

Influence of Surrogate Advertising of Paan Masala on Health Perceptions of Delhi's Youth

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E-mail : effulgence@rdias.ac.in, Website : www.rdias.ac.in<http://effulgence.rdias.ac.in/user/default.aspx><https://dx.doi.org/10.33601/effulgence.rdias/v22/i2/2024/111-120>**Dr. Sumedha Dhasmana**¹✉**Ms. Mansi Sharma**²

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effects of surrogate advertising of paan masala on youth, with a focus on understanding how these promotional messages influence their attitudes and behaviours. The study aims to share its findings with policymakers and educators to help create effective solutions to reduce the potential harm caused by surrogate advertisements of paan masala. The main goal is to determine how much young people are exposed to these ads, and use this information to inform public health initiatives that promote healthy choices.

The attempt is to examine channels where such advertisements are shown, including banners, hoardings, newspapers, billboards TV and OTT, featuring prominent brands like Vimal, Kuber, Kamla Pasand and Rajnigandha. The researchers also identified some of the locations in Delhi NCR where the billboards of Vimal and Rajnigandha are placed, these are in Noida, East Delhi (Preet Vihar), Rohini and Azadpur, Shastri Park metro station and bus stand. Banners of Kamala Pasand, Vimal, Rajnigandha and Kuber have been noticed in public transport like auto-rickshaws, Metro and on DTC buses. A survey of 240 Delhi participants reveals that all respondents are exposed to surrogate paan masala ads. Moreover, it is identified that celebrity endorsements influence consumption. Such ads are identified to have increased youth consumption and 90.1% support stricter regulations. Interviews with dentists highlight significant dental health issues and the need for targeted education and cessation support.

Keywords: Paan Masala, Advertisements, Youth, Awareness, Influence

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INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare of Government of India has enacted a comprehensive legislation called the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA 2003) to discourage the consumption of tobacco products and in order to protect the masses from the health hazards attributable to tobacco use. The act prohibits the advertisement of, and to provide for the regulation of trade and commerce in, and production, supply and distribution of, cigarettes and other tobacco products and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto (NTCP, 2021).

The tobacco industry has however found a way out through surrogate advertising. The literal meaning of 'surrogate advertising' is duplicating the brand image of one product extensively to promote another product of the same brand. Surrogate advertising is when a company uses its brand name or logo to advertise a different product, with the main purpose being to keep the original brand top-of-mind with consumers, rather than necessarily boosting sales of the surrogate product itself (Panda, n.d.). This form of advertising involves promoting another product under the same brand name or a similar looking product to create a similar effect on people's minds. For example, advertisement of Vimal is endorsed by celebrities like Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Ajay Devgan and Tiger Shroff in the disguise of cardamom. Chako, (2023) notes Amitabh Bachchan, Ranveer Singh, Hrithik Roshan, Saif Ali Khan, Priyanka Chopra, Anushka Sharma and many more. The list of Bollywood celebrities endorsing pan masala brands is endless. Added to this is list of cricketers endorsing these brands. After Sunil Gavaskar and Virender Sehwag, Kamla Pasand roped in Kapil Dev and Chris Gayle.

The tobacco industry has evolved its marketing strategies over time, the impact on young

individuals has become increasingly complex and nuanced. The standardization of paan masala intake in Delhi reinforces detrimental gender stereotypes by linking the practice to specific perceptions of masculinity and social status. In numerous instances, the utilization of products in surrogate advertisements is shown as a symbol of manliness and refinement, with male models or celebrities enjoying the product. This image supports traditional gender norms by claiming that eating paan masala is a sign of manhood, while forbidding women from doing the same. As a result, this creates a gender split in society, with males viewing paan masala intake as more acceptable or desirable, reinforcing gender stereotypes and inequities (Grover et al. 2020).

Despite the presence of youth-focused tobacco companies-sponsored advertising, few studies have explored its potential effects. Most existing studies have primarily assessed the immediate reactions of youths to these advertisements or examined the relationship between ads and attitudes considered predictive of smoking behavior change. Notably, there is a lack of studies investigating the impact of tobacco company parent-focused advertising on youth. The complexity of determining the relative influence of tobacco company-sponsored advertising, especially in the context of competing tobacco control programs, adds to the intricacy of understanding its effects (Wakefield et al. 2006).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Li et al. (2021) highlight the persistently high prevalence of cigarette and e-cigarette marketing exposure among US adolescents. Their study recommends further regulatory efforts, both offline and online, to mitigate adolescent exposure to tobacco marketing content. The aim is to reduce susceptibility to the uptake of tobacco products. Richardson et al. (2015) identified that online banner/video advertising is predominantly used to promote e-cigarettes and cigars rather than cigarettes. Some of these advertisements make

unproven claims about health benefits. Hanewinkel et al. (2011) supports the idea of a content-related effect of cigarette advertisements and emphasize the specificity of the relationship between tobacco marketing and teen smoking. Exposure to cigarette advertisements, but not to other advertisements, is associated with smoking initiation.

Shah et al. (2008) utilized data from the Global Youth Tobacco Survey to into the impact of exposure to both pro-smoking advertisements and anti-smoking messages on the smoking behavior of adolescents. Gilpin et al. (2007) highlight the enduring impact of tobacco advertising and promotions on the development of smoking behavior into young adulthood, emphasizing the need for continued efforts to curb the influence of marketing strategies. Tercyak et al. (2002) identified that adolescents with both high advertising receptivity and depressed moods are particularly susceptible to experimenting with smoking. It emphasized the importance of tailoring prevention and intervention efforts to address the combined effects of tobacco advertising and depression, suggesting that a targeted approach could contribute to reducing youth smoking rates. Biener & Siegel (2000) emphasize the importance of implementing measures such as restrictions on tobacco marketing and promotion to mitigate the risk of tobacco addiction among the youth.

Di Franza (1995) explores the vulnerabilities of children and adolescents to tobacco advertising,

emphasizing the impact on self-image, independence, and peer acceptance. Choi et al. (1995) contributes valuable insights into the complex interplay between social influences, advertising exposure and smokeless tobacco use among adolescent boys in California. Botvin et al. (1993) underscore the need for comprehensive strategies and interventions to address the impact of advertising on youth smoking initiation and progression.

Objectives and Methodology

The objectives of this study are:

- To identify the extent of exposure that young individuals have to surrogate advertising of pan masala across various mediums, such as television, online platforms and print.
- To identify the respondent's feelings regarding surrogate advertisements of Paan Masala
- To examine dentist's viewpoint on the impact of Paan Masala consumption among youth

The researchers prepared a questionnaire for the conduct of the survey and calculated the sample size of 240 respondents with the help of an online sample size calculator. This study included youth of Delhi. The age bracket of youth that has been studied is 18-29 years. We collected a response from 240 students. The survey study is added with three in-depth interviews of dentists of Delhi.

Data Analysis

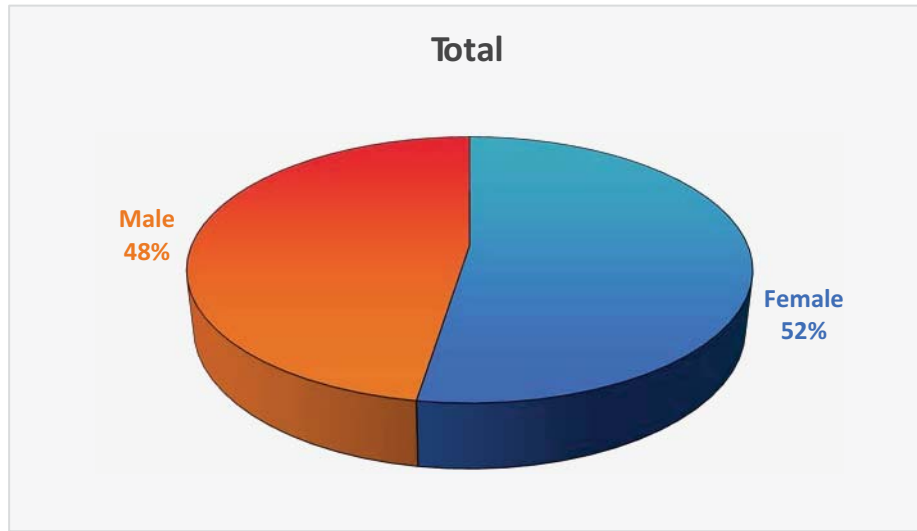


Figure 1: Gender based Analysis

Fig.1 shows that this survey has participation from 48% of male respondents and 52 % of female respondents.

Table 1: Platforms of Advertisement Exposure

Where do you usually come across these advertisements?

	N	%
Billboards	13	5.4%
Billboards, Television	105	43.8%
Billboards, Television, Newspapers	35	14.6%
Billboards, Television, Newspapers, Radio	5	2.1%
Billboards, Television, Newspapers, Radio, Social Media	58	24.2%
Billboards, Television, Newspapers, Social Media	3	1.3%
Billboards, Television, Radio, Social Media	2	0.8%
Billboards, Television, Social Media	2	0.8%
Television	12	5.0%
Television, Newspapers	3	1.3%
Television, Social Media	2	0.8%

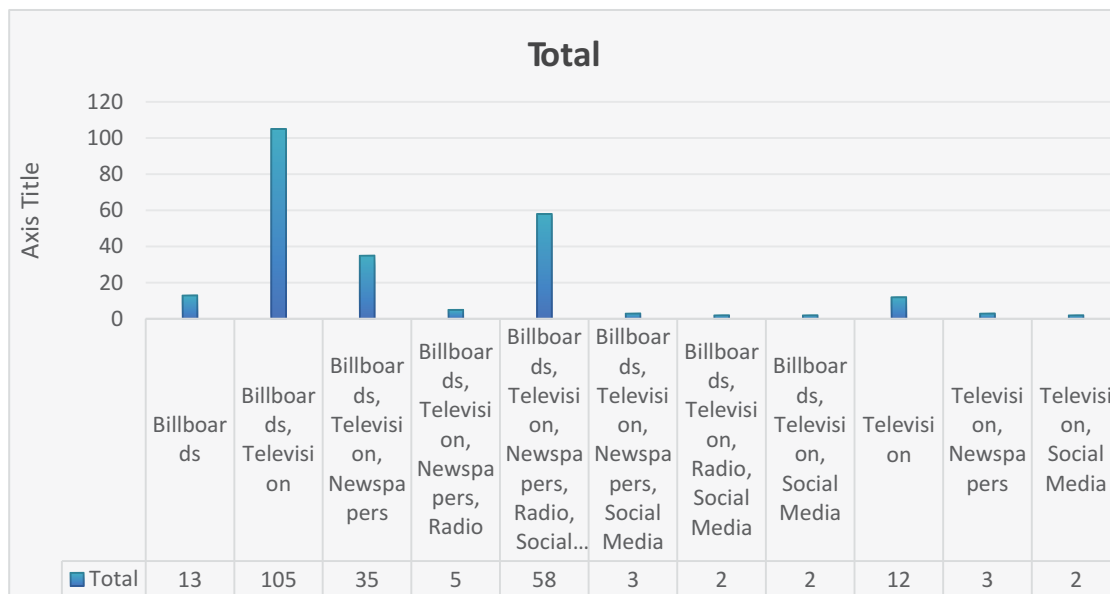


Figure 2: Platforms of Advertisement Exposure

Table 1 and Fig. 2 reveal that surrogate advertisements of paan masala reach the youth of Delhi through multiple media channels, with the most common exposure being a combination of billboards and television (43.8%), followed by billboards, television, newspapers, and social media (24.2%). Billboards, television, and newspapers also form a notable combination (14.6%), highlighting the strategic use of these media. Television alone is seen by 5.0% of respondents, while billboards alone are seen by 5.4%. Exposure through social media, combined with other channels, reflects its significant role among young people. Lesser reported combinations include billboards, television, newspapers, and radio (2.1%) and television and newspapers (1.3%).

Table 2: Awareness of Surrogate ad of Paan Masala

Have you heard about the following Paan Masala brands through advertising in Delhi? (Please select all that apply)

	N	%
Rajnigandha	27	11.3%
Rajnigandha, Vimal	99	41.3%
Rajnigandha, Vimal, Pan Bahar	39	16.3%
Rajnigandha, Vimal, Pan Bahar, RMD	4	1.7%
Rajnigandha, Vimal, Pan Bahar, RMD, Tulsi	63	26.3%
Rajnigandha, Vimal, Pan Bahar, Tulsi	7	2.9%
Vimal	1	0.4%

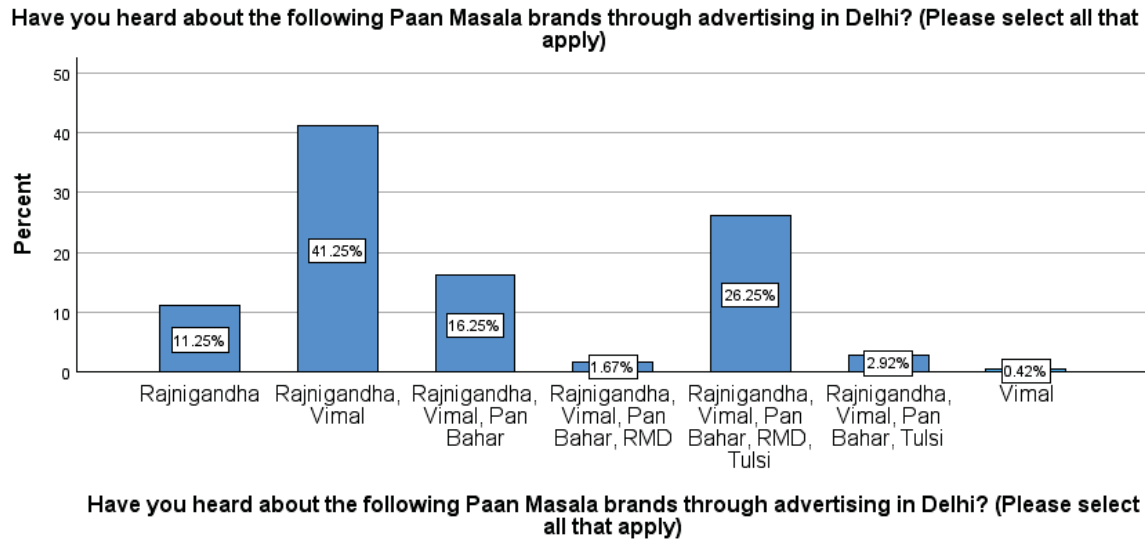


Figure 3: Awareness of Surrogate ad of Paan Masala

Table 2 and Fig. 3 indicate that Rajnigandha is the most well-known brand among people surveyed in Delhi, followed by Vimal. Pan Bahar, RMD, and Tulsi also have notable levels of recognition among respondents. This insight sheds light on brand perception, market competition, and the effectiveness of advertising efforts for various brands in the paan masala industry in Delhi.

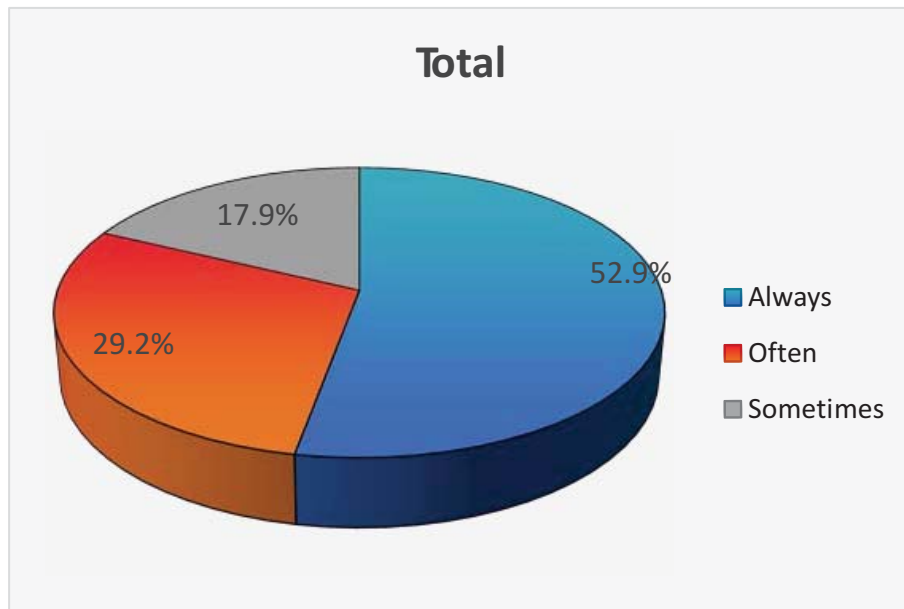


Figure 4: Celebrity Endorsement Analysis

Fig. 4 presents a comprehensive overview of exposure to celebrity endorsements of paan masala brands among the population of Delhi, with a substantial 52.9% reporting always encountering these endorsements, indicating widespread exposure.

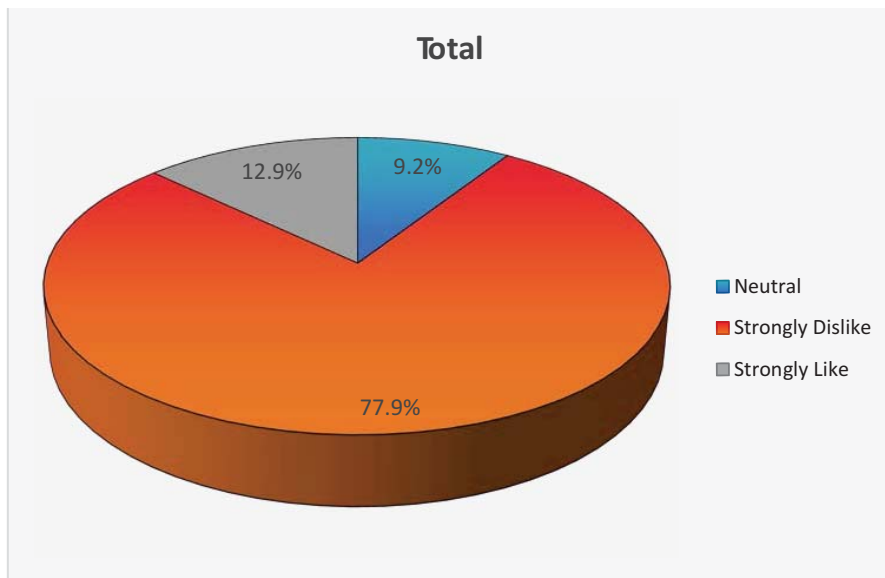


Figure 5: Respondent’s sentiments regarding Surrogate Advertisements of Paan Masala

Fig. 5 depicts respondent’s feelings about the overall content and messaging of paan masala advertisements. According to the data, a strong majority (77.9%) of people surveyed strongly dislike the content and messaging of surrogate advertisements of paan masala. Only a small percentage (12.9%) of people surveyed strongly like the content and messaging of these advertisements, and a relatively small percentage (9.2%) of people surveyed report feeling neutral about the content and messaging of paan masala advertisements.

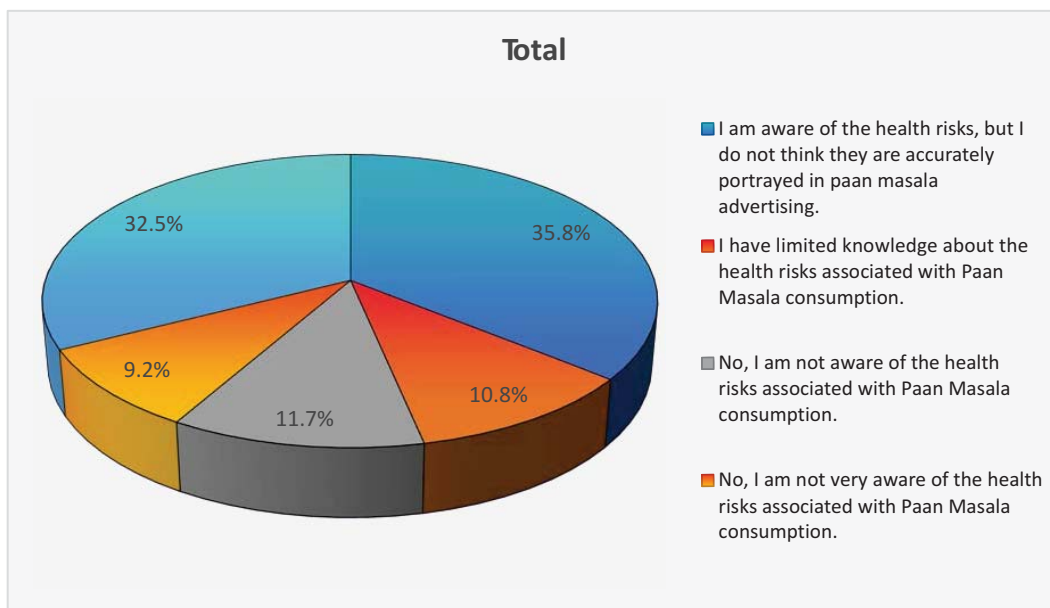


Figure 6: Awareness of Health Risks Analysis

Fig. 6 shows that there's a mix of awareness levels among respondents regarding the health risks of Paan Masala. About 35.8% are aware of the risks but feel they're not accurately portrayed. Another 32.5% are well aware, while 11.7% aren't aware at all, and 9% are not very aware. 10.8% have limited knowledge about the risks. This suggests a need for better education and information about the health risks associated with Paan Masala.

INTERVIEWING THE DENTISTS

The three Dentists that were interviewed included Dr. Aanchal Sabharwal of Sabharwal Dental Clinic, Dr. Ashish Jain of dentist4u clinic and Dr Divya Sharma of tooth saver clinic. All three of them emphasized the severe impact of Paan Masala on dental health. Some of the key issues that they highlighted include staining of teeth, bad breath, gum inflammation, tooth decay, oral lesions and potential for oral cancer.

They highlighted how the ingredients, especially tobacco and areca nut, lead to noticeable discoloration of teeth. Tobacco when consumed regularly, results in persistent bad breath due to the chemicals and residual particles. The abrasive nature and high sugar content of Paan Masala contribute significantly to tooth decay and oral lesions, which may be precancerous. Moreover, long-term use can cause gum inflammation, leading to more severe conditions like gum disease and tooth decay. Additionally, ingredients like areca nut have carcinogenic properties, increasing the risk of oral cancers.

There are differing observations regarding the prevalence of Paan Masala-related dental issues among young people. Dr Aanchal Sabharwal and Dr Divya Sharma, observe a significant number of young patients with issues directly linked to Paan Masala. Dr Ashish Jain on the other hand notes that while dental issues among young people are common, not all are directly attributable to Paan Masala. Other factors like oral hygiene and diet also

play crucial roles.

Dr Divya Sharma explains, "Paan Masala can have a pretty harsh impact on your teeth and gums. Think of it like this: the ingredients in Paan Masala, especially the tobacco and other chemicals, can really mess with the delicate balance in your mouth. They can cause staining on your teeth, bad breath, and even lead to gum disease and tooth decay over time. It's like inviting trouble right into your mouth." She adds, "personalized support and counselling have been the most effective strategies in helping young people quit or reduce their use of Paan Masala. It's important to listen to their concerns and provide them with practical tips and resources to overcome their addiction and protect their dental health."

Dr Aanchal Sabharwal provides advice to young individuals using Paan Masala, she says, "focus on maintaining excellent oral hygiene practices, including regular brushing, flossing, and dental check-ups. I emphasize the importance of quitting Paan Masala use to prevent further dental damage and recommend seeking professional help for addiction cessation support. Additionally, I stress the significance of a balanced diet and encourage them to avoid habits that harm their oral health."

Dr Ashish Jain provides hope as he pinpoints that, "we have observed positive changes in the dental health of young individuals who've discontinued similar habits. Improvement often manifests in reduced gum inflammation, decreased instances of tooth decay, and overall better oral hygiene. These outcomes highlight the significant impact of lifestyle changes on enhancing dental wellness among this demographic." He adds, "enhancing educational initiatives through school programs and social media campaigns can effectively raise awareness about the dental risks associated with such habits. Incorporating engaging visuals, real-life testimonials, and interactive workshops can make the information more relatable and memorable for young audiences. Additionally, collaborating with community health organizations and leveraging

peer-to-peer influence can further amplify the message and promote healthier choices.”

FINDINGS

- The majority of respondents (187 individuals) strongly dislike the content and messaging of surrogate paan masala advertisements. This sentiment reflects concerns about the messaging and impact of these ads on public health perceptions and behaviours.
- Most respondents (186 individuals) view Paan Masala as harmful, indicating a widespread negative perception likely influenced by health concerns.
- The study indicates that there's a significant negative sentiment (77.9%) towards surrogate advertisements of Paan Masala ads among those surveyed.
- This analysis suggests a need for better education and information about the health risks associated with Paan Masala.
- A notable number of young people visiting dentists suffer from dental problems related to Paan Masala use, reflecting the widespread impact of these products on oral health.
- Dentists report that Paan Masala causes significant dental issues such as stained teeth, bad breath, gum inflammation, and gum disease among young users.
- Prolonged use of Paan Masala can lead to severe dental issues, including tooth decay, gum recession, and increased risk of oral cancer, highlighting the long-term health risks associated with continued use.
- Ingredients like tobacco, areca nut, and added sugars in Paan Masala are particularly harmful, contributing to serious dental and health issues such as tooth decay, gum disease, and oral cancer.
- Dentists emphasize that the dental issues caused by Paan Masala are entirely preventable if young people avoid these products, underscoring the importance of cessation and prevention strategies.

- Young people who quit using Paan Masala show significant improvements in dental health, including reduced gum inflammation and better overall oral hygiene, demonstrating the benefits of cessation.
- There is a worrying trend of more young people presenting with dental problems caused by Paan Masala, indicating an increasing prevalence of use among this demographic.

CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals high exposure to surrogate advertisements of paan masala advertisements among the surveyed youth, primarily through television and billboards. Traditional media still dominates advertising reach, underscoring its continued influence on youth perceptions and behaviours. However, social media is gaining traction, indicating a shift towards more contemporary platforms that resonate with younger audiences. This dual approach of utilizing both traditional and digital media highlights the pervasive nature of surrogate paan masala advertising and underscores the need for comprehensive regulatory measures across all media channels to effectively address and mitigate the impact on youth.

The high exposure through traditional media like television and billboards, combined with the growing impact of social media, underscores the extensive reach of these advertisements. The significant influence of celebrity endorsements on youth perception and consumption further highlights the persuasive power of these marketing tactics. The negative sentiment towards these advertisements and the perception of misleading health portrayals raises significant concerns.

The interviews with dentists reveal a significant and growing issue of Paan Masala-related dental problems among young people. The dentists emphasize the need for increased education and awareness, regular dental care, and supportive

strategies to help individuals quit this harmful habit. By understanding and addressing these concerns, it is possible to mitigate the adverse effects on dental health and promote healthier choices among the youth.

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