

Module 9 - Consumerism

HANDOUT 9-2

Advertising techniques and sales tactics

Lifestyle sales

It could be a picture of a happy family in an expensive home. Or a beautiful couple on a private yacht. These ads are selling the lifestyle shown in the ad. They lead us to believe that if we buy the product, we can have the lifestyle. This is a very common technique. In some ways, all ads could be considered lifestyle ads.

Sex appeal

We've all seen these ads. These are the ones with good-looking men or women in sexy poses. Sometimes it can be hard to tell what these ads are selling. Sometimes, the product does not even appear in the ad! But the message they send is that we will be sexy too if we buy the product.

Special deals

These are the ads urging us to "Hurry! Buy now!" because it is a "Limited time offer!" Sometimes these ads will include coupons or discount codes. But these might not be deals at all. To find real deals, it is important to shop around and compare prices. We cannot rely on the claims that an ad makes.

Star power

These are ads that use celebrities to sell their product. They're also known as 'celebrity endorsements'. Famous people are paid a lot of money to appear in these ads. The hope is that if we like and trust the celebrity, we will buy the product they endorse. Many celebrities never use the products they promote.

Science and statistics

Is there a doctor or a scientist in the ad? Often these 'experts' are really actors and models. Does the ad use numbers and percentages, or make claims about research? These statistics might only be part of the whole story. These ads appear to be scientific, but they may not be based on real science. Always look for the 'fine print' in an ad like this.

Better than

These ads claim that their product is better than their competitors. The famous 'Coke versus Pepsi' ads are an example of this. These ads rarely say how or why their product is better, other than that people (usually actors) like it more.

Put downs

Ads sometimes try to make us feel bad and then try to sell us something. They tell us we are too fat, too old, too dull, that our house is too dirty, our car is too old. Then they tell us how their product will improve our lives. But will it?

'Weasel' words

Advertisers are not allowed to outright lie. But they can twist words around or use language that misleads. When an ad for sugary cereal tells us it is "part of a healthy breakfast", they are not telling us about the other, more healthy part of that breakfast. Certain words and terms are used so much in advertising that they do not really mean anything anymore. For instance, now there are so many products that claim to be 'green' or environmentally friendly. Just what do they mean by 'green'?

Module 9 - Consumerism**HANDOUT 9-2, continued****Safety and security**

All of us have a basic need to feel safe and secure. Ads will often play on this need by claiming that their product will make our lives more secure. Ads for insurance and certain car safety features do this. Worse, some ads claim that we could be in danger without it. Home security systems are experts at this technique. These ads often prey on parents and their deep need to keep their children safe.

'Bandwagon' appeal

We also have a basic need to feel that we belong. Bandwagon appeal ads tell us that if we don't buy something, we will be left out. These ads often target children and teens, who have a very strong need to belong. But advertisers also know that young people are very media aware. They may use the bandwagon message in ways that are hard to see.

Sales tactics to watch for:

Low cost leader – A low cost item is offered to get you into the store so you might also consider buying other goods.

Questions – They ask you questions about yourself, and then offer a range of products they think you might be interested in.

Compliments – They compliment you and tell you how great something looks on you, or comment on your great taste.

Need – They try to convince you that you need the product.

Up sell – They try to convince you that you will need extra features for the product you are buying.

Free gift with purchase – Bonus items for free may entice you to purchase, but will you use them? Are they good quality?

Today only! – You must buy now! They tell you someone else wants to buy the item, or the sale ends today.

Guilt – They make you feel guilty or bad for not buying, especially if they have invested a lot of time and energy answering your questions or assisting you.

Buy one, get one (BOGO) – Buy one get one free, or at a reduced price. Encourages you to buy more to get a better price, but you may end up spending more than you wanted to, or buying something you didn't need.