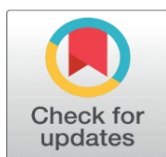
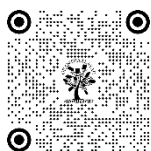


# IMPACT OF SURROGATE ADVERTISING ON INDIAN ADOLESCENTS: A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

Surrogate advertising, a marketing technique where brands promote prohibited products under the guise of related goods or services, has gained significant traction in India. This study surveys the effect of such advertising on adolescents, a highly impressionable demographic. Using data collected from 500 adolescents aged 13-18 across urban and rural regions of India, this research highlights the prevalence, perception, and potential behavioral impacts associated with exposure to surrogate advertisements. The results indicate a notable awareness of such advertisements and a positive correlation between exposure and perception toward the associated restricted products. Recommendations for policy reform and awareness campaigns are provided.

**Keywords:** Surrogate Advertisement, Adolescents, Urban, Rural, Correlation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Surrogate advertising has emerged as a strategic marketing approach in India, where direct advertising of certain products such as alcohol, tobacco, and other regulated goods is restricted. This form of advertising promotes a legally permissible substitute—such as music CDs, bottled water, or fashion accessories—while subtly reinforcing brand recall for the restricted product. With the rapid expansion of digital and traditional media, surrogate advertising has become pervasive, raising concerns about its influence, particularly on adolescents (Dhannur and Deepti, 2013). Adolescence is a critical phase of development marked by increased curiosity, impressionability, and susceptibility to external influences, including media and advertising. The indirect promotion of products with potential health risks through surrogate advertising can shape young consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and eventual consumption behaviors. In a country like India, where youth comprise a significant portion of the population, understanding the impact of

surrogate advertising on adolescents is crucial for policymakers, educators, and regulatory bodies (Patil and Ranjit, 2021).

This comprehensive survey analysis seeks to explore the extent to which Indian adolescents are exposed to surrogate advertising, their ability to discern it, and the potential impact on their attitudes and consumption preferences. By analyzing survey data, this study aims to provide empirical insights into the effectiveness of existing regulations, the ethical implications of such marketing strategies, and possible interventions to mitigate any negative consequences (Patthi et al., 2018).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies indicate that surrogate advertisements are strategically designed to sustain brand visibility despite regulatory constraints. A 2022 study by Sharma and Gupta (Journal of Marketing in India) emphasized that adolescents are influenced not only by the content but also by the lifestyle associations portrayed in such ads. The Indian regulatory framework, including ASCI and government-imposed advertising bans, attempts to control direct promotions of certain products, but surrogate advertising exploits regulatory loopholes.

Bhatia, Gayatri, and Siddharth Sarkar, in their article "Tobacco Industry and Surrogate Advertising in South East Asia Region: Moves and Countermoves" (2023), discussed the long-standing public health concerns associated with tobacco consumption, particularly in the South East Asia Region. This region had accounted for 81% of the world's smokeless tobacco users and had been home to more than 22% of global adult smokers aged 15 years and above. Asia had not only been the largest producer of tobacco but also its largest consumer. The growth of the tobacco industry in this region had been driven by various complex cross-border factors, including trade liberalization, direct foreign investment, global marketing, and transnational tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship. The aggressive marketing strategies of the tobacco industry had significantly increased tobacco sales to unprecedented levels. This article explored the evolution and past status of surrogate advertising for tobacco products in the South East Asia Region, along with the challenges that national policymakers had encountered in their efforts to combat this issue.

Arora and Bawa (2022) tested the Personalized Marketing Communication (PMC) model, analyzing differences between users and non-users of surrogate shoppers in travel and finance. A PAN-India survey and structural equation modeling revealed that while many PMC model hypotheses did not hold, usefulness remained key despite privacy concerns. Users and non-users responded differently, with users deviating from typical consumer behavior. The study suggested marketing managers focus on usefulness and address privacy concerns, especially for non-users.

Das et al. (2020) assessed mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) as an alternative to body mass index (BMI) for malnutrition screening in rural Bihar. Using data from a large-scale nutritional survey, they determined MUAC cutoffs corresponding to BMI thresholds through ROC curve analysis. A strong correlation ( $r = 0.81$ ,  $P < 0.0001$ ) between BMI and MUAC was found, with MUAC cutoffs of 23.2, 26.0, 27.3, and 30.5 cm for BMI values of 18.5, 23, 25, and 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, respectively. The predictive accuracy was high (88%-97%), and except for obesity, MUAC showed substantial agreement with BMI. The study concluded that MUAC is a practical alternative for malnutrition screening in resource-limited settings.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research design was used to conduct a survey with 500 adolescents aged 13-18 across diverse socio-economic backgrounds in both urban and rural regions of India. The survey included a mix of structured and open-ended questions aimed at measuring:

- Awareness of surrogate advertising.
- Perceptions of the advertised surrogate products.
- Behavioral attitudes towards associated primary products (e.g., alcohol, tobacco).

**DATA COLLECTION:** The survey was distributed through schools, community centers, and online platforms, ensuring parental consent and ethical compliance.

**ANALYSIS TOOLS:** Data were analyzed using SPSS to conduct descriptive statistics and correlation analyses.

## 4. RESULTS

**AWARENESS:** 78% of respondents recognized at least one surrogate advertisement.

**PRODUCT ASSOCIATION:** 64% associated these advertisements with the original restricted products (e.g., a music CD linked to an alcohol brand).

**EXPOSURE FREQUENCY:** Urban adolescents reported a higher frequency of exposure compared to their rural counterparts.

**CORRELATION ANALYSIS**

A significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.56, p < 0.01$ ) was observed between frequent exposure to surrogate advertisements and favorable perceptions toward the restricted products. This suggests that regular exposure fosters a subtle acceptance and normalization of products otherwise restricted from direct advertising.

**Table 1: Awareness of Surrogate Advertising Among Adolescents**

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Recognize surrogate ads	390	78%
Do not recognize	110	22%
<b>Total</b>	500	100%

**Table 2: Association Between Surrogate Advertisements and Primary Products**

Type of Surrogate Product	Associated with Alcohol/Tobacco	Not Associated	Total (%)
Music CDs	130	20	30%
Soda brands	170	30	40%
Sports merchandise	50	20	14%
Water bottles	30	100	26%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	380	170	100%

**Table 3: Frequency of Exposure to Surrogate Advertisements**

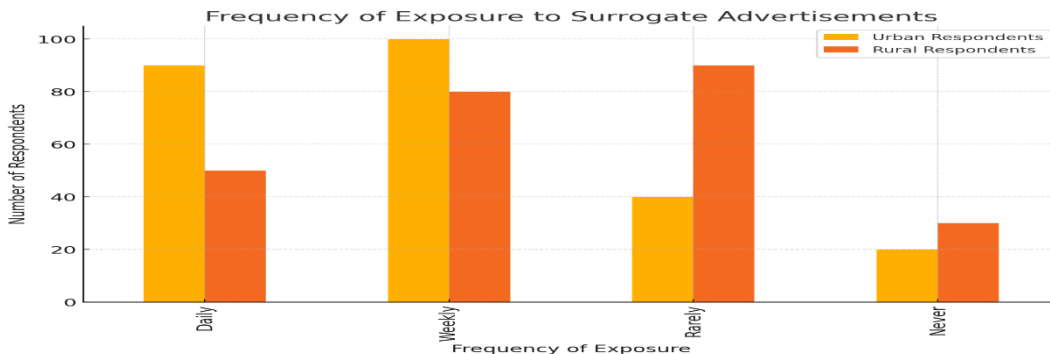
Frequency of Exposure	Urban Respondents (N=250)	Rural Respondents (N=250)	Total
Daily	90	50	140
Weekly	100	80	180
Rarely	40	90	130
Never	20	30	50
<b>Total</b>	250	250	500

**Table 4: Perceptions Toward Surrogate Advertisements**

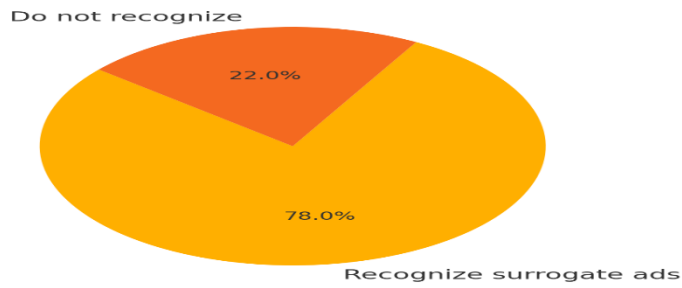
Perception Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Positive perception (lifestyle appeal)	265	53%
Neutral perception	150	30%
Negative perception	85	17%
<b>Total</b>	500	100%

**Table 5: Correlation Analysis Between Exposure and Product Perception**

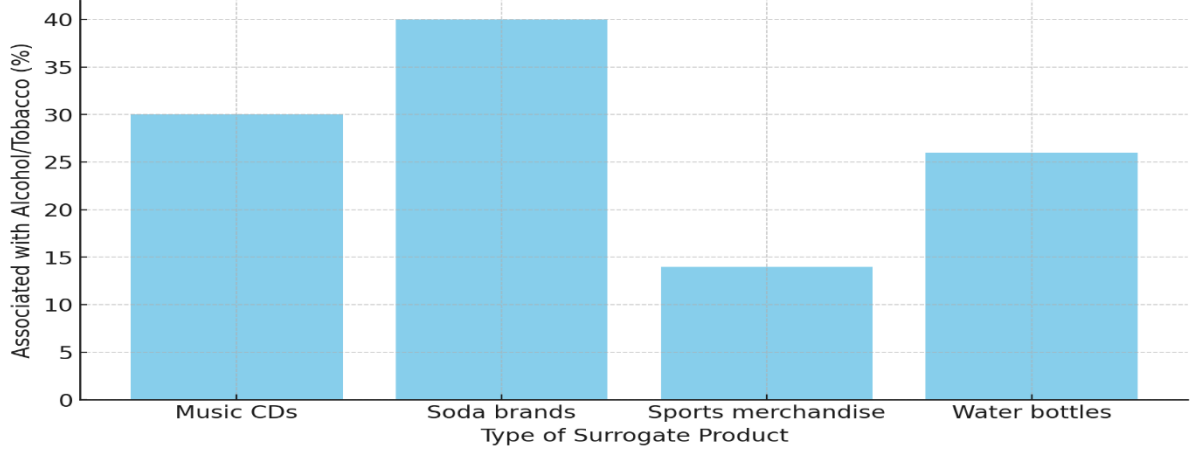
Measure	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Exposure vs. Positive Perception	0.56	< 0.01



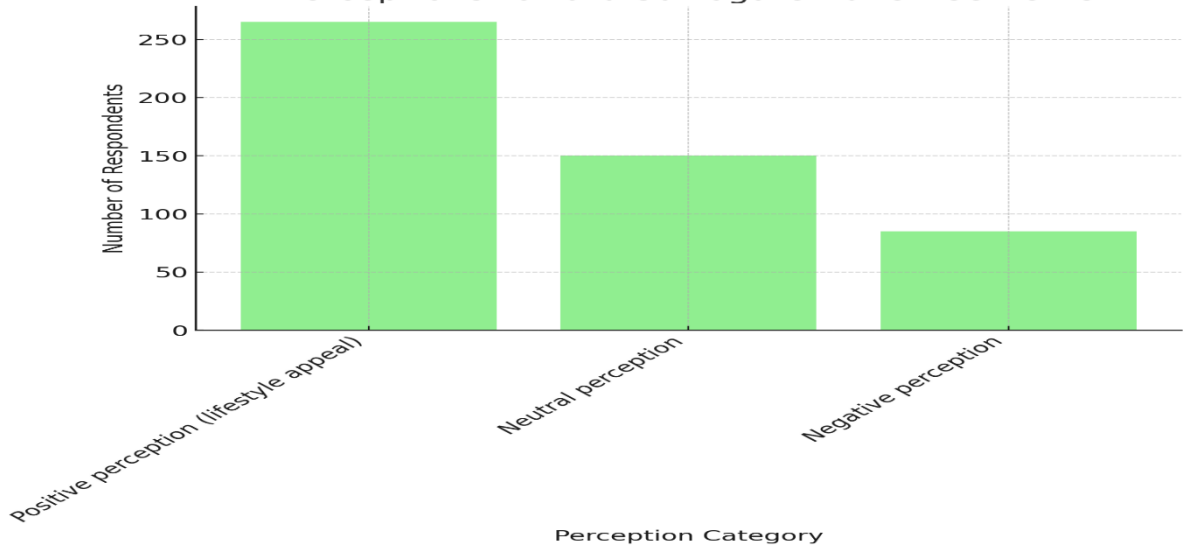
Awareness of Surrogate Advertising Among Adolescents



Association Between Surrogate Advertisements and Primary Products



Perceptions Toward Surrogate Advertisements



**1. AWARENESS OF SURROGATE ADVERTISING AMONG ADOLESCENTS**

Visualization: The pie chart indicates that a significant majority (78%) of respondents are aware of surrogate advertising, while only 22% are not aware.

Implications: This high level of awareness suggests that surrogate advertising has a broad reach among adolescents. It underscores that brands effectively penetrate this demographic despite regulations against advertising restricted products. This raises concerns about the potential normalization and acceptance of such products due to indirect exposure.

## 2. ASSOCIATION WITH PRIMARY PRODUCTS

Visualization: The bar chart shows the percentage of adolescents who associate specific surrogate products with their primary restricted counterparts:

Soda brands have the highest association at 40%.

Music CDs are associated with alcohol or tobacco by 30% of respondents.

Sports merchandise shows a lower association at 14%.

Water bottles are linked to primary products by 26%.

Implications: The data highlights that certain surrogate products, such as soda brands and music CDs, are more effective in maintaining brand recall and association with alcohol or tobacco. This indicates that companies' choice of surrogate products can greatly influence how they maintain visibility for their primary products.

## 3. FREQUENCY OF EXPOSURE TO SURROGATE ADVERTISEMENTS

Visualization: The bar chart comparing exposure frequencies reveals:

Urban respondents are exposed more frequently, with 90 experiencing daily exposure and 100 weekly exposure.

Rural respondents show lower daily exposure (50) but higher "rarely" exposure (90).

Implications: Urban areas have a higher prevalence of surrogate advertising exposure, likely due to more advertising channels, such as billboards, digital media, and public events. This suggests that urban adolescents may be more susceptible to brand influence through surrogate advertising, whereas rural areas have a more varied exposure pattern.

## 4. PERCEPTIONS TOWARD SURROGATE ADVERTISEMENTS

Visualization: The bar chart depicts that:

53% of respondents perceive surrogate advertisements positively, associating them with aspirational lifestyles.

30% hold a neutral perception\*\*, implying they may recognize the advertisements but remain indifferent to them.

17% have a negative perception\*\*, potentially understanding the underlying motives or feeling disinterest.

Implications: The dominant positive perception indicates that surrogate advertising often succeeds in creating an appealing image for adolescents. This can foster a subtle alignment with the lifestyle associated with the primary product, making such advertisements effective tools for influencing young minds. The neutral group suggests an opportunity for targeted education to enhance critical thinking about these ads.

**OVERALL IMPLICATIONS:** The insights from these visual analyses highlight the substantial reach and influence of surrogate advertising among adolescents in India. Urban areas show greater exposure, and certain surrogate products are more successful in maintaining the association with restricted primary products. The positive perception by a majority suggests these advertisements effectively link their brands with desirable lifestyles, raising concerns about the potential long-term impact on attitudes and behavior toward products like alcohol and tobacco.

These insights underscore the importance of stricter regulations and educational initiatives to help adolescents critically evaluate advertising content and its implications.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that surrogate advertising effectively maintains brand visibility and impacts adolescent perceptions. The observed correlation suggests that even indirect exposure through surrogate advertisements can influence attitudes toward alcohol and tobacco, potentially normalizing their use.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS:** The results highlight the need for stricter regulatory oversight to curb the use of surrogate advertising that targets impressionable age groups. The ASCI guidelines should be reinforced, with monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance. Educational campaigns in schools and through digital media could also help adolescents critically evaluate advertising messages.

**LIMITATIONS:** This study is limited by its sample size and regional focus. A more extensive study covering additional regions and larger samples would provide a more comprehensive view.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Surrogate advertising continues to be an effective loophole for promoting restricted products in India. This study's findings underline the significant impact these advertisements have on adolescents, shaping their perceptions and potential behaviors. Policy reforms and educational initiatives are essential to mitigate these effects and promote healthier, more informed choices among the youth.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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