



Lesson Ten

The Influence of Advertising



commonly used advertising techniques

information

- Presentation of simple, direct information

status

- Associates product use with those who have status, who are successful, and who enjoy and understand the “fine things in life”

peer approval

- Associates product use with friendship/acceptance

hero endorsement

- Associates use of product with a well-known person

physical attraction to others

- Associates use of product with increased physical attraction/appeal

entertainment

- Associates product with entertainment and feelings of enjoyment

intelligence

- Associates product with smart people who can't be fooled by gimmicks

independence

- Associates product with people who can think and act for themselves

unfinished comparison

- Use of phrases such as, “Works better in poor driving conditions!” Works better than what?



Some commonly used approaches:

guarantees

- Abundant use of statements such as “lifetime guarantee” and “satisfaction guaranteed, or your money back”

scarcity

- Merchant creates a false sense of urgency by claiming that supply or time is limited

perceptual contrast

- Merchant presents undesirable/inferior option first to make the second option look far superior

scientific or numerical claims

- “Nine-out-of-ten” may sound good, but many such claims can prove impossible to substantiate

negative option

- Merchandise arrives automatically unless the consumer takes steps to stop shipment and billing
- Often used by book and record clubs



unethical techniques

Techniques considered deceptive and/or misleading:

"bait and switch"

- Advertisement entices consumers into the store with bargains that are too good to be true. Once consumers are in the store, they are told the item is unavailable and are shown a similar, but more expensive, item
- Often high-pressure sales tactics are used
- Illegal in most states

exploitation of fears and misgivings

- Ad feeds or plays on consumers' fears

supermarket specials

- Advertisement of products that are not in stock or that are not readily available to consumers at the advertised price

out-of-context quotations

- Comments by a noted person or passages from a story taken out of context to imply an endorsement of a product or service



examples of misleading advertisements

Frequently seen misleading advertisements:

health fraud

- Promises of overnight medical cures and treatments
- Products developed after “years of research” and “proven to provide immediate positive results”
- Testimonials from medical experts and satisfied customers

credit repair

- Offers, for a fee, to fix a bad credit record

“get rich quick” schemes

- Ads that offer an opportunity to earn a lot of money in a short amount of time with very little effort

product misrepresentation

- Uses names similar to nationally recognized brand
- Merchandise offered at below-market value for a limited time only
- Vague descriptions of product

travel fraud

- Offers accompanied by certificates for free or very low-cost travel
- Vague description of services and accommodations



program-length commercials (infomercials)

how to spot program-length commercials

- “Commercials” similar to the program content
- Sponsor identified at beginning or end
- One product is proclaimed superior

protect yourself if you want to order the item

- Use a credit card
- The Fair Billing Act will offer you some protection if you have problems with the bill or the quality of the product

order or pay by mail

- Your purchase will be covered under the Mail Order Rule

actions to avoid

- Giving your bank account number over the phone

remember

- Product claims are made by the advertiser
- Such claims represent neither an objective nor an independent evaluation of the product



rules for evaluating advertisements

ask yourself basic questions

- Does the ad appeal to your emotions?
- Look beyond the appeal to find out what the ad really says (or doesn't say) about the product or service.
- What are the special features of the product?
- Are these features necessary?

as you read, listen to, or watch advertisements...

- Search for fraud and deception in the ad.
- Be alert to ads that are misleading (those that make unreasonable claims about the product or service).
- Read the fine print, or listen carefully.