UNMASKING DECEPTIVE NOURISHMENT: THE HIDDEN RISKS OF FALSE HEALTH CLAIMS AND MISLEADING ADVERTISEMENTS IN CHILDREN’S DRINKS

Mr. Soham Shripad Kulkarni1* Mrs. Shraddha Amit Pathak
1Student, Pharm D. Dr. D. Y. Patil Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research, Pimpri, Pune, Maharashtra, India - 411018
Asst. Professor, Dr. D. Y. Patil Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research, Pimpri, Pune, Maharashtra, India - 411018

ABSTRACT: The article scrutinizes the concerning trend of false advertising within the children's health drink industry. Despite the surge in health-conscious consumerism, numerous companies promote their products as nutritious and beneficial for children, masking their actual lack of essential nutrients. This article delves into the repercussions of such misleading marketing on the health of young kids. Through an extensive analysis of industry trends and consumption statistics, we expose the stark disparity between promised health benefits and the nutritional reality of these beverages. The detrimental impact on children's health is emphasized, highlighting the potential risks associated with the consumption of ostensibly healthy drinks. The case study of the well-known brand Bournvita serves as an illustrative example, uncovering the discrepancies between advertising claims and the actual nutritional content of the product. Incorporating relevant statistical data, we underscore the widespread prevalence of deceptive practices in the industry and their tangible consequences on the health and well-being of the younger demographic. This article serves as a call to action, advocating for increased transparency and accountability within the children's health drink market. By unmasking the hidden risks associated with false health claims and misleading advertisements, we seek to empower consumers to make informed choices for their children and encourage a critical re-evaluation of the products they bring into their homes.

Keywords: False advertising, Deceptive marketing, Bournvita, Misleading advertisements, Consumption statistics, Brand image

Introduction:
In the current landscape of health-conscious consumerism, the surge in popularity of children's health drinks has brought forth a disconcerting reality—widespread false advertising. This article seeks to illuminate the pervasive issue of deceptive marketing within this industry. Despite claims of nutritional superiority, many of these products fall short of delivering essential nutrients, posing tangible risks to the health of young children. As we navigate the intricate tapestry of misleading marketing in health drinks, this article serves as a guide for consumers, health professionals, and policymakers alike to make informed decisions and foster a culture of integrity in the promotion of well-being. As consumers increasingly turn to these beverages in the pursuit of well-being, the need to critically examine the veracity of the claims made by manufacturers becomes paramount. Through this exploration, we endeavour to empower consumers with the knowledge needed to make informed choices for their children and encourage a critical re-evaluation of the products that shape the dietary landscape for our youngest consumers.

PSYCHOLOGY OF DECEPTIVE ADVERTISING
The use of false or misleading representations or symbols for a product's quality, quantity, manufacturing data, usage instructions, content, price, origin, manufacture, processor, or location is prohibited in most jurisdictions due to marketing and advertisement regulations. Certain commercials present deceptive information regarding features of products that are not true. Deceptive advertising has an impact on consumers' purchasing decisions, which can be seen as having an impact on the purchasing process. These commercials provide the false impression that the product [1]. Adolescents and children continue to
be a significant market, and there is a pressing need to investigate possible privacy concerns, advertising literacy, parent mediation, and the regulations needed to handle new types of digital advertising [2]. A study was carried out in India to look into the impact of food-related television commercials on young children's obesity and eating habits. The study's main conclusions were that unhealthy foods and drinks with high calorie and poor micronutrient contents predominate in food promotion on Indian television channels watched by young teenagers [3]. In India, a comparison analysis of two children's channels and two mainstream channels was conducted to look at food commercials on television that targeted both adults and children. The study's main conclusions were that, of the 1602 food advertising that were shown throughout the sample period, the majority featured chocolate and sweet items, followed by ads for energy and health beverages, as well as products made of grains and fruits. Television advertisements often featured broad claims about dietary benefits, such as "makes taller and sharper," "low calories," "high protein," and "calcium and carbohydrates"[4].

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), which was established in October 1985 by media owners, advertisers, advertising agencies, and related professionals like consumer researchers, filmmakers, processors, etc., is the self-regulatory monitoring body in India that oversees advertising content in accordance with consumer interest. In contrast to the United States, Australia, and other industrialized nations, India does not have a distinct code for advertising to children [5]. Comparing India's policy regulation structure to those of the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, the study discovered that there are no particular limitations on the times or length of media commercials directed towards children in India. Like in industrialized nations, where standard boards handle consumer complaints, community involvement is necessary. Similarly, in India, public participation in the complaint process must increase.

BOURNVITA – Case study

In India nowadays, health drinks are hugely popular. India accounts for about 22% of global retail volume sales of health drinks, and one of them is Bournvita. The idea behind health drinks began as an alternative to milk. They were promoted as beverages with a high nutritional content that were safe for ingestion by the young, old, and ill.

A study conducted in Coimbatore city revealed significant trends in the consumption patterns of health drinks among respondents. Notably, the majority of participants, constituting 36.5%, reported a frequency of consuming health drinks once daily. Additionally, a substantial 46% of respondents indicated that they exclusively use health drinks for children. These findings highlight the prevalence of a daily health drink routine among participants, with a substantial portion reserving the use of such beverages primarily for the nutritional needs of children [8].

A research study was conducted in the North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, India, involving a sample of 500 health drink consumers. The investigation focused on Bournvita, and respondents provided ratings out of 10 for various factors associated with the product. The customers' average rating for Bournvita was 7.2, indicating a generally positive reception. The brand image received a commendable score of 7.025, reflecting the brand's perceived reputation among consumers. Nourishment, a crucial aspect for health drinks, received a rating of 6.7, suggesting a moderate level of satisfaction. However, the colour of the drink received a comparatively lower rating of 5.825, indicating a potential area for improvement. Notably, in the overall ranking among health drinks, Bournvita secured the third position, showcasing its standing relative to other competitors in the market. These findings provide valuable insights into customer perceptions and preferences in the context of health drinks in the specified region[6]. In their extensive advertising campaign spanning from 2016 to 2021, Bournvita strategically emphasized key elements integral to consumers' health concerns. The campaign centered around nutrition, focusing on fostering growth, optimal brain development, enhanced stamina, and the crucial development of bones and muscles. Notably, Bournvita's messaging addressed the multifaceted aspects of well-being, including weight gain, underscoring its commitment to a holistic approach to health. By aligning their marketing efforts with these essential health considerations, the brand aimed to position itself as a comprehensive solution for consumers seeking not only a flavourful beverage but also a product that aligns with their broader health and developmental goals. This targeted focus on diverse health aspects reflects Bournvita's strategic approach to cater to the evolving needs and priorities of its consumer base over the reviewed period [7]. Also, they mentioned Vitamin D, phosphorus, protein, iron, iodine, vitamin B2, vitamin B12, and other elements that support strong bones, strong muscles, and an active brain are all found in Cadbury Bournvita, a health food drink with an inner strength recipe [9].

In a notice dated April 21, The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has written to Mondelez India International, the company that makes the health drink Bournvita, requesting that it carry out an investigation and remove "misleading" container
labels and marketing. The announcement was made amidst a major controversy surrounding claims that the milk supplement included a lot of sugar [10,11].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the complex interplay between deceptive advertising practices, regulatory frameworks, and consumer perceptions in the health drink industry underscores the need for heightened scrutiny and responsible marketing. The study's findings reveal significant consumption patterns and customer perceptions surrounding health drinks, with Bournvita emerging as a prominent player in the market. While the brand strategically addresses diverse health aspects in its advertising campaigns, recent controversies surrounding its sugar content highlight the challenges in maintaining transparency. This calls for enhanced regulatory measures, improved public participation, and heightened awareness regarding daily sugar consumption in health drinks [12]. The absence of specific regulations on advertising to children in India raises concerns, emphasizing the importance of bolstering regulatory frameworks to protect vulnerable demographics. As the health drink industry continues to thrive, this review underscores the critical role of ethical marketing practices, regulatory vigilance, and consumer awareness in fostering a marketplace that genuinely aligns with consumers' health and well-being.

REFERENCES


