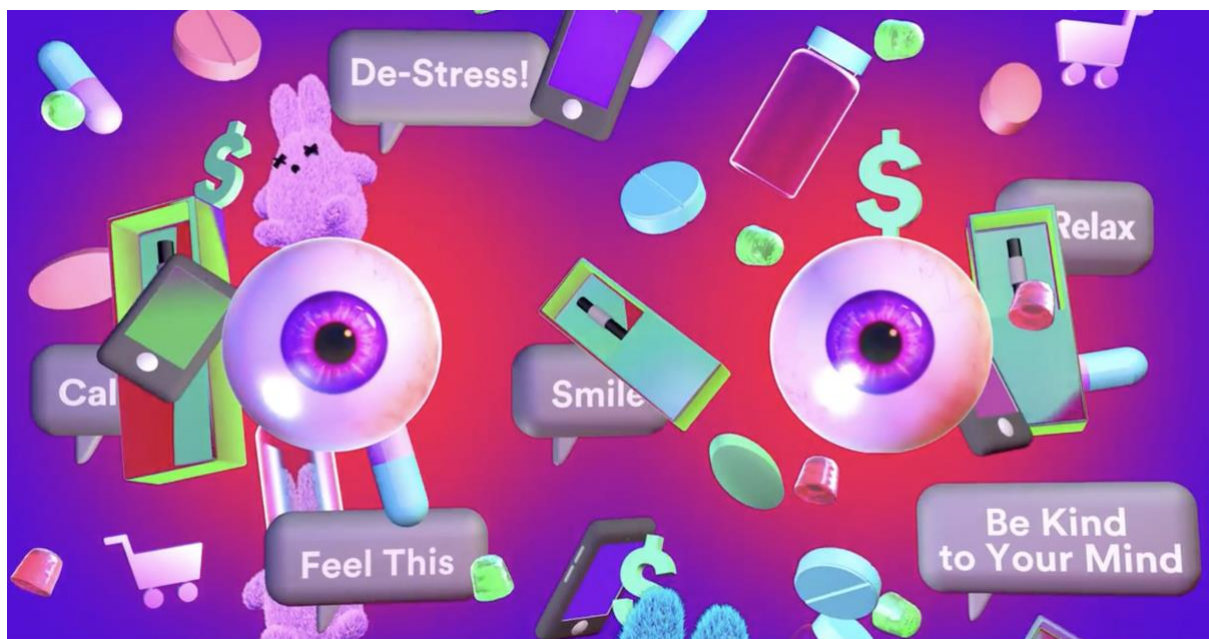


# Do Ads Really Over-Promise?

Advertisers don't know that they're exaggerating. And the consumers don't care. Admen are probably unaware of this.



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Imagine this scenario taking place in the swankiest bar in your city.

You have your fifth drink stylishly balanced in your hand when a hottie walks over and you slyly wink at her and say, *'Hey, I'm wearing Axe.'*

The girl says, *'Excuse me? You're what?'*

You say, *'Come on, you know what the deal is. I'm wearing Axe! You're supposed to rip my clothes off and force me to have wild, uninhibited sex with you right now, right here, on this floor.'*

The girl looks at you like you're wearing pig dung and says, *'Get out of my face! Or you'll be wearing your ass on your neck.'*

All your confused lips can manage is a strangled plea, *'But I'm wearing Axe.'*

SFX: *Crrashh! Thud!*

Agreed, the above sounds like a gross exaggeration, but that's the point being made here. Namely, that most ads tend to exaggerate the effects of their products.

In ads, kids who drink health supplements come first in races, or score the winning goal in inter-school championships and, of late, they're even coming first in studies.

Girls who use talcum powder bag a dream job over 15,000 other dejected (and of course rejected) girls who didn't have the foresight to rub this mildly-scented crushed chalk all over their bodies.

Men whose wives wash their clothes in Extra Powered detergent get promoted overnight from peon to Worldwide CEO.

People who drink tea suddenly become more socially responsible.

But when you shell out your hard-earned money on say, a deo, and clothe your stinking skin in it, you realize that no one even notices.

No one cares. (Maybe because at that very moment the other person is hoping you'd notice her new improved shampoo, the one that's supposed to make her win the Miss World contest.)

People in advertising are probably unaware of this.

Advertising folk and brand managers do not know that a deo can, at best, block body odour.

A tea can only refresh you for like 5 seconds.

A shampoo can merely dislodge a little dirt from the hair.

A car can just take you from point A to point B (provided a VIP is not visiting your city).

It can never take you from 0 to national celebrity in 6 seconds. It's against the laws of physics, unless you're driving a magic wand with wheels and leather upholstery.

For one reason or the other, advertisers don't know that they're exaggerating.

And the consumers don't care that they are.

No one gives a flying Fa.

Consumers continue to lap up products regardless of the fairy tales in the ads.

A mother will, year after year, lovingly buy her 30 year old son a pen that's supposed to make him a Nobel Prize winner, and he's still struggling to pass tenth standard.

Probably this is the result of living in a society where hundreds of competitive and yet identical products coexist.

If ten detergents exist and all of them can keep whites sparkling white, how are you going to choose one detergent over the other?

Luckily there are ads to help you make the right choice.

And so you buy the detergent that keeps clothes clean and helps you win an Olympic gold medal in freestyle wrestling, and tutors you to become an Oscar-winning music composer, plus inspires you to build an 80 metre nuclear-powered rocket in your bathroom.

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*\*\*Deepak Joshi Strayed into advertising after briefly pursuing the following professions – beach bum, painter, waiter, hawker, transport company clerk, mechanic, tutor... He has had stints in Contract, McCann, Saatchi, Euro RSCG and Madison. He recently left O&M Bangalore as Senior Creative Director. His ads have been lucky enough to win many local awards and a few international ones.*

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