

# The effects of false advertising

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Final Draft: The Effects of False Advertising Since the evolution of communication, media has been used to transmit informations to those willing to absorb it. Now, using powerful technologies such as television or the internet, information has been made accessible to people in every aspect of our daily lives, trying now to influence our choices more than ever before through advertisement. However, for the most, the goal behind advertising is personal profit.

Therefore, the things we are exposed to in advertisements are not always true; they often tend to make people try being someone else's idea of perfection while ignoring their own goals, and then conduct the consumers to deception. As for anything else, regulations on advertising do exist and are set by the Federal Trade Commission. But still, the problem of deceptive advertising does exist and is very persistent.

My goal is to discuss the problem of deceptive advertising, by analyzing the strengths and the weaknesses of the FTC policies on advertising, the causes and effects of the problem and finally propose eventual solutions. Part I According to its official web site, [ftc.gov](http://ftc.gov), " The FTC deals with issues that touch the economic life of every American. It is the only federal agency with both consumer protection and competition jurisdiction in broad sectors of the economy," (" About the Federal Trade Commission") advertising included.

As any institution of this scale, the FTC has very strong policies regarding the field it deals with. And acts such as false advertising can be heavily punished by the law, according to the FTC's many laws and acts. However, regardless the numerous regulations that make the FTC's strengths, it possesses a

major weakness, since as far as the commission punishes unfair methods in advertising, and it fails to clearly define the word “ unfair”. William F.

Brown says in his article that the term “ unfair methods” remains a generalization that the FTC must translate into usable policies, or standards by which specific methods can be judged (“ the Federal Trade Commission and False Advertising II”). More specifically, it’s not always clear what would be included within the scope of the commission’s authority. This I would rather qualify unexisting part of the FTC policy, creates a gaping hole through which the problem of false advertising slips out.

And I can truly see where this problem might apply: We can always see or hear from commercials all the benefits of a product, but, usually all the undesirable side effects are either written in very small caps at the bottom, so that no one can see or practically said at the speed of light, making them incomprehensible. From my consumer point of view, I can say that these are unfair methods; however, I can hardly see how the FTC is going to punish such an act, because in fact, everything about the product is there; regardless how the information is delivered.

Part II Along with the FTC policy problem, there are more causes linked to the false advertising problem. For starter, I can tell from personal observations that America is a highly competitive country with a very capitalist nature. So much that in order to sell its products, companies will not hesitate to lie. For example, I still don’t know which phone company’s network is America’s fastest, especially when most claim to be (AT; T, Verizon, and t-mobile are really getting me confused. Then there is also the people mindset that is problematic. By that, I mean people tend to respond

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to feeling rather than reason; a commercial full of fallacies, for example, will get customers to buy a product simply by being entertaining. I believe that people's response to advertisements in America is different because of the way they are implemented. For every 10 minutes of a television show, there are 5 minutes of advertisement; it gives a 1/3 ratio, meaning that more than 30% of what people see on television are commercials.

Even on radio stations and all over the internet there are commercials. What I'm saying is that over time, people stop noticing them, plus they become boring (think about how often you skip channels when an ad is on), that's when marketers, in need of new ways to keep consumers attention on a product, use humor, entertainment, or make some commercials so stupid that they are rarely unnoticeable. Also, somebody desperately in need of change in his life is most likely to consider any possible option, even the most irrational.

I will take the specific case of over the counter weight loss products, which has a huge market value at the moment: Approximately 100 billion dollars and expected to quadruple by 2015 (" MoneySpent On Weight-Loss Programs in America Today"). A study from John Cawley (Cornell University), Rosemary Avery (Cornel University) and Matthew Eisenberg (Carnegie Mellon University) revealed that as of 2008, 68% of the American adult population was overweight, 33% obese, and that out of the majority of those trying to lose weight, 33.9% had used over the counter weight loss products.

The same study also showed that their spread is increasing because weight loss products are very loosely regulated and have a history of little efficacy and dangerous side effects (" The Effects of Advertising and Deceptive  
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Advertising on Consumption”). One cause to that is: They are treated like food. Therefore, they are sold in supermarkets and pharmacies as well as through the internet without any need for manufacturers to prove benefits from the product, and bearing responsibilities for showing safety before marketing (food is assumed to be safe).

It is then up to other governmental institutions to reveal the product to be unsafe. As a result, manufacturers of weight loss products have considerable slack in the marketing of these products. But truth is, they are very ineffective and can have severe side effects. Most of the weight loss products contain components such as phenylpropanolamine and ephedra, which have been identified by the FDA as increasing risks of stroke and cardiac events, as well as caffeine like products that increase the heart rate to give the impression of a faster metabolism.

One big case was involving “ Redux”, a drug that was designed for obese individuals, but had many people, including doctors, who were slightly overweight experience pulmonary hypertension, valvular heart disease, and neurotoxicity. Even without being an expert on this topic, I can accurately say that it’s impossible to lose weight without doing any kind of exercise; so the best these products can do is ease the weight loss process. And as a matter of fact, if they were really working we would already see decreases in the overweight rate in the population.

Unfortunately, not everybody understands the facts about advertising certain products, and people end up falling into deception by using a lot of them, ultimately affecting themselves as individuals and the population as a whole. In a long run I can hold it responsible for phenomena like emotional

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conflicts, because, in addition to lies, some advertising programs show a distorted image of reality which often become people's new standard. For those influenced deeper, physical and mental problems occur, including bulimia, anorexia, the employment of harmful dietary plans, low self esteem, or thoughts of suicide.

Unless the truth is revealed, some will continue to suffer. To my opinion, consumers could find products more attractive advertisements were done by normal people or without all the extra mind blowers. Other side effect to deceptive advertising is that continuously deceived consumers can actually turn their back to some product, and give negative feedback to their entourage. In some cases, it gets so bad that there are several individual law suits against a single company.

Such mistrust into local products can go as far as bringing the economy down, especially if people decide to stop purchasing things of the same kind. Plus, manufacturing products that are not going to be consumed by a majority of the population is a waste of resources. Part III But like for every problem, there are a few solutions, or at least ways to lessen it. I believe the FTC needs to create a clear definition of the term " unfair methods" in its policy, so that every questionable, literally or implicitly false advertisement will be subject to revision, especially for those that can have an impact on health.

In addition to this, if the public could try viewing advertising only as something to get one's attention, and recognize the commercials playing on people's insecurities, as well as those using humor and entertainment over facts to sell a product (According to the article " The Use Of Humor To Mask  
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Deceptive Advertising” in The Journal of Advertising, “ The content analysis of 238 humorous ads showed that 73. 5% of them had deceptive claims and 74. 5% of these claims were masked by humor”).

Until either is accomplished, the negative effects of deceptive advertising will be felt by the vulnerable, people, and companies will still make profit. Conclusion Overall, it’s clear to see that the practice of false advertising is very persisting and influences several aspects of our live, either by getting people to buy ineffective products then fall into deception or sometimes setting new standard in society by showing a distorted image of reality or beauty.

However, I believe there is no better wall to this problem than self-defense. By that, I mean it is up to the people to truly open their mind and rely more on reason, to try finding and understanding more facts about the products on the market, so that their actions toward a product define new standards for manufacturers instead of the other way around. Work Cited “ About the Federal Trade Commission. ” Federal Trade Commission June 17, 2010Ftc.gov April 18 2011. Electronic. Brown, William F. The Federal Trade Commission and False Advertising II” The Journal of Marketing (1 July1947): 38-46. April 18, 2011. Print. Cawley, John, Rosemary Avery, and Matthew Eisenberg. “ The Effects of Advertising and Deceptive Advertising on Consumption. ” Economics Seminar Papers (30 July 2010): 3-11. Electronic. Mialon, Hugo M. and Paul H. Rubin. Economics, Law, and Individual Rights. 2008 New York: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2008. Electronic. “ Money Spent on Weight Loss Programs in The USA Today. Worldometers Information 2009. Worldometers. info April 18 2011. Electronic. Mundy, Alicia. “ Weight-loss <https://assignbuster.com/the-effects-of-false-advertising/>

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