

# ADVERTISING CLAIMS

In a simple world, we could say that the **claims** made in an advertisement are **a company's promises to consumers as they decide whether to buy a product or service**. As you know, we do not live in a simple world.

Advertising claims have a spotty history. They include the claims of "snake oil" salesmen that a magical elixir would cure anything from tuberculosis and polio to bad breath and crossed eyes, and the claims of tobacco ads that certain cigarettes would sweeten the breath and keep you slim. Click [here](#) to see the claims on some vintage tobacco ads.



Today, laws and regulations require advertisers to stick to the truth in their claims. Even so, consumers should listen closely to claims by advertisers, and learn how to analyze them.

Recognizing marketing approaches, advertising strategies and the various types of claims enables you to begin breaking an ad down so you can figure out how it works.

Advertisers are familiar with various ways to make a claim that can suggest or imply more than it actually promises, without ever saying anything that is untrue. Nine of these techniques are listed :

- the unfinished claim**
- the weasel-word claim**
- the "we're different and unique" claim**
- the "water is wet" claim**
- the vague claim**
- the endorsement or testimonial**
- the scientific or statistical claim**
- the compliment-the-consumer claim**
- the rhetorical question**

### The Unfinished Claim

Ad claims that the product or service has **something more** to offer or is **better than** but does not finish the comparison.

STATEMENT	COMMENTS
"Superglue now 100% better"	Better than what? Was it that bad before?
"Scrub Clean—Gives you more"	More what?

### The Weasel-Word-Claim

Ad uses a word that makes all that follows practically meaningless.

Parity products tend to use this technique; parity products are really identical and no one superior product exists. The Weasel Word Claim is used to create the illusion of superiority.

STATEMENT	COMMENTS
"Will leave your floor virtually spotless"	Virtually means "almost"—Not totally spotless. Spotless is the key word, which is made meaningless by the word virtually.
"Made with beef"	This phrase does not mean 100% beef, just that there is some beef in the product.

### The "we're different and unique" claim

Ad claims there is nothing else like the product/service being advertised. This implies superiority, nothing better.

STATEMENT	COMMENTS
"There's no life like it"—Army.	Every career is different.
"Only Duncan's coffee has this unique taste."	Well yes, doesn't every coffee try to have their very own distinct taste?

### The "water is wet" claim

Ad states something that is obvious to any product.

STATEMENT	COMMENTS
"Orange Pekoe Tea—the choice of real tea drinkers."	As opposed to fake tea drinkers?
"Fantasy Eye shadow—adds colour to you eyes."	So does every other eye shadow product.

### **The Vague Claim**

Ad uses meaningless words as well as emotional and subjective views that cannot be verified.

STATEMENT	COMMENTS
"For skin like a baby."	Hard to prove this!
"A new hair colour will make you feel younger."	How do you know?

### **The endorsement or testimonial**

Claim is substantiated by celebrities or authorities. They claim to use the product and thus make its use attractive to the consumer.

STATEMENT	COMMENTS
Dentist—"I wouldn't recommend any other toothpaste."	Most likely recommends all sorts of brands.
Wayne Gretzky for Ford	Does Wayne really drive around in a Ford? Maybe a Ferrari?

### **The scientific or statistical claim**

Claim uses specific numbers with scientific proof or experiments.

STATEMENT	COMMENTS
"Dust Power—has 25% more dusting power."	The claim probably means that the can is 25% larger.
"Bread helps build strong bodies in 12 ways."	This advertisement was removed by the Federal Trade Commission. The number 12 could not be proven. Changing the 12 to many may have helped.

### **The compliment-the-consumer claim**

These ads compliment the consumer.

STATEMENT	COMMENTS
"For those with fine taste"	People will buy because they will want to be considered as having fine taste
"For the real Athlete"	Attracts those who want themselves to be considered an athlete.

## The rhetorical question

Claim requires a response from the audience and gives incomplete information.

STATEMENT	COMMENTS
"Shouldn't your family be using high speed Internet?"	???
"Wouldn't you rather be driving a Ford?"	???

## **Assignment: Advertising Claims**

Your task is to find a total of **five advertisements** that will act as examples of **five types of advertising claims**. The ads you choose can be images, videos or TV commercials (YouTube is a great source!). If you want to use a radio commercial and have the ability to record it, then a sound file can also work.

Do not submit photos of individual products. Your ads must be actual advertisements for products or services.

**Identify the claim made by the ad, and explain how it makes that claim.**

Your assignment may be in the form of a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation, a Word document or a video/slideshow. You must provide a citation or reference for every ad. A URL (link) is all you need.

When your assignment is complete, check it over and make any necessary revisions and corrections. Then, submit it to your student directory.