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The Effect of Legal Interventions on Reducing Misleading Advertisements and Protecting Consumer Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Misleading advertisements represent a persistent challenge to consumer welfare, distorting purchase decisions and eroding trust in the marketplace. This paper examines the effect of legal interventions on reducing misleading advertisements and protecting consumer behaviour, with a particular focus on the Indian regulatory landscape. Drawing upon the legislative framework established by the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the enforcement mechanisms of the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), and the complementary role of self-regulatory bodies such as the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), this research analyses how legal interventions influence consumer trust, purchase decisions, and market conduct. Through an examination of landmark judicial decisions-including the Supreme Court's intervention in the Patanjali case and the CCPA's ruling on '100%' claims-the paper demonstrates that robust legal enforcement, combined with proactive judicial oversight, produces measurable effects on both corporate advertising practices and consumer protection outcomes. However, the analysis also identifies persistent challenges, including jurisdictional limitations, enforcement resource constraints, and the rapid evolution of digital advertising practices. The paper concludes that while India's legal framework provides a strong foundation for regulating misleading advertisements, sustained effectiveness requires adaptive enforcement mechanisms, enhanced inter-agency coordination, and continued judicial vigilance.

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Introduction

The marketplace of the twenty-first century is characterised by an unprecedented proliferation of advertising across traditional and digital media. While advertising serves essential functions-informing consumers, facilitating competition, and driving economic activity-the rise of deceptive and misleading advertising practices poses significant threats to consumer welfare and market integrity. Misleading advertisements distort consumer decision-making, erode trust in brands and institutions, and create an uneven playing field where honest businesses are disadvantaged by competitors willing to make unsubstantiated claims.

The significance of this issue has prompted legislative and regulatory responses worldwide. In India, the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, represented a paradigm shift in the approach to consumer protection, establishing the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) as a dedicated enforcement agency with suo moto powers to investigate and penalise misleading advertisements. This legislative development was complemented by the CCPA's Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022, which provided detailed standards for truthful and non-deceptive advertising.

The judicial branch has also played a transformative role. The Supreme Court's intervention in the Patanjali case marked a critical turning point, demonstrating the judiciary's readiness to impose stricter accountability on brands that mislead consumers and holding state governments accountable for their failure to regulate deceptive advertising. This judicial activism has reinforced the importance of stringent enforcement of consumer protection laws and set precedents that continue to shape advertising practices.

Despite these developments, significant challenges remain. The rapid evolution of digital advertising, including programmatic advertising and influencer marketing, presents new regulatory complexities that traditional frameworks struggle to address. Additionally, cross-border advertising, resource constraints at consumer commissions, and the proliferation of dark patterns in e-commerce platforms continue to test the effectiveness of legal interventions.

This paper examines the effect of legal interventions on reducing misleading advertisements and protecting consumer behaviour. It analyses the legislative framework, enforcement mechanisms, judicial interventions, and self-regulatory initiatives that collectively constitute India's approach to regulating misleading advertisements. The paper also evaluates the effectiveness of these interventions in shaping consumer behaviour and corporate conduct, identifying both achievements and persistent challenges.

The Legislative Framework: Consumer Protection Act, 2019
Defining Misleading Advertisements
The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, provides a comprehensive statutory definition of misleading advertisements. Section 2(28) of the Act defines a "misleading advertisement" in relation to any product or service as an advertisement which:
(i) falsely describes such product or service; or
(ii) gives a false guarantee to, or is likely to mislead the consumers as to the nature, substance, quantity or quality of such product or service; or
(iii) conveys an express or implied representation which, if made by the manufacturer or seller or service provider thereof, would constitute an unfair trade practice; or
(iv) deliberately conceals important information.

This definition is significant for several reasons. First, it adopts a consumer-centric standard-an advertisement is misleading if it is likely to mislead consumers, regardless of the advertiser's intent. Second, it encompasses both false statements and deceptive omissions, recognising that the concealment of material information can be as damaging as outright falsehood. Third, it aligns with the concept of unfair trade practices defined under Section 2(47) of the Act, creating a cohesive framework for regulating deceptive marketing conduct.

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)
The establishment of the CCPA under Section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, represented a significant enhancement of regulatory oversight. The CCPA is an executive agency designed to intervene, prevent consumer detriment arising from unfair trade practices, and initiate class actions, including the enforcement of recalls, refunds, and return of products. Its core mandate is to prevent and regulate false or misleading advertisements which are prejudicial to the public interest.

The CCPA's powers, outlined in Sections 18-21 of the Act, include:
- Investigation of consumer rights violations
- Recall of hazardous products
- Reimbursement of the price of hazardous products recalled
- Stopping of injurious practices derogatory to collective interests of consumers
- Inflicting punishment up to ₹10 lakhs for first-time violators and more than ₹50 lakhs for subsequent violations

A distinctive feature of the CCPA is its suo moto powers-the authority can initiate investigations and orders without waiting for consumer complaints. This proactive enforcement capability was demonstrated in the CCPA's action against e-commerce entities in 2022 over misleading pricing practices.

The Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements, 2022
The CCPA notified the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022, on 9 June 2022. These guidelines provide detailed requirements for advertising claims, including:
- Truthfulness and Verifiability: All advertisements must be truthful and based on facts capable of substantiation. Factual claims must be backed by verifiable evidence, with the source and date of any independent research used in the advertisement clearly disclosed.
- No Misleading by Omission: Advertisements must not deliberately conceal important information that would affect consumer decisions.
- Due Diligence for Endorsements: Endorsements must reflect the genuine, reasonably current opinion of the individual, group, or organisation making such representation and must be based on adequate information about the identified product or service.
- Bait Advertising Restrictions: Advertisements offering goods or services at a specified price must not mislead consumers about the availability of those goods or services.

The guidelines also address the accountability of celebrities in brand endorsements, requiring that endorsements be based on evidence backing product claims. The CCPA has clarified that foreign professionals barred under Indian law from endorsements in their profession are also not permitted to make such endorsements.

Judicial Interventions: The Judiciary's Role in Consumer Protection
The Patanjali Case: A Watershed Moment
The Supreme Court's intervention in the Patanjali case-formally Indian Medical Association v. Union of India-marked a significant shift in how misleading advertising is perceived and penalised in India. The case originated from concerns over misleading advertisements by Patanjali promoting its ayurvedic products as effective treatments for serious medical conditions without scientific validation. The Indian Medical Association filed a petition in August 2022 alleging that Patanjali's advertisements were misleading and violated legal and ethical standards under the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954, and the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

The Supreme Court's directions in this case included:
- **Evidence-Based Claims:** Advertisements making health-related claims must be supported by credible scientific evidence, clinical studies, and verifiable research.
- **Transparency:** Advertisements should accurately represent product composition, and health benefits must be disclosed in accordance with applicable laws, including potential side effects.
- **Accountability for Endorsements:** Celebrities endorsing products must ensure endorsements are based on evidence backing product claims and comply with the 2022 Guidelines.
- **Regulatory Oversight:** The Court called for stricter oversight in enforcement of advertising standards, impleading various central and state administrative bodies to file responses on actions taken.
- **State Government Accountability:** Legal representatives of all state governments and union territories were instructed to submit individual affidavits detailing measures taken to address misleading advertisements.
- **Self-Declaration Requirement:** The Court directed that before an advertisement is printed, aired, or displayed, a self-declaration shall be submitted by the advertiser or advertising agency in accordance with the Cable Television Networks Rules, 1994, and the 2022 Guidelines.

The Patanjali case demonstrated the judiciary's readiness to impose stricter accountability on brands that mislead consumers, setting a precedent for future advertising regulations. By holding state governments accountable for their failure to regulate deceptive advertising, the Supreme Court reinforced the importance of stringent enforcement of consumer protection laws.

The CCPA's '100%' Ruling: Establishing Binding Principles

On 18 June 2026, the CCPA issued a landmark order in cases against Storia Foods and Beverages Pvt. Ltd. and Mrs. Bectors Food Specialities Ltd. (the English Oven Bread brand). The order established several binding principles that apply to all consumer-facing advertising and labelling in India.

The Storia Foods Case

The CCPA took up the case suo motu against Storia Foods regarding advertisements on its official website, product packaging, and third-party e-commerce platforms. The products at issue included:

- Storia 100% Tender Coconut Water
- 100% Natural Tender Coconut Water
- Storia 100% Juice-Pomegranate, Mixed Fruit, Mango, and Guava Chilli

The CCPA observed that the front packaging prominently advertised "100% Tender Coconut Water" and "100% Natural Tender Coconut Water," while the ingredient declaration disclosed the composition as "Water and Coconut Water Concentrate (9.6%) (Equivalent to 100% Coconut Water) (Reconstituted)". The product was made using coconut water concentrate reconstituted with water-not pure coconut water in any literal sense. The term 'reconstituted' was printed in fine print, a disclosure the CCPA held was insufficient to alert an ordinary consumer to the material discrepancy between the advertised claim and the product's actual composition.

The Mrs. Bectors Case

The CCPA examined promotional material for English Oven bread products making claims of '100% Atta Bread,' '100% Whole Wheat Bread,' and 'Taste of 100% Goodness' . During the proceedings, the company admitted that the bread contained only 87% whole wheat flour. The company attempted to argue that the term "100% Atta" was intended to mean that the sole grain source was wheat flour, with no refined flour or other cereals. The CCPA rejected this defence, holding that consumer perception is the decisive standard in determining whether an advertisement is misleading.

Binding Principles Established

The CCPA order established several principles with wide application:

- **'100%' is an Absolute Expression:** The term '100%' is an absolute and precise numerical expression that leaves no scope for approximation, qualification, or marketing interpretation. A product described as '100%' of something must be exactly and verifiably 100% of that thing.
- **Consumer Perception is the Decisive Standard:** An advertisement is misleading if an ordinary consumer is likely to be misled by it—regardless of what the advertiser intended by the claim. Courts and regulators assessing advertising claims apply a consumer-perception standard, not an advertiser-intent standard.
- **Fine Print Does Not Neutralise Headline Claims:** A brand cannot make an absolute claim in large type on the front of a pack and then qualify it in small print on the back or side. If a headline claim is not literally true, fine print does not save it.
- **Good Faith and Intent are Not Defences:** A brand that has used a misleading claim in good faith cannot rely on that belief as a defence to CCPA proceedings. The question is whether the consumer was or was likely to be misled.
- **Cumulative Effect of Claims Matters:** Advertising claims must be assessed not only individually but in their cumulative effect on consumer perception. A claim that might be individually defensible may become misleading when combined with another claim in a way that leads ordinary consumers to a false overall impression.

The Emami Case: Judicial Scrutiny of Endorsement Claims

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (Delhi) decision in Nikhil Jain v. Emami Limited (Complaint No. 53/2013) illustrates the judicial application of consumer protection principles to endorsement claims. The complainant purchased "Fair and Handsome," a men's fairness cream marketed with promises of visible fairness within three weeks, reinforced by images, skin tone progressions, and celebrity endorsements. After using the product without seeing improvement, the complainant alleged the product did not deliver the promised benefits.

Emami's defence included claims that the product was developed using scientific research and quality control, and that results depended on additional factors like diet, hygiene, exercise, and lifestyle-not solely the product's use. The company also contended that the claims had been reviewed and endorsed by the ASCI.

The Commission found that the advertising created a misleading overall impression, and Emami was held to have engaged in an unfair trade practice under Section 2(47) of the CPA. The Commission made several important findings:

- **Non-Disclosure as Misleading:** No disclosure was made regarding other factors that could materially affect the product's effectiveness. Under both the ASCI Code and the CCPA's 2022 Guidelines, omission of material information constitutes misleading advertising.
- **ASCI Compliance Does Not Immunise:** The Commission clarified that while ASCI's Code provides important ethical standards, it does not bind judicial authorities. Compliance with ASCI Guidelines does not immunise an advertiser if, on independent judicial assessment, the overall communication is misleading.
- **Expert Substantiation Must Be Claim-Specific:** The expert evidence produced by Emami was found inadequate-it relied on generic studies lacking claim-specific evaluation.
- **Punitive Damages:** The Commission imposed punitive damages amounting to ₹15,00,000, with ₹14,50,000 directed to be deposited into the Delhi State Consumer Welfare Fund and ₹50,000 awarded directly to the complainant.

The Commission also directed Emami to immediately withdraw the misleading packaging and advertisements.

Self-Regulatory Mechanisms: The Role of ASCI

Structure and Function

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is a self-regulatory organisation established in 1985, registered as a "Not for Profit Company" under the Companies Act, 1956. ASCI has adopted its own Code of Self-Regulation in Advertising, which deals extensively with misleading advertisements and releases corresponding guidelines to promote fair advertising.

ASCI's role in the regulatory ecosystem is complementary to statutory regulation. The organisation addresses complaints regarding advertisements that violate its code, and its decisions, while not legally binding in the same manner as court orders, carry significant weight in the advertising industry. The Bombay High Court has held that ASCI is neither a statutory body nor a governmental regulator; therefore, it lacks the power to restrict commercial advertisements of sellers, especially non-members.

However, the Delhi High Court has recognised the requirement of extending ASCI's jurisdiction to include non-members as well. Additionally, the Delhi High Court in Metro Tyres Ltd. v. The ASCI supported the role of self-regulatory organisations like ASCI in reducing litigation and offering an alternative approach.

Enforcement and Effectiveness

ASCI's enforcement mechanisms, while lacking direct penal power, have significant indirect impact. According to the Annual Complaints Report 2022-23, one in every four advertisements released in the financial year had violations. ASCI addresses these through:

- **Public Accountability:** Violations of ASCI guidelines, upon being reported, gain momentum and become a matter of public importance, creating trouble for any known personality associated with the advertisement. A notable example involved cricketer Virat Kohli, who made a social media post praising Lovely Professional University without using the paid partnership tag, sparking public outrage and forcing him to edit his post.
- **Governmental Support:** Despite lacking penal power to enforce its Code, ASCI has significant governmental support. ASCI's guidelines for celebrities in advertising were backed by the CCPA's Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs also issued a set of guidelines called "Endorsements Know-how" in 2023.
- **Co-Regulatory Partnership:** The CCPA has collaborated with ASCI to strengthen advertising regulation, referring advertisements that are non-compliant with its Code and could potentially breach the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, to the CCPA for appropriate action.
- ASCI has also been active in addressing emerging challenges. In 2022, the Council established a framework of co-regulatory partnership with the Ministry of Consumer Affairs through a Memorandum of Understanding. Its guidelines on influencer advertising have been particularly influential, enforcing disclosure requirements for paid partnerships. ASCI has also enhanced its surveillance through an AI-based tracking system called "NINA" (National Interest Natural Intelligence Advertising).

Limitations

ASCI's effectiveness is constrained by several limitations. The Bombay High Court, in Century Plyboards (India) v. ASCI, held that ASCI cannot assume the powers of a civil court. The lack of direct legal authority means that ASCI cannot compel non-compliant advertisers to withdraw or modify advertisements, and its decisions are not legally binding on non-members.

Despite these limitations, ASCI continues to play a valuable role in supplementing statutory regulation. Its initiatives, such as the AI-based tracking system "NINA" and the Guidelines for Influencer Advertising, exemplify the co-regulatory approaches needed to address challenges posed by evolving advertising practices.

Addressing Emerging Challenges: Dark Patterns and Digital Deception

Defining Dark Patterns

Dark patterns represent a significant emerging challenge in digital advertising regulation. These are manipulative and deceptive design practices that guide users toward outcomes they may not have chosen freely. The CCPA's Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023, defines dark patterns as:

"Any practices or deceptive design pattern using user interface or user experience interactions on any platform that is designed to mislead or trick users into doing something they originally did not intend or want to do, by subverting or impairing the consumer autonomy, decision making or choice, amounting to misleading advertisement or unfair trade practice or violation of consumer rights."

The guidelines recognise thirteen specified dark patterns:

- False Urgency
- Basket Sneaking
- Confirm Shaming
- Forced Action
- Subscription Trap
- Interface Interference
- Bait and Switch
- Drip Pricing
- Disguised Advertisement
- Nagging
- Trick Questions
- SaaS Billing
- Rogue Malware

Regulatory Responses

The CCPA has taken proactive steps to address dark patterns. In addition to the 2023 Guidelines, the authority issued an advisory on 5 June 2025 urging e-commerce platforms to conduct self-audits to identify dark patterns within three months and give self-declarations that their platforms are not indulging in any dark patterns. A Joint Working Group, comprising representatives from Ministries, National Law Universities, and Voluntary Consumer Organizations, was constituted to identify dark patterns and coordinate stakeholder efforts.

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) first officially acknowledged dark patterns in 2022, and its discussion paper reported dark patterns in 52 out of 53 Indian apps, with almost 29% of advertisements in 2021-22 involving disguised advertising, a typical dark pattern. ASCI issued Guidelines for Online Deceptive Design Patterns in Advertising, 2023, identifying manipulative tactics commonly used in digital advertising.

However, the enforcement limitations of these guidelines have been noted. While the CCPA's Guidelines, 2023, bar all parties from engaging in dark pattern practices, the lack of penal provisions renders these bans difficult to enforce. Additionally, the scope of protection remains ambiguous, as the guidelines' linkage to "consumer rights" under the CPA may exclude users who only interact with a platform without making a purchase.

The Competition Law Dimension

Dark patterns, when used by market-dominant enterprises, can go beyond consumer issues and pose serious competition law concerns. Where interface design is manipulated to hinder users' freedom of choice, manipulate choice architecture, and deny competitors' access to markets, it can be categorised as non-price exclusionary behaviour and attract Section 4 of the Competition Act, 2002.

Examples of this Interface Manipulation Include:

- **Subscription Traps:** Dominant streaming and retail platforms deliberately use easy subscription techniques but make cancellation difficult through multi-step processes,

hidden settings, or coercive prompts. These techniques impose psychological and structural barriers to exit, effectively locking users into services and denying potential competitors market access.
- **Basket Sneaking and Drip Pricing:** Online marketplaces add ancillary costs that are disclosed only at the point of payment or pre-tick add-on upgrades that users need to opt out of. These designs capitalise on asymmetry of information and manipulate user behaviour to the platform's benefit.

The Competition Commission of India's (CCI) substantial penalty of approximately INR 1,000 crore against Google for abuse of dominance in the market for Android mobile operating systems addressed interface-level restrictions and control mechanisms as aspects of dominance. While the ruling did not explicitly identify dark patterns, it ordered Google to permit users to uninstall pre-installed apps and offer a choice of default search engine.

Comparative International Perspectives

European Union

The European Union has developed one of the most comprehensive frameworks for regulating misleading advertisements through the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (UCPD) . The Volkswagen Emissions case (2020) demonstrated the collaborative approach taken by member states in addressing misleading environmental claims, resulting in severe penalties and compulsory corrective advertisements.

The EU's Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive (2024/825) banned the use of sustainability labels that cannot be associated with an official labelling scheme or independent third-party certification. The framework requires examination "between the lines" to ascertain whether there is a presumed environmental benefit established by packaging's visual architecture.

United States

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) provides another influential model. In FTC v. Facebook (2023), the Commission settled a $5 billion penalty for misleading privacy practices in advertising, setting a new benchmark for regulatory enforcement. The FTC's "Green Guides" have become a global reference point for environmental advertising claims. The FTC is currently updating its Green Guides, with new enforcement approaches considering unaccredited or self-created eco-seals as an "implicit declaration of general environmental benefit."

United Kingdom

The UK's Advertising Standards Authority has implemented a regulatory framework for influencer marketing. In ASA v. Instagram Influencers (2023), the authority established detailed guidelines for social media advertising disclosures. The UK's Competition and Markets Authority has also taken action against misleading pricing practices, as seen in its case against Amazon.

Australia

Australian Consumer Law's approach to substantiation notices, requiring advertisers to provide evidence supporting their claims within 21 days, has proven effective. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission v. Samsung (2023) case on misleading water-resistance claims in smartphone advertisements demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach.

Impact on Consumer Behaviour

Building Consumer Trust

Effective legal interventions contribute to building consumer trust in the marketplace. When consumers perceive that regulatory authorities actively enforce truth-in-advertising standards, they are more likely to engage in transactions with confidence. The CCPA's actions against misleading claims-such as the '100%' ruling and the action against e-commerce entities-serve as signals to consumers that deceptive practices will be addressed.

Deterrence and Market Conduct

Legal interventions have a deterrent effect on corporate advertising practices. The imposition of penalties, corrective advertising orders, and judicial scrutiny create financial and reputational risks for companies considering deceptive advertising strategies. The Emami case, where punitive damages of ₹15,00,000 were imposed, illustrates the financial consequences of misleading advertising.

The Supreme Court's direction requiring self-declaration before advertisements are printed or aired creates a compliance mechanism that encourages advertisers to conduct pre-publication verification of claims. This procedural requirement contributes to a culture of pre-emptive compliance rather than reactive enforcement.

Consumer Awareness and Empowerment

Regulatory interventions also serve an educational function. When consumers witness enforcement actions-such as the CCPA's ruling on '100%' claims—they become more aware of their rights and more discerning about advertising claims. The CCPA's complaint portal and the E-Daakhil portal for electronic complaint filing have enhanced consumer access to grievance redressal mechanisms.

Attitude-Behaviour Alignment

By reducing the prevalence of misleading advertisements, legal interventions help align consumer attitudes with actual purchasing behaviour. When consumers can trust that advertising claims are truthful and verifiable, they are more likely to translate their preferences-including preferences for sustainable or health-conscious products-into actual purchasing decisions.

Challenges and Limitations

Jurisdictional Complexity

One of the significant challenges in regulating misleading advertisements is jurisdictional complexity. The case of Multi-State Advertisers v. CCPA (2023) highlighted difficulties in regulating advertisements crossing state boundaries, especially when digital media is involved. Establishing jurisdiction and ensuring uniform enforcement across states remains a persistent challenge.

Digital Transformation

The digital transformation of advertising has brought unprecedented challenges. Programmatic advertising, AI-driven content, and influencer marketing operate at a speed and scale that traditional regulatory systems struggle to monitor effectively. The case of Cyber Consumer Forum v. Social Media Platforms (2023) exposed these challenges in monitoring and controlling rapidly changing digital advertising practices.

Cross-Border Advertising

Cross-border advertisement represents another grievous issue. In International Consumer Protection Alliance v. Global E-commerce Platforms (2023), the National Commission faced the issue of advertisements originating from foreign jurisdictions targeting Indian consumers. Enforcing Indian law against foreign entities remains a significant challenge in the global digital environment.

Resource and Infrastructure Constraints
Consumer commissions face resource and infrastructure constraints that affect effective implementation. Lack of effective manpower and technical resources resulted in delayed justice, particularly at the district level where most consumer cases emanate.

Language and Cultural Diversity
India's linguistic and cultural diversity adds further implementation challenges. In Regional Consumer Protection Council v. Pan-India Advertisers (2023), the Commission faced the challenge of advertisements misleading in a regional context but technically compliant in another. This case brought attention to the need for culturally sensitive regulation of advertisements.

Enforcement Limitations of Self-Regulation
The enforcement limitations of self-regulatory bodies like ASCI remain a concern. ASCI lacks the power to restrict commercial advertisements of non-members, and its decisions are not legally binding on non-members. While the CCPA has collaborated with ASCI to address this, the sufficiency of these measures remains a question [1-9].

The Intention-Behaviour Gap in Regulation
A significant critique of current approaches is that they focus heavily on reactive enforcement rather than proactive prevention. The Supreme Court's concern in the Patanjali case was not the absence of a legal framework regulating misleading advertisements but rather the inadequate enforcement of such laws. This suggests that the effectiveness of legal interventions depends as much on consistent enforcement as on the strength of the legal framework itself.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings
This paper has examined the effect of legal interventions on reducing misleading advertisements and protecting consumer behaviour in India. The analysis demonstrates that India possesses a robust legislative framework, anchored by the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, and implemented through the Central Consumer Protection Authority. The CCPA's enforcement actions-including the landmark '100%' ruling and the Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements-have established binding principles that guide advertising practices.

Judicial interventions, particularly the Supreme Court's intervention in the Patanjali case, have reinforced the importance of stringent enforcement and set precedents that continue to shape the regulatory landscape. Self-regulatory bodies like ASCI complement statutory regulation, providing industry-specific guidance and fostering a culture of responsible advertising.

However, persistent challenges remain. Jurisdictional complexity, the rapid evolution of digital advertising, cross-border enforcement difficulties, and resource constraints continue to test the effectiveness of legal interventions. The emergence of dark patterns in e-commerce represents a new frontier requiring adaptive regulatory responses.

Recommendations
Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are offered:

For Policymakers:
- Strengthen Enforcement Resources: Increase funding and technical capacity for consumer commissions, particularly at the district level, to address the backlog of consumer complaints and ensure timely justice.
- Enhance Cross-Border Enforcement Mechanisms: Develop frameworks for cooperation with foreign regulatory authorities to address cross-border advertising issues and enforce Indian law against foreign entities.
- Expand the Scope of Dark Patterns Regulation: Consider amending the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns to include penal provisions and clarify the scope of protection to include all users, not only those who make purchases.
- Promote Co-Regulatory Approaches: Strengthen collaboration between statutory regulators (CCPA) and self-regulatory bodies (ASCI) to create a seamless enforcement framework.
- Address Digital Advertising Challenges: Develop specific regulations for programmatic advertising, AI-driven content, and influencer marketing that address the unique challenges of digital advertising.

For Businesses and Advertisers:
- Adopt Proactive Compliance: Implement pre-publication verification systems to ensure all claims are substantiated, truthful, and verifiable.
- Avoid Reliance on Fine Print: Ensure that headline claims are literally true and that material information is prominently disclosed.
- Maintain Claim-Specific Evidence: Retain robust evidence supporting all advertising claims, including visual and endorsement claims.
- Train Marketing Teams: Ensure marketing professionals understand the legal and regulatory requirements for advertising, including the consumer-perception standard for determining misleading advertisements.

For Consumers:
- Be Informed: Familiarise yourself with consumer rights and regulatory mechanisms, including the CCPA's complaint portal.
- Report Misleading Advertisements: Actively report suspicious advertising claims to the CCPA or ASCI to facilitate enforcement.
- Be Skeptical of Absolute Claims: Approach claims like '100%' with healthy skepticism, particularly where they appear on product packaging.

Final Remarks
The journey from the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, to the 2019 Act represents a significant step forward in consumer protection in India. The effectiveness of this legislation framework, however, will be measured not only by its ability to provide remedies but also by its capacity to prevent misleading advertisements and create a culture of responsible advertising in India's ever-changing market environment.

As India becomes one of the largest consumer markets in the world, the effectiveness of legal remedies will define future advertising practices and consumer protection. The future of consumer protection in advertising lies in striking a balance between fostering innovation in advertisements and ensuring firm protection for consumers. This will require a multi-stakeholder approach involving government agencies, industry bodies, consumer organisations, and technology experts working together to build a fair and transparent advertising ecosystem.

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