claims. The processing of one claim affects beliefs about other claims in the same advertisement. In this process, respondents acquire the belief that the advertised brand is better than the competitor, not only in terms of the attributes featured in the comparative claim, but also those in the non-comparative claims.

Tugrulter (2017), opined that miscommunication, misunderstanding, and the misses of communication in general cannot be absolutely and definitively separated from communication proper as they are part and parcel of communication, indicating communication's difference within, its differential makeup. Miscommunication uncannily resides in communication.

### 3. Research Design:

#### Statement of Problem

In a highly competitive market for Personal care products in FMCG, while transforming communication into profit (by giving good information on product, more customers are attracted towards a product which in turn gives more sales), advertisers employ lot of techniques to convince the customers to buy the advertised product / service. Sometimes, these advertised products may not yield the desired results especially in case of skin care or health care products. Therefore, it is relevant to make a study on "miss-communication in mass communication."

#### Objectives:

1. To ascertain the respondents buying the product/service on the basis of an advertisement.
2. To ascertain the extent of miss-communication (miss-construed) in mass communication in personal care products.

#### Scope of the Study

The scope of the study was restricted to the respondents of different parts of Bangalore city, few parts of Mysore, and few respondents of San Jose, California. Further, the study was conducted on few skin care and few health care brands only in personal care products in FMCG segment.

#### Type of Study

Exploratory method of research was employed as it entails exploring how far the advertisement gives factual information about the product and the extent of the respondents miss-construed by the advertisement.

#### Research Methodology

The data was collected by means of structured open-ended questionnaire. The collected data was thoroughly edited and was subject to analysis by means of suitable title, table and figures. The suitable findings were arrived based on the analysis and relevant suggestions were given. As the scope of the study was limited, 60 respondents were chosen. Convenience sampling was employed where-in the respondents were influenced by advertisement and bought the product for consumption was selected.

#### Hypotheses

**H0:** The advertisement of skin care and health care products do not miss-communicate the target audience.

**H1:** The advertisement of skin care and health care products miss-communicate the target audience.

## Testing of Hypothesis

Chi-square method was employed to test the hypotheses. The level of significance was fixed at 5%. When P value was greater than 5%, Null Hypothesis was accepted. On the other hand, when Chi-square value was greater than 5%, Alternate Hypothesis was accepted.

### Limitations:

1. The time of the study was very less.
2. The views and expressions by the respondents may not be generalised.

### Meaning of the terms used in the study:

1. **FMCG:** Fast Moving Consumer Goods, these are the goods which do not remain for a longer time in the retailer's shelves.
2. **Advertising:** is a paid form of persuading the customers by means of non-personal messages to purchase a brand/product of the advertiser.
3. **Miss-communication:** also termed as miss-construed, is not interpreting the advertisement in a proper way as it is advertised.
4. **Mass communication:** Communication addressed to people watching the mass media like newspaper, TV, Internet etc.
5. **Skin Care Products:** The existing brands related to skin care by different players in the market.
6. **Hair Care Products:** The existing brands related to hair care by different FMCG players in the market.

## Analysis of Data

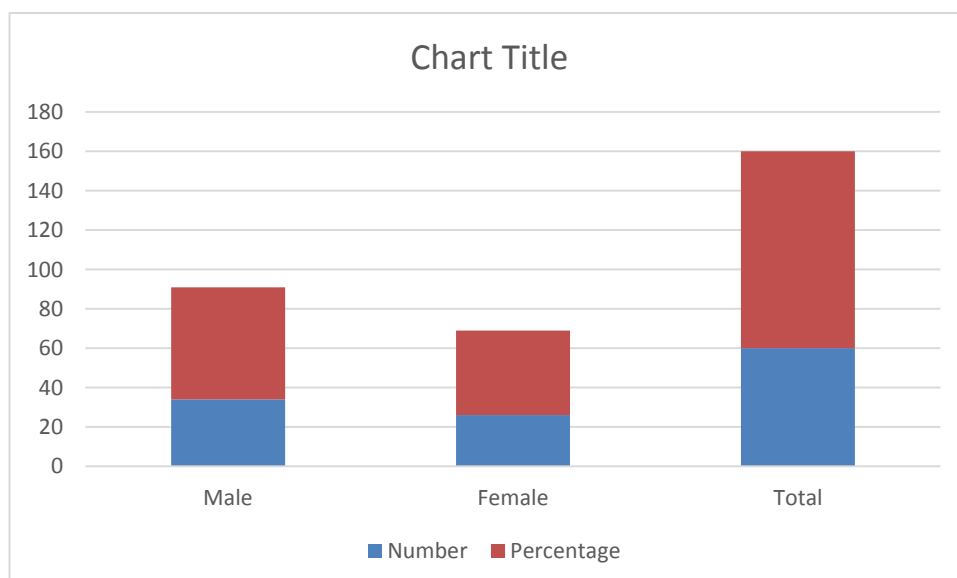
After collection of data from the respondents as planned, the data was analysed as shown below

**Table No 1: Gender of the Respondents**

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	34	57
Female	26	43
Total	60	100

**Interpretation:** Out of the total respondents males were 34 females were 26

**Figure No 1: Gender of the Respondents**

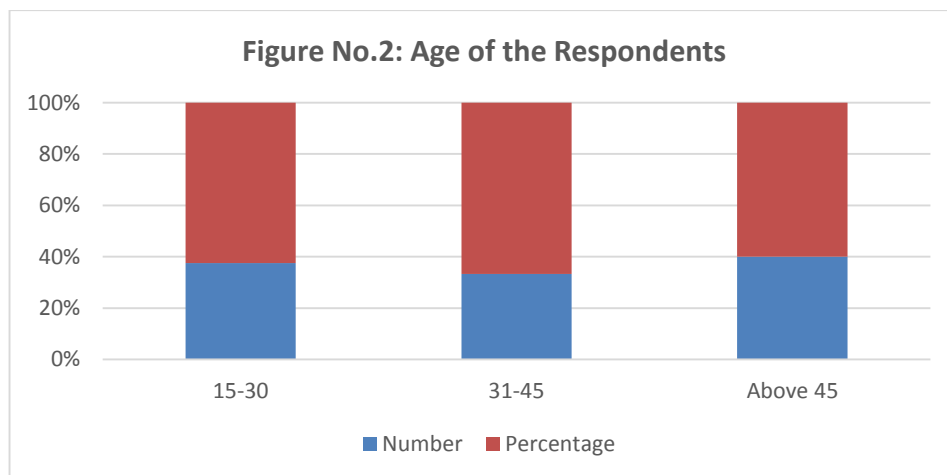


**Inference:** Most of the respondents were Males

**Table No 2: Age of the Respondents**

Age	Number	Percentage
15-30	57	95
31-45	1	2
Above 45	2	3

**Interpretation:** Out of the total respondents 57 were in the age group 15-30

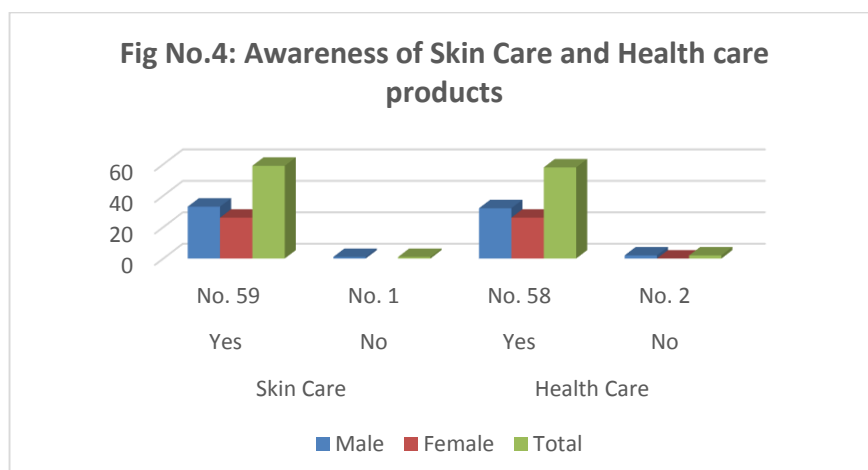


**Inference:** Most of the respondents were from the age group 15-30

**Table No 3: Awareness of Skin Care and Health care products**

Gender	Skin Care		Health Care	
	Yes No. 59	No No. 1	Yes No. 58	No No. 2
Male	33	1	32	2
Female	26		26	0
Total	59	1	58	2

**Interpretation:** Barring one male and two females everybody is aware of Skin care and Hair care products.

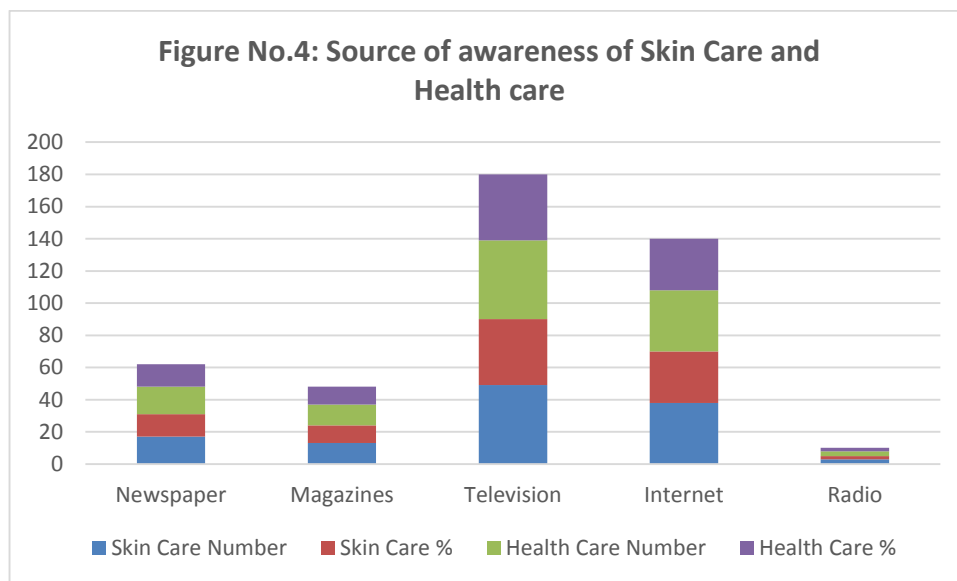


**Inference:** Awareness of Skin Care and Hair Care is equal across genders

**Table No 4: Source of awareness of Skin Care and Health care**

Gender	Skin Care		Health Care	
	Number	%	Number	%
Newspaper	17	14	17	14
Magazines	13	11	13	11
Television	49	41	49	41
Internet	38	32	38	32
Radio	3	2	3	2

**Interpretation:** Maximum number of respondents gets awareness through Television and Internet

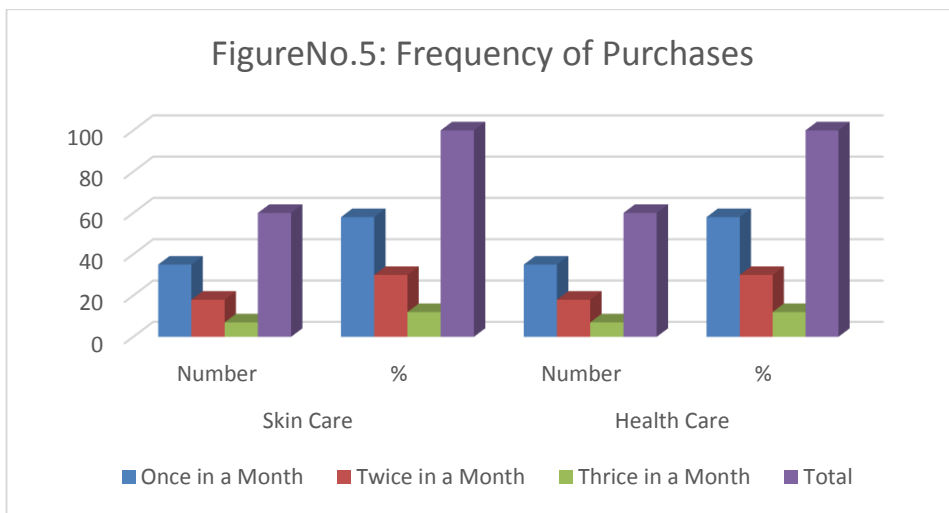


**Inference:** Television and Internet create maximum awareness

**Table No 5: Frequency of Purchases**

Gender	Skin Care		Health Care	
	Number	%	Number	%
Once in a Month	35	58	35	58
Twice in a Month	18	30	18	30
Thrice in a Month	7	12	7	12
Total	60	100	60	100

**Interpretation:** Most of the respondents (58%) make purchases of Skin and Hair care products once in a month. While 30% of them buy twice a month and 12% thrice in a month.

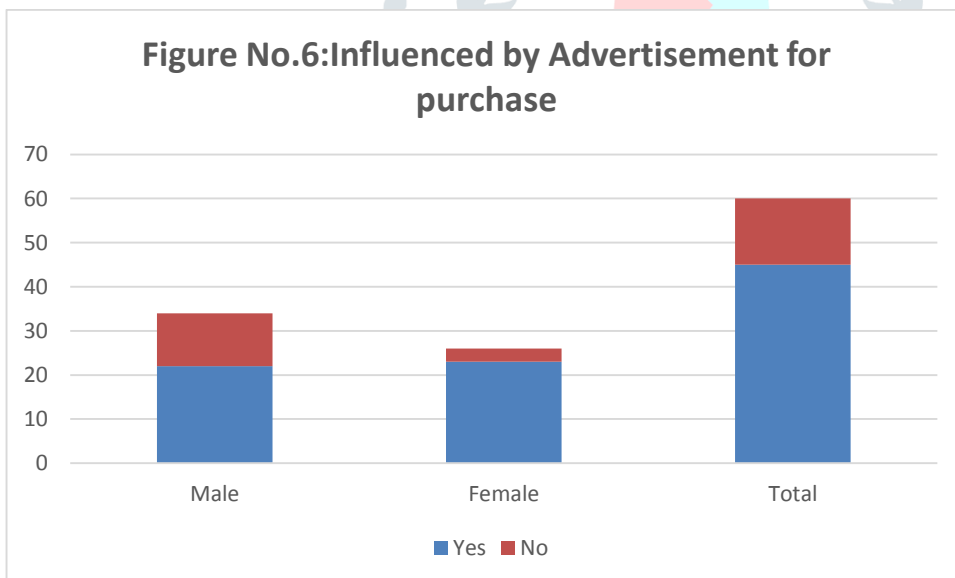


**Inference:** Majority of the respondents buy skin and hair care products once in a month

**Table No 6: Influenced by Advertisement for purchase**

Gender	Yes	No
Male	22	12
Female	23	3
Total	45	15

**Interpretation:** 75% of respondents are influenced by advertisements.

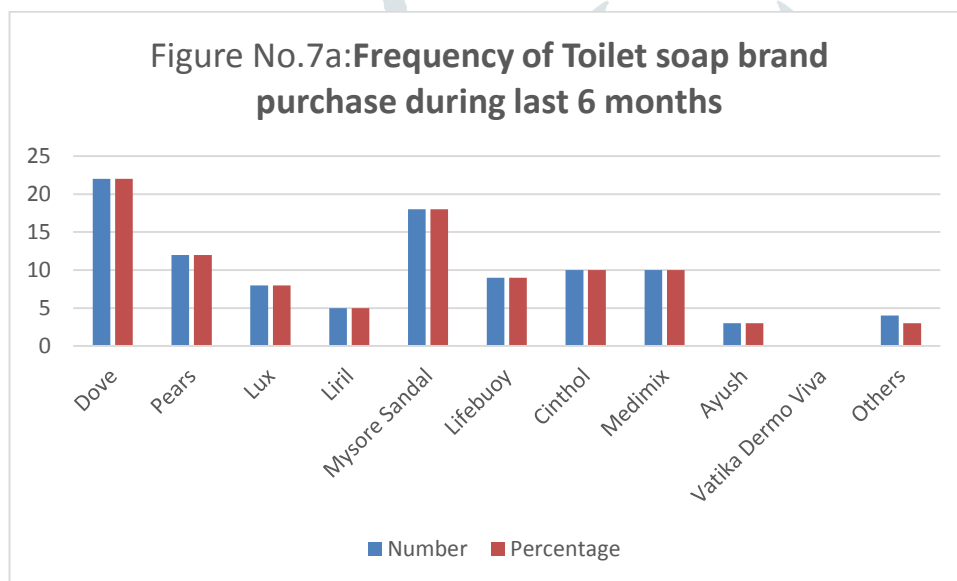


**Inference:** Females are more influenced by Advertisements.

**Table No.7a: Frequency of Toilet soap brand purchased during last 6 months**

Toilet soap brands	Number	Percentage
Dove	22	22
Pears	12	12
Lux	8	8
Liril	5	5
Mysore Sandal	18	18
Lifebuoy	9	9
Cinthol	10	10
Medimix	10	10
Ayush	3	3
VatikaDermo Viva	0	0
Others	4	3

**Interpretation:** Dove is the most preferred brand, followed by Mysore Sandal.

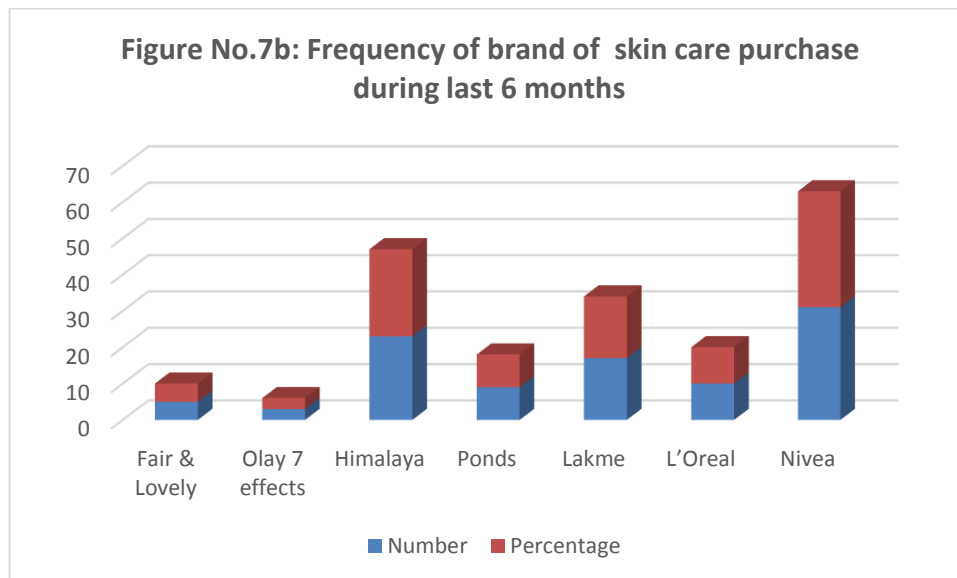


**Inference:** Dove is the most preferred Toilet Soap brand.

**Table No.7b: Frequency of brand of skin care purchase during last 6 months**

Toilet soap brands	Number	Percentage
Fair & Lovely	5	5
Olay 7 effects	3	3
Himalaya	23	24
Ponds	9	9
Lakme	17	17
L'Oreal	10	10
Nivea	31	32

**Interpretation:** Maximum respondents use and prefer Nivea, followed by Himalaya and Lakme

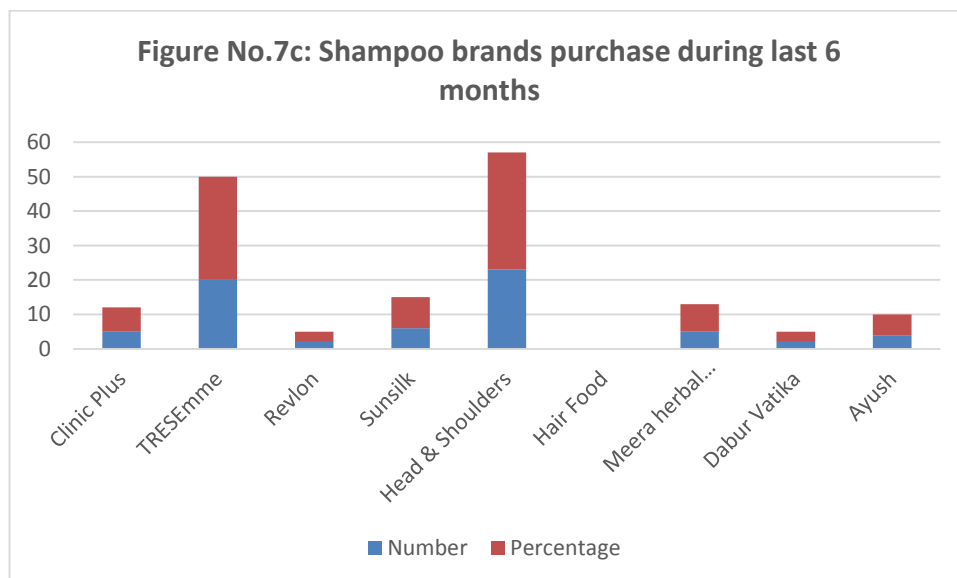


**Inference:** Nivea is the most preferred brand for skin care

**Table No.7c: Shampoo brands purchase during last 6 months**

Toilet soap brands	Number	Percentage
Clinic Plus	5	7
TRESEmme	20	30
Revlon	2	3
Sunsilk	6	9
Head & Shoulders	23	34
Hair Food	0	0
Meera herbal shampoo	5	8
DaburVatika	2	3
Ayush	4	6

**Interpretation:** Majority of the respondents use Head & Shoulders followed by Tresemme



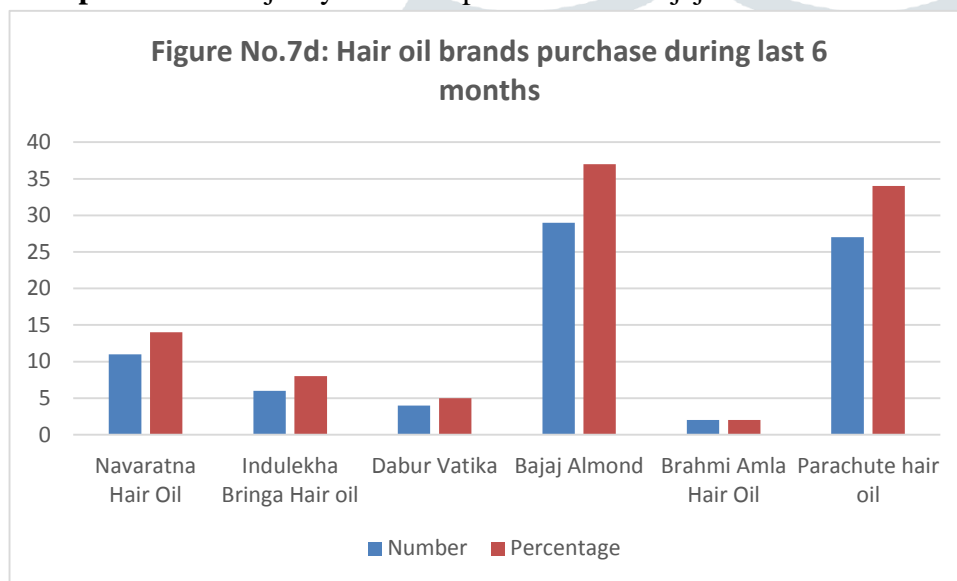


**Inference:** 34% of the respondents use Head & Shoulders while 30% use Tresemme

**Table No.7d: Hair oil brands purchase during last 6 months**

Toilet soap brands	Number	Percentage
Navaratna Hair Oil	11	14
IndulekhaBringa Hair oil	6	8
DaburVatika	4	5
Bajaj Almond	29	37
BrahmiAmla Hair Oil	2	2
Parachute hair oil	27	34

**Interpretation:** Majority of the respondents use Bajaj Almond and Parachute Hair Oil



**Inference:** 37% of the respondents use Bajaj Almond while Parachute Hair Oil comes close at 34%

**Table No8: Advertisement mislead the customers (after usage) (The Respondents were asked to make expressions by means of their experience).**

**Interpretation:** 44 out of the 60 respondents think that advertisements mislead sometimes.

**Inference:** 73% of the respondents think that have been misled by advertisements sometimes.

### Testing of Hypothesis

In order to arrive at proper conclusion, it was essential to subject the collected data for Hypothesis testing. Chi-square method was employed. Let us know the Hypothesis and results of Hypothesis.

**H0:** The advertisements do not miscommunicate to the Target Audience

**H1:** The advertisements do miscommunicate to the Target Audience

**Results of Hypothesis****Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Advertisements miscommunicate the customers * Influenced by the persuasive message in an Advertisement	59	100.0%	0	.0%	59	100.0%

**Advertisements mislead the customers \* Influenced by the persuasive message in an Advertisement Cross-tabulation**

Count		Influenced by the persuasive message in an Advertisement		Total
		Yes	No	
Advertisements miscommunicate the customers	Rarely	6	0	6
	Sometimes	33	9	42
	Always	5	6	11
Total		44	15	59

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.319 <sup>a</sup>	2	.026
Likelihood Ratio	8.096	2	.017
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.994	1	.008
N of Valid Cases	59		

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.53.

**Interpretation:** As the Chi-square value is significant, the Null Hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, from the above we can conclude that the advertisements do mis-communicate the target audience.

**Results of Hypothesis:**

As the Chi-square value is significant, the Null Hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, from the above we can conclude that advertisements do mis-communicate the target audience (respondents).

## Results and Discussion:

From the responses received and by conducting the chi-square test on the Hypothesis it was observed that the respondents using the skin care and hair care products had awareness of the products. Females were more influenced by advertisements. It was also found that females were more impulsive and people of all age groups were more susceptible to misleading advertisements and indulged in impulsive purchases.

## Conclusions & Recommendations:

Misleading advertisements deceive the consumers in many ways; a classic example would be a fairness cream promising visible change within a fortnight. These advertisements mislead and give false hopes. This research clearly shows that mis-communication through such advertisements misguides and compels the consumer to buy the product.

Consumers should not fall prey to such advertisements and follow the dictum of 'Caveat Emptor' which says that the buyer alone is responsible for checking the quality of the product and the purchases made by him.

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