
Handout C

Types of advertising claims

1. The weasel claim: words or claims that appear substantial upon first look but after further analysis they turn out to be meaningless. Key words to look for: “helps”; “like”; “virtual or virtually”; “acts or works”; “can be”; “up to”; “as much as”; “refreshes”; “comforts”; “tackles”; “fights”; “come on”; “the feel of”; “looks like”; “fortified”; “enriched”; and “strengthened.”

Examples:

- “Helps prevent hair loss.”
- “Our mouthwash fights germs.”

2. The unfinished claim: the ad claims the product is better, or has more of something, but does not finish the comparison.

Examples:

- “Superglow lip gloss gives you more shine.”
- “Our pain reliever provides three times the relief.”

3. The “we’re different and unique” claim: the claim states there is nothing else quite like the product in the advertisement. This is supposed to imply that the product is superior.

Examples:

- “There’s no other nail polish like it.”
- “Zappy is like nobody else’s gym shoe.”

4. The “water is wet” claim: this claim says something about the product that is true for any brand in that category of product. The claim is a statement of fact, but not really an advantage over competing products.

Examples:

- “Incredilash makes your lashes appear darker.”
- “PowerWash detergent with a strong cleaning agent.”



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5. The “so what” claim: a claim that is true but gives no real advantage to the product. Similar to the “water is wet” claim except this technique claims an advantage over competitors. A careful reader or consumer will react by saying “so what”?

Examples:

- “SuperVit has more than three times the vitamin C as ordinary supplements.”
- “Our bread contains grains not found in other brands.”

6. The vague claim: this claim is not clear. The key to this claim is that it uses colorful, but meaningless, words. These claims also use personal and emotional opinions that cannot be verified.

Examples:

- “SuperPops taste good and smell good.”
- “FlavoLot makes food taste great.”

7. The Endorsement or Testimonial: a celebrity or authority appears in the ad to lend his or her qualities to the product. They may claim to use the product.

Examples:

- Will Smith says, “Use Crest for a cleaner, brighter smile.”
- “Clairol makes my hair shine bright,” says Beyonce Knowles.

8. The Scientific or Statistical Claim: these ads use some kind of scientific proof or experiment, specific numbers, or a mystery ingredient that sounds impressive.

Examples:

- “Dynamite Detergent has 60% more cleaning power than the leading brand.”
- “Veggie Lite contains RHD.”

9. The “Compliment the Consumer” claim: This kind of claim attempts to flatter the consumer.

Examples:

- “Because you have good taste our coffee is the perfect choice.”
- “You take pride in being a leader in fashion.”

10. The Rhetorical Question: This technique requires an answer from the audience. The question is asked in a way that encourages an answer that affirms the product’s goodness.

Examples:

- “Don’t you want your family to experience the goodness of what our hotel has to offer?”
- “SuperVite—couldn’t your body use a boost?”