

# False advertising: can you trust advertisements? essay sample

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Low fat, no fat, sugar free, high in fiber, healthy lifestyle are all hype words used to advertise food products. Individuals have busy hectic lifestyles and want to be able to grab an easy, convenient, tasty food product. They do not have time or are too lazy to read the nutrition label to see what they are ingesting, and to research the claims that companies make about their products. Consumers trust manufacturers to provide truthful information in their advertisements-but that is not always what they receive. " Marketers and consumers engage in a relationship the ultimate purpose of which is the exchange of products for money" (Anker, Sandoe, Kamin, & Kappel, 2011) As a consumer it is easy to believe the slanted or misleading information advertisers use, but need to keep in mind their main objective is influence consumers to purchase their product-not to assist in creating healthy lifestyles or dietary habits. Advertisers betray consumer's trust by using hype words and health claims to induce a purchase

### Trusting Advertisers

Advertisers have long influenced consumer's purchases. It is the job of the advertisers to market the company's product in the hopes of creating a purchase. They use emotive content in their television, print and radio ads to stimulate the feelings of the viewer. Or they use health claims which may convince a consumer that the product is good for them. There is a range of words that advertisers use to describe food products. Consumers make assumptions when advertisers use these specific words. For example the word " fresh", consumers typically associate the word with unprocessed ingredients, when in reality the ingredients have gone through heat processes and preservatives have been added to increase the shelf life.

(Hastak & Mazis, 2011) Consumers use health halos to help them define what is a healthy product and unhealthy product. “ The branding and labeling of food often operate by relying on people’s natural tendency to categorize food as intrinsically good or bad, healthy or unhealthy, regardless of how much is eaten” (Chandon & Wansink, 2012).

This idea can derive from thinking one aspect of the foods is healthy but not looking at the actually nutritional facts. This creates a boomerang effect where people feel that they can consume more of what they perceive as healthy food and then eat unhealthy food without as much guilt, wrongfully assuming they are eating bad food in moderation. (Chandon & Wansink, 2012) Coca-Cola, the manufactures of Vitaminwater have been faced with a class action lawsuit in the USA because of false advertising for claiming that it is a vitamin enhanced water beverage. (Gregory, 2010) What the label fails to mention is that it has 125 calories and 33 grams of sugar per 20 oz. bottle. Water is a healthy way to hydrate your body and it is not wrong for consumers to assume that a product having water in the title would be healthy. Advertisers would like to give consumers the impression that they are helping you to make healthy choices, by being concerned with the overall health of their customers. Hype Words in Advertisements

Advertisers like to use hype words such as low in fat, low in cholesterol, or contain no fat or no cholesterol. What do those phrases really mean?

Consumers would assume that “ no fat” meant that there is zero grams of fat in the product but FDA standards state that for the term “ no fat” to be used it has to have less than 0. 5 grams of fat. So technically there could be fat in

the product. If you eat a product that has 0.5 grams of an ingredient in it and then say eat four servings then you have ingested 2 grams of the ingredient. Some products advertise that the product contains “no cholesterol”. Such as Mazola vegetable oil claimed it contains “no cholesterol” but no vegetable oil contains cholesterol. Mazola was trying to promote their oil as being better than their competitors. (Hastak & Mazis, 2011) The Mazola advertisers mislead the consumer into thinking their oil is better because it does not contain cholesterol. Cereal advertisers for years have been promoting the fact that their cereal contains fiber, and is therefore a healthful selection, because fiber has been shown to reduce cholesterol and lower blood pressure.

The advertisers are not lying about the cereal containing fiber but are omitting the other amounts of unhealthy ingredients their product contains. Nutella, chocolate hazelnut spread, advertises, “Breakfast never tasted so good”. The commercial also goes on to list the ingredients as hazelnuts, skim milk and a hint of cocoa. What the commercial does not mention is that in one tablespoon there is 11g of sugar and 6g of fat. Ferrero the manufacturer of Nutella had a class action filed against them in the USA for “misleading consumers via labeling and marketing into thinking the spread was healthy.” (Armour, 2012) Consumers put too much trust in advertisers to advise them on what is healthy and what is not, and it is shown that many consumers are not adequately skilled to interpret nutritional tables or facts. Consumers should beware of the phrases or words advertisers use to describe products and know that advertisements are not always truthful. Tougher laws should be in place to prevent these misleading claims by

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establishing minimum nutrient levels that need to be met by the manufacturer before they can make such claims.

### Medical Implications

Advertisers can influence consumers into buying a product because the product claims it will make you healthier or help with a health condition. These health claims can lead to a healthy person to believe that they could have a health problem. Activia yogurt claims that by taking the 14-day challenge it will improve your digestion. “ When marketers exploit consumers irrational concern, their interest is to use these concerns as a vehicle to create purchase intentions.” (Anker, Sandoe, Kamin, & Kappel, 2011) The down side to Activia claim is that it can play on consumer’s irrational fears and can make them believe they have a digestion problems, when they may not. What the ads do not say that a person needs to consume three yogurts a day to benefit from the product. It is proven that yogurt does help with digestion, but Activia is claiming to have an ingredient that other yogurts do not have.

Activia is no different that any other yogurt. Advertisements for Danone’s DanActive, dairy drink claimed that the product was “ clinically proven to help strengthen your body’s defenses.” Most consumers interpret this to mean that DanActive would strengthen your immune system and reduce the risk of getting a cold or flu. DanActive also plays on consumer’s irrational fears of getting sick. Danone stands by their statement that the product helps strengthen your body’s defenses, even though there is not adequate research to prove their statement. Danone the manufacture of both Activia

and DanActive has settled a class action lawsuit in the USA and Canada for false advertising and making unsubstantiated claims. As a result Danone has agreed to remove the claim it is scientifically proven or clinically proven and the word immunity from their advertisements. Advertisers of these two products are being devious in their advertisements as they are targeting consumers that value their health and want to purchase products that support that value.

### Conclusion

Advertisers job is to advertise a product to the public in hopes of creating a customer and ultimately a customer who makes a purchase. People are impressionable and though it makes selling products easier, they should act ethically and either create products that meet their claims, or drop the claims altogether. Consumers need to read the labels and look up the ingredients that are not immediately understood. Also demand higher quality food products and not buy from companies that mislead or lie to customers. Our health is too important to leave in the hands of advertisers.

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