

Article

Deceptive Advertising: Investigating How Fast-Moving Consumer Goods Use Puffery and Manipulation in TV Commercials

Babatunde Adeyeye & Sandiso Ngcobo

Department of Communication, Faculty of Management Sciences,
Mangosuthu University of Technology, 4026 Durban, South Africa

*Corresponding Author: tk4ade@gmail.com

Received: 05 October 2025 / Accepted: 12 December 2026

Abstract: This study examines the advertising tactics and possible misleading components in two television ads for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), WAW detergent, and Sunlight. It examines the types of claims, deceptive tactics, and message content used in each commercial using Schrank's framework of advertising claims. The study adopted qualitative content analysis to examine the types of claims used in both commercials. Findings show that both brands used implied and unique claims to differentiate themselves from competition and convey the advantages of their brands, especially when using suggestive language and visual storytelling. Through subtle and distinctive claims, Sunshine detergent emphasized freshness and cleaning power. Puffery was found to be the only dishonest component, mostly in the overstated repetition of advantages such as long-lasting freshness. However, the WAW detergent commercial used a wider variety of persuasive strategies, including implied, unique, and puffery claims in addition to more overtly dishonest advertising. This included manipulation, involving emotional appeals and exaggerated claims about the product's efficacy, as well as puffery, which used superlative and exaggerated terms like "amazing" and "a lot." The results raise ethical questions regarding the use of exaggerated imagery and emotionally charged messaging in the promotion of FMCG products, as they imply that WAW's commercial engaged in more extensive deceptive advertising practices than Sunlight. The study concludes that advertisers frequently use unique and implied claims to convey the advantages of their products and differentiate them from rivals. These claim types were purposefully employed to appeal to consumers' needs for freshness and efficient cleaning.

Keywords: Advertising ethics; deceptive advertising; fmcgs; media literacy; marketing strategies

Introduction

According to Danciu (2014), consumers are regularly subjected to manipulation and deception in advertising. This strategy is most commonly used to advertise FMCG. It can be said that consumers have become accustomed to these strategies, making them more distrustful of TV commercial claims. The situation has not improved over the years, as many advertisers have employed exaggeration and deceptive tactics to attract consumers. These consumers have repeatedly fallen for the claims made by these advertisers, and now they must think carefully before making a purchase. Warren (2016) stated that consumers are frequently wary and distrustful of advertisers' claims, and as a result, most advertised information is generally disbelieved.

Misleading advertisements infringe several fundamental consumer rights, including the right to information, the freedom to choose, protection from harmful products and services, and the freedom from unfair commercial practices (Widijowati & Denysenko, 2023). This is a significant issue and hinders the country's economic prosperity, impacting its foreign image. Ukaegbu (2020) states that the situation has

deteriorated to the point where regulatory bodies such as the Consumer Protection Council (CPC) and the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) have become ineffective, leaving consumers at the mercy of the devious marketing activities of manufacturers, advertising agencies, and traders in the market. Therefore, this unregulated, unethical marketing, which is destroying the nation's moral commercial value system, raises questions about the functions of the various regulatory bodies.

Raziq et al. (2018) assert that while consumers' perceptions or experiences of a brand vary, when an advertisement claim is perceived to be exaggerated or false, the current level of skepticism may be triggered, leading to a negative attitude towards the brand. Many brands have lost customers due to skepticism toward their claims; consumers have complained that what was promised was not delivered. Some of these cases involve situations in which a cosmetic brand claims to prevent skin ageing but does not do so when used. Another example is when weight loss products are advertised as extremely effective in a short period of time, but do not work at all. Regrettably, these cases of deceptive advertising have become very common and have a disastrous effect on consumers (Alam, 2021). It is crucial for academics to critically examine advertising believability in different advertising media and bring to light consumers' perspectives so advertisers can comprehend the effect of their claims.

The Lever Brothers founded the Sunlight household soap brand in 1884. It was the first laundry soap with a brand and packaging in history. The product's manufacturer was Unilever Nigeria Plc. Three varieties are available: Sunlight Paradise Sensation for autowash, Sunlight Spring Sensation (Yellow Pack), and Sunlight Tropical Sensation (Pink Pack). It was intended for ordinary household use, including washing. One of the most popular brands in Nigeria is Sunlight detergent, which is available in practically all supermarkets, traditional markets, and retail establishments there. The strong fragrance and bleaching properties of the sunlight detergent are its most highlighted features. WAW multipurpose detergent, on the other hand, was intended for laundry and general household use and was the first detergent in Nigeria to be packed in a recognizable black container. The goal of the ad campaign is to quickly remove all types of stains from textiles. The ability of the detergent to remove stains has been highlighted in the ads, with a passing mention of its pleasant scent.

Only a few studies have been carried out to objectively analyze whether consumers believe the claims of advertisements of certain kinds of products in Nigeria. Olaleye et al. (2019) investigated the perception of puffery by the public in drug advertisements. Ukaegbu (2020) investigated misleading advertising and consumer reactions. These studies are among a few that have assessed audience perceptions and reactions to advertisements. Advertisers must understand how consumers perceive their claims in television commercials. Therefore, this study will critically analyze the perspectives of Sunlight and WAW detergent consumers on the claims of advertisers in television commercials using the survey research approach. Additionally, using qualitative content analysis, this research will evaluate the types of claims made by Sunlight and WAW detergent advertisers. In this way, the study will assess whether advertisers are dishonest and how it affects the perception and attitude of target consumers toward the brand. This would allow consumers to voice their complaints to advertisers and help advertisers recognize the value of transparency. The study is guided by the following objectives: to examine the claim types in Sunlight and WAW detergent TV commercials, and compare the claims of Sunlight and WAW detergent in TV commercials.

Advertising claim techniques

Advertisers from various product categories use different suitable claims for their brands. Several studies have been conducted to identify the most used claims in various product advertisements. Ariffin, Razali, Nikman, Baharum, and Wahab (2013) researched the most used claim in advertising. The result indicated that the weasel claims ranked above the most used claims in the advertising of alternative and complementary medicine. Consequently, the weasel claim was deemed the most effective in advertising complementary and alternative medicine. Suvaree (2006) examined the claims made in airline advertisements and discovered that the statistical or scientific claims were used the most because airline advertisements required claims with evidence. Arroyo (2013) demonstrated that scientific language was the first option for advertising skin care products, making them more compelling. The peculiar language of the skin care expert can catch the

consumer unaware. Furthermore, Lapsanska (2006) examined the claims used in print advertisements and discovered that the weasel claim is commonly used for food product slogans. On the contrary, scientific, and statistical claims are widely used in the advertising of automobile products.

Television advertising and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs)

Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) are nondurable items with low costs and quick turnover (Vivek et al. 2020; Ogundeyi et al. 2024). Consumers frequently purchase these items because they are commonly used items. Examples of FMCGs are soft drinks, toiletries, soaps, detergents, stationery items, groceries, etc. There are numerous brands in the FMCG sector. Some of these brands share a target audience that they aim to convince. Therefore, there is constant raging competition in this sector. FMCG advertisers try to grab the market by strategically compelling the target audience to try a new or existing brand they have not tried before. Another reason for the competition between FMCG advertisers is that FMCG profits are based on the number of products sold. Unlike other product categories such as phones, clothes, accessories, etc. Therefore, FMCG advertisers believe that they must claim the market and sell more products than their competitors. FMCG is probably the most classic case of a low-margin and high-volume business worldwide (Adejare et al. 2022). FMCG advertisers must announce the brand in a way that engages, reminds, and sustains consumers. It is not enough to force consumers to patronize the brand. The advertiser must also retain the consumers by presenting the brand so that they remember the brand whenever they think of FMCGs.

Due to the high competition in the FMCG product category, advertisers must create unique commercials. There is a plethora of FMCG brands with comparable product offerings. We have brands like Ariel, Sunlight, So Klin, WAW, Good Mama, Omo, etc. These brands fight for the attention of the same target consumers. Therefore, advertisers must communicate their brand offerings effectively and strategically with target consumers. Television is the best way to advertise FMCG. Curana et al. (2022) asserted that television commercials have a significant product interaction with a greater effect on a consumer's purchase decision. Effective FMCG advertisements need a clear representation of the product. This allows consumers to recognize the superiority of the product over the competitor's brand offerings.

Authenticity and believability of advertising media

Consumer believability varies depending on the advertising medium. Given the consumer believability of radio advertising, Muela-Molina and Perelló-Oliver (2013) stated that radio advertising contains deceptive content that leads to consumer disbelief, particularly product attributes. However, when examining deception in radio advertising of health products, Garca-Nieto et al. (2021) depicted radio as an advertising medium less prone to deception. Therefore, promote consumer belief and trust in radio advertising.

Furthermore, in terms of the authenticity and believability of online advertisements, Toros (2021) stated that online advertisers use manipulative and deceptive strategies. The researcher indicated that different products advertised online include various elements of deception and provide inadequate information about the material and size of the product. Therefore, consumers are skeptical of the information offered by online advertisers. Furthermore, Moore and Rodgers (2005) discovered that most consumers do not entirely rely on online advertisements because they see the Internet as the least trustworthy advertisement medium. Wolin and Korgaonkar (2003) assessed the believability of online ads based on gender. The study showed that men are more likely to believe the claims made in online advertisements and have more positive attitudes towards online advertisements than women. However, the believability of online advertisements is generally low. In relation to the authenticity and believability of newspaper advertising, Rahman (2019) showed that most consumers have relatively positive impressions of newspaper advertising. However, some consumers have a negative perception. According to the study, most consumers believe that newspaper advertisements do not portray a genuine image of the brand and that they do not feel confident in trusting the information conveyed in newspaper advertising. According to Vileková (2016), all advertising media have moderate overall credibility, but newspapers have the highest overall credibility. Therefore, it is considered a credible and reliable source of advertising messages.

Impact of television merchandising on consumer buying behavior

Several studies have been conducted to measure the perception of TV commercials by the audience and their effect on purchasing behavior. Ingavale (2013) revealed that most young consumers make purchases after viewing television commercials because they place greater trust in television commercials. Neupane (2019) stated that although all four forms of media raise awareness, television commercials significantly impact consumer purchasing behavior. This is because television commercials are more glamorous and specialized; they allow a combination of sound, color, light, and other features that no other medium allows. Manandhar (2018) also proved that television commercials greatly impact consumers, as they stimulate their curiosity and provide product information, both of which are essential for consumers before acquiring products and services. Furthermore, Sama (2019) suggested three stages of consumer behavior: awareness, interest, and conviction, and that television commercials impact all three phases.

Some studies have discussed various elements that can be found in TV commercials and ways in which TV commercials can influence target consumers' decision-making. Bhatt and Bhatt (2015) conducted a study to identify characteristics that influence consumer attitudes regarding television commercials. They found that consumer opinions about television commercials were affected by five factors: knowledge and creativity, credibility, recall ability, likeability, and economic progress. Furthermore, it was discovered that four criteria, namely obscenity, appalling, irrelevant, and dislike, caused viewers to shun television advertising. Vivek et al. (2020) further proved that another factor that influences consumer purchase is the use of celebrities in television commercials. They stated that it builds a desire for the product and makes consumers believe in the commercial and purchase the product. Furthermore, MasKhanam and Ali (2019) observed that television commercials effectively influence consumer behavior because a diverse audience of different genders, ages, and locations watches television around the world.

Cultivation Theory

George Gerbner proposed cultivation theory in the 1960s. The theory primarily examines how television messages affect viewers' perceptions of reality. Gerbner's focus on television content stems from its distinct qualities. Television does not require literacy and is universally accessible. Furthermore, its audio-visual feature makes it easier to attract viewers. Television has such an impact on viewers that their views begin to reflect its content. According to Mosharafa (2015), television has evolved into a platform for people to obtain knowledge about society, life, people, and authority. The theory states that people who watch television programs regularly are more likely to be impacted by television content than those who watch less television. Further arguments asserted that the images presented in the media are opposed to reality. Television images are often distorted or misrepresented, sometimes significantly different from reality. The media portrays a feeling of perfection, as seen by the disproportionate number of gorgeous men and women, wealth, love, etc. These portrayals lead the viewer to feel that reality is the same, whereas it is not.

The rationale for using this theory is that it focuses on the influence of television content on viewer perception. Advertising messages constitute a segment of media content. Concerning consumer believability of TV commercial claims, regular exposure to false or exaggerated advertising messages may change consumers' perception of a brand. The communicated reality is the advertiser's claims in TV commercials, whereas the viewer's reality is the use of the brand and the consumer's subsequent perspective. Gerbner stated that media content is opposed to reality. In this case, advertising messages are sometimes contrary to reality. When the advertiser's claims are compared to the consumer's reality, they are sometimes not as expected. Therefore, it affects the consumer's opinion of the brand. Media content influences the viewer's perception of reality positively or negatively. Similarly, advertising messages impact the consumer's perception of the brand, either positively or negatively.

Methodology

This study adopted qualitative content analysis. The purpose of adopting content analysis for this study was to examine the types of claims used by Sunlight and WAW detergent advertisers in television commercials. This study adopted qualitative content analysis because it provides a systematic and theory-driven approach

for interpreting manifest and latent meanings in media texts, making it suitable for examining and categorising the persuasive claims employed by Sunlight and WAW detergent advertisers in television commercials. The population frame for the content analysis included all WAW and Sunlight detergent TV commercials.

Sample size

Two television commercials were purposively chosen as the study sample for content analysis because the number of TV commercials for each brand was small and uneven. These two commercials were also purposively selected because they contained claims that could be analyzed for deceptive elements. Although the study was limited in sample size and scope, with only two purposively selected television commercials analysed due to the small and uneven number of available adverts per brand, these commercials were chosen because they contained analyzable claims relevant to identifying deceptive elements.

This research used purpose-based sampling to select the TV ads that were analyzed for this study. The reason for using the purposive sampling method was to have a definite focus and avoid thin data. The TV ads were selected because they featured details and claims that could be analyzed to determine if the advertisers of these brands were deceptive or honest. To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, purposive sampling was employed to enhance credibility and dependability by deliberately selecting television advertisements with rich, relevant claims, thereby maintaining a clear analytical focus and avoiding thin or superficial data.

Instrument for data collection

The only data collection instrument used was a coding sheet. The coding sheet was developed to aid in simple interpretation to achieve the second research objective.

Content categories

Apuke and Tunca (2019) posit that the core of content analysis is the category system used to classify media content.

- i. Message content / Slogan for advertising.
- ii. Claim types: The various claim types that were analyzed are:
 - a) Implied claims.
 - b) Puffery.
 - c) Weasel claims.
 - d) Unfinished claims.
 - e) The Unique Claim.
 - f) Rhetorical question claim.
 - g) Consumer complaint claim.
 - h) Scientific or statistical claim.
- iii. Deceptive Elements: The various elements of deception that were analyzed in the commercials are the following:
 - a) Puffery / exaggeration.
 - b) Manipulation.
 - c) Lies/misrepresentation.
 - d) Conceptions.
 - e) Vague and ambiguous statements.
 - f) False testimonials.

Data analysis

The unit of analysis must be precise, concise, and easily identifiable. Therefore, the analysis unit for this study included the ad slogans and claim types, which were further defined in the content categories section. In this study, a coding sheet was also used to aid in the analysis of the commercial. When the coding sheet was created, it included a list of codes corresponding to several themes and categories related to the study. The

codes were developed utilizing data from the study's research goals and the content analysis of the advertisements. The topics included in the coding sheets were assessed through an examination of the ad's component elements.

The Findings

The content analysis was performed by watching two TV commercials. One TV commercial for Sunlight and the other for WAW. The analysis was conducted to examine the claims made in the Sunlight and WAW detergent TV ads. The analysis was also used to examine the claims of these television commercials for deceptive elements. Content analysis was performed on the message content and slogans of the TV ads.

Synopsis of Sunlight 2-In-1 Smart Foam TV Commercial

Sunlight 2-in-1 detergent is a 30-second TV commercial that opens with the main character, a foam figure, emerging from a bucket filled with detergent foam. The figure takes a basket of flowers and inhales the sweet smell of the flowers in the basket. The character then holds a pack of Sunlight detergent next to the basket of flowers and proceeds to combine the cleaning power of the detergent and the fresh fragrance of the flowers in a bucket to produce a 2-in-1 detergent powder with sensational cleaning ability and fragrance that lasts for a long time. The commercial incorporates Sunlight background music and a voiceover. It is based in a garden setting. The voiceover artist makes the following claims and statements in the commercial;

"Not all washing powders are the same. Sunlight adds a burst of freshness to the cleaning power to give you Sunlight 2-in-1 for sensational cleaning and freshness that lasts and lasts and lasts. Sunlight 2 in 1, sensational cleaning with bursts after bursts of freshness."

(Excerpts from Sunlight Commercial)

Synopsis of Commercial WAW Multi-Use Detergent

WAW Multi-Use Detergent commercial is a 30-second TV commercial that depicts a large group of people, ostensibly at an event comprising numerous activities, prominently dancing. The commercial opens with all these people at the scene, most of whom are dancing. These people wear white pants and dance in the mud, getting stained as a result. In the commercial, a woman wears a white shirt while holding her child, who is also wearing white, and both become stained by an orange, grease-like substance. The commercial continues showing three mothers putting WAW detergent in three different buckets and preparing to wash the stained garments. They wash these garments and instantly become extremely white, illustrating the whitening power of WAW detergent. The commercial ends with the woman spreading the garments and observing the effectiveness of WAW detergent on the garments, followed by a scene showing everyone dancing due to the satisfaction derived from using WAW detergent. The commercial features WAW background music and a voiceover. The voiceover artist makes the following claims and statements throughout the commercial;

'We love dances that create stunning performances. And for many stains on so many clothes, we need WAW. WAW, amazing washing power, and lots of foam to remove the tough stains. Each WAW pack gets a lot of clothes clean and fresh a lot more than you think WAW, washes a lot, saves a lot.'

(Excerpts from WAW Commercial)

Table 1 shows the content analysis of the Sunlight and WAW detergent ads. The result of the content analysis shows the claims made in Sunlight 2-in-1 detergent commercial and The WAW Multi-use detergent commercial. The table also shows the types of claims made and the deceptive elements identified in these commercials. The result from the content analysis showed that the dominant claim types made in Sunlight detergent are unique and implicit claims, and the dominant deceptive element in the commercial is Puffery/Exaggeration. The results for WAW detergent commercial showed that the dominant claim types made are Unique, Implied, and Puffery claims, while the identified deceptive elements were Puffery and Manipulation.

Table 1. Content analysis of sunlight and WAW TV commercials

Brand	Message Content/Slogan	Claim Types	Deceptive Elements
Sunlight	“Not all washing powders are the same' 'Sunlight adds a burst of freshness to cleaning power to give you Sunlight 2-in-1 for sensational cleaning and freshness that lasts and lasts.' 'Sunlight 2-in-1, sensational cleaning with bursts after bursts of freshness'	Unique and implied claims.	Puffery and Exaggeration.
WAW	“For so many stains on so many clothes, we need WAW'. 'WAW, amazing power and lots of foam to remove tough stains'. 'Each WAW pack gets a lot of clothes clean and fresh, much more than you think..’ 'WAW, washes a lot, saves a lot’	Unique, Implied and Puffery claims.	Puffery, Manipulation, Lies, and Misrepresentation.

Discussion

The claims of Sunlight and WAW detergent TV ads were analyzed for the study to determine the message contents, claim types, and the appearance of deceptive elements in each commercial. The various types of advertising claims were examined using Schrank's proposed framework of advertising claims. The findings of the analysis of Sunlight detergent TV commercial claims revealed that the dominant claims used by the advertisers were implied and unique claims. Unique claims are used to differentiate a brand from its competitors. Sunlight made a unique claim when it stated that "Not all washing powders are the same." In this case, the advertiser implies that not all washing powders can perform the same functions or meet the desired expectations of target consumers. The statement was made as an introduction to the commercial, which further described the benefits of Sunlight detergent. By doing this, the advertiser tries to differentiate Sunlight from other detergent brands. Various implied claims were also made by Sunlight detergent advertisers. Implied claims are descriptions of a brand's benefits that are not specifically defined in the advertisement copy (Nottage et al., 2025; Hulbert & Moran, 2015).

They are often shown in the visual representation of the brand or in the message content of the advertisement. Sunlight detergent advertisers made implied claims by stating that “Sunlight adds a burst of freshness to the cleaning power to give you Sunlight 2-in-1 for sensational cleaning and freshness that lasts and lasts. ' The sunlight detergent commercials stated the benefits of using the brand and visually demonstrated it by showing the whitening ability, extra foam, and refreshing fragrance quality of the detergent. The claim was not necessarily expressed in the copy, but it was visually represented and stated in the commercial message content. The 2-in-1 commercial sunlight detergent was also analyzed to investigate whether it contained deceptive elements. The deceptive element identified in the commercial was puffery/exaggeration. Puffery can be demonstrated through exaggeration of brand quality in the message content of the commercial or visual representation of the brand’s benefits (Targański, 2025; Olaleye, Bejide, & Adekoya, 2019). Puffery was identified in the brand's claims/message content. The whitening ability of Sunlight detergent was exaggerated in the commercial, with the claim that Sunlight detergent has "the power to give sensational cleaning that lasts and lasts and lasts." Puffery occurs when advertisers exaggerate a brand's ability to satisfy target consumers. The use of superlative words like "best" or the overuse of a certain word, like in this case, demonstrates puffery. Therefore, the advertiser used puffery in this commercial by exaggerating the cleaning ability of the detergent by overusing the term "last."

The analysis for the WAW Multi-use detergent commercial showed that the dominant claim used in the commercial comprised Implied, Puffery, and Unique claims. The Unique claim in the ad was demonstrated when the advertiser stated that “for so many stains on so many clothes, we need WAW”. The advertiser in making this statement, indicated that, of all other detergent brands, WAW is considered the brand needed and the most effective to remove excessive amounts of stains from fabrics. Furthermore, WAW detergent advertisers used implied claims in the commercial message content by stating "WAW, amazing power and

lots of foam to remove the tough stains" and "each WAW pack gets a lot of clothes clean and fresh a lot more than you think." The assertions presented in the above statements highlight the benefits of using the brand by mentioning the brand's qualities. In these words, the advertiser implies that the target consumers will benefit from the brand because of the stated qualities, which include amazing cleaning power and a lot of foam to thoroughly clean and freshen clothes. Implied claims were also discovered in the visual presentation of the brand's cleaning ability. According to Cohen (2018), implied claims can also be found in inferences made in the visual representation of the quality of a brand. Therefore, implied claims were made in the visual presentation of the detergent's whitening ability, and another claim type identified in the WAW Multi-use detergent commercials was puffery claims. Activists used puffery claims using words like 'a lot' and 'amazing'. The use of 'a lot' was dominant in the content of the commercial's message. This is a form of overstatement of the performance of the brands.

Puffery can be found in the use of superlative words. As a result, the use of the word "amazing" to describe the brand's performance might be interpreted as the advertisers exaggerating the brand's performance. Puffery and manipulation were identified as deceptive elements in the WAW Multi-use detergent commercial. As stated previously, puffery was detected in the use of the superlative words "amazing" and "a lot." Puffery was also found in a visual representation of the detergent's whitening ability, in which clothes were dipped into a bucket containing the detergent combination and immediately washed and removed, leaving them extremely white. The instant whitening ability of the detergent might be considered exaggerated. Manipulation was also identified in the commercial. Advertisement manipulation is like puffery/exaggeration. According to Danciu (2014), manipulation happens when an advertiser attempts to mislead consumers by using facts and logic or playing on their emotions.

Manipulation may also occur when an advertiser identifies the target consumers' desire for a certain feature in a product and extensively demonstrates that feature in advertisements to increase patronage. The goal of manipulation is to play on consumers' logic by determining what they want from a brand and emphasizing it in advertisements. This can be seen in the emphasized demonstration of the whitening ability of WAW detergent and the statement made by the advertisers that 'WAW detergent gets a lot of clothes cleaned a lot more than you think.' By making this claim, the advertiser attempts to manipulate the thinking of consumers and push them to use the brand by emphasizing the need of consumers to remove tough stains from their clothes. The statement appeals to the target consumers by telling them that the brand is able to do more than they desire, which might not be the case. From the study findings, it was discovered that the commercial sponsors of WAW detergent and Sunlight detergent made use of unique and implied claims. However, the WAW detergent advertisers further used Puffery claims. It was also discovered that the commercial WAW detergent contained more deceptive elements than Sunlight as the only deceptive element identified in Sunlight was puffery, while the commercial WAW detergent contained puffery/exaggeration and manipulation.

Conclusion

Advertisers frequently used Unique and Implied claims to convey the advantages of their products and differentiate them from rivals, according to an analysis of Sunlight and WAW detergent ads. These claim types were purposefully employed to appeal to consumers' needs for freshness and efficient cleaning. Through visual representation and carefully crafted claims, like its "2-in-1" freshness and whitening power, Sunlight's advertising concentrated more on emphasizing its unique qualities. The only dishonest aspect found in Sunlight's commercial was puffery, especially in the form of overused repetition in phrases like "lasts and lasts and lasts." The primary goal of the exaggeration was to increase the attractiveness of the product without using deceptive tactics.

In contrast, the WAW detergent commercial displayed a higher degree of dishonest advertising practices using puffery and manipulation, in addition to using unique and implied claims. Superlative and exaggerated phrases like "amazing power" and "a lot more than you think" were used frequently in the commercials, which exaggerated the product's capabilities. Additionally, manipulative graphic components and emotionally charged messaging were used to give the impression that the WAW detergent went above

and beyond what customers expected. This indicates that although both companies used comparable claim structures to market their goods, WAW's advertising strategies were more reliant on dishonest tactics, which could have misled customers with exaggerated advantages and emotionally charged content.

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations are made: Regulatory bodies such as the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) should enforce stricter guidelines to limit the use of puffery and manipulative tactics in ads generally to protect against misleading claims. There is a need for media literacy campaigns to help consumers evaluate advertising messages and recognize exaggerated or deceptive content. Besides that, advertisers and marketing professionals should be encouraged to adopt transparent and honest communication strategies that prioritize consumer trust over exaggerated brand claims. Finally, FMCG brands should include disclaimers when using dramatized visuals or claims to ensure consumers understand the promotional nature of the content.

Acknowledgement: Appreciation goes to the members of staff of the Department of Communication, Faculty of Management Sciences, Mangosuthu University of Technology, South Africa.

Informed Consent Statement: The analysis of secondary data from publicly accessible television ads for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs), particularly detergent brands, served as the foundation for this study. In addition to not requiring the collection of sensitive or personal data, the data used in this study were already in the public domain and did not entail any direct interaction with human participants.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Adejare, B. O., Olaore, G. O., Udofia, E. E., & Adenigba, O. A. (2022). COVID-19 Pandemic and Business Survival as Mediation on the Performance of Firms in the FMCG-Sector. *Athens Journal of Business & Economics*, 8(3), 239-260.
- Apuke, O. D., & Tunca, E. A. (2019). A comparative content analysis of television and blog coverage of internally displaced persons in Nigeria. *The Social Science Journal*, 56(2), 168-182.
- Alam, A. (2021, October 10). Addressing deceptive advertising | Independent. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://m.theindependentbd.com/home/printnews/268901>
- Ariffin, K., Razali, A., Nikman, K., Baharum, N. D., & Wahab, R. A. (2013). The Use of Weasel Words as Disclaimers in Superiority Claims. *Gading Journal for the Social Sciences*, 17(1).
- Arroyo, D. M. (2013). Science language in skin-care advertising: persuading through opacity. *Resla*, 26, 197-213.
- Bhatt, S., & Bhatt, A. (2015). Audience Behaviour towards Television Advertisements: An Empirical Study in Ahmedabad. *International Journal of Marketing and Business Communication*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.21863/ijmbc/2015.4.1.004>
- Cohen, G. (2018). *Believability: A Study of Coincidence and Scarcity in Consumer Behavior* (Doctoral dissertation, Doktora Tezi, Georgia State University).
- Curana, R., Khomariah, N. I., Bagaskara, R. E. A., Mani, L., & Aras, M. (2022). Comparative study between the effect of television advertising, social media of instagram, and brand image in the decision of purchasing new product. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 6(S1), 494-509.
- Danciu, V. (2014). Manipulative marketing: persuasion and manipulation of the consumer through advertising. *Theoretical and Applied Economics*, 21(2(591)), 19-34.
- García-Nieto, M. T., González-Vallés, J. E., & Viñarás-Abad, M. (2021). Social Responsibility and Misleading Advertising of Health Products on the Radio. The Opinion of the Professionals. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(13), 6912. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18136912>
- Hulbert, M. B., & Moran, E. (2015, December 8). *Seven Points to Consider Regarding Advertising Claims*. JD Supra. Retrieved August 23 15, 2025, from <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/seven-points-to->

consider-regarding-

25926/#: %7E:text=The%20FTC%20provides%20examples%20of,the%20product%20will%20prevent%20colds.%E2%80%9D

- Ingavale, D. (2013). An impact of advertisements on purchase decision of youth with reference to consumer goods. *Advances in management*, 3(1), 18-22.
- Lapsanska, J. (2006). *The language of advertising with the concentration on the linguistic means and the analysis of advertising slogans*. (Diploma thesis). Comenius University.
- Manandhar, B. (2018). Effect of Advertisement in Consumer Behavior. *Management Dynamics*, 21(1), 46-54. <https://doi.org/10.3126/md.v21i1.27046>
- MasKhanam, M., & Ali, A. (2019). Impact of advertising: end user perspective. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 58(1), 179–189. <https://doi.org/10.46568/jssh.v58i1.137>
- Moore, J. J., & Rodgers, S. L. (2005). *An examination of advertising credibility and skepticism 165 in five different media using the persuasion knowledge model*. Paper presented at the American Academy of Advertising. Conference. Proceedings.
- Mosharafa, E. (2015). All you Need to Know About: The Cultivation Theory. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: A Arts & Humanities – Psychology*, 15 (8),22-37
- Muela-Molina, C., & Perelló-Oliver, S. (2013). Misleading advertising: a study of radio spots in Spain. *Convergencia. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, (62), 13–43.
- Neupane, R. (2019). Advertising and its Effects on Consumer Behaviour in Kathmandu Valley. *NCC JOURNAL*, 4(1), 158–162.
- Nottage, M. K., Taylor, E. V., Kim, Y., Soh, N., Hammond, D., Simonavicius, E., ... & East, K. (2025). Marketing claims on the websites of leading e-cigarette brands in England. *Tobacco Control*, 34(1), 21-27.
- Ogundeyi, O. J., Molale, T. B., & Nkamta, P. N. (2024). Indigenous Language Advertising on Radio: Perceptions of MTN Subscribers about Setswana Radio Commercials in Mahikeng, South Africa. *e-Bangi Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.17576/ebangi.2024.2104.04>
- Olaleye, F. A., Bejide, O. A., & Adekoya, A. O. (2019). Audience Perception of the Influence of Puffery as persuasive Tools in Herbal Medicine Advertisement in Ondo state. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 9(10), 253–276. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v9-i10/6490>
- Rahman, M. T. (2019). Perception on advertising media: The case of newspaper advertising. *International Journal of Commerce and Management Research*, 5(4), 22–25.
- Raziq, M. M., Ahmed, Q. M., Ahmad, M., Yusaf, S., Sajjad, A., & Waheed, S. (2018). Advertising skepticism, need for cognition, and consumers' attitudes. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 36(6), 678–693. <https://doi.org/10.1108/mip-11-2017-0273>
- Sama, R. (2019). Impact of Media Advertisements on Consumer Behaviour. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 14(1), 54–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973258618822624>
- Suvaree, P. (2006). *The study of language use in airlines' advertisements*. (Master's thesis). King Mongkut's Institute of Technology North Bangkok.
- Targański, B. (2025). The legal aspects of consumer protection in cross-border e-commerce. In *Digital Internationalisation of Firms* (pp. 223-241). Routledge.
- Toros, S. (2021). Deceptive Tactics Used in Online Shopping. *Transnational Marketing Journal*, 9(2), 407–424. <https://doi.org/10.33182/tmj.v9i2.1255>
- Ukaegbu, R. C. (2020). Deceptive Advertising and Consumer Reaction: A Study of Delta Soap Advertisement. *Open Access Library Journal*, 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1105865>
- Vilčeková, L. (2016). Advertising Credibility Across Different Media Channels. *IJASOS- International E-Journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, 2(4), 126. <https://doi.org/10.18769/ijasos.38812>
- Vivek, V., Jeyalakshmi, G., & Chandrasekar, K. (2020). Impact of Television Advertisement on Buying Behaviour of Customer in Purchasing FMCG Products in Coimbatore District. *International Journal of Innovative Science, Engineering & Technology*, 7(2), 181–189.

- Warren, L. J. (2016). Perceived Believability of Televised Green Advertising. . . *Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Proceedings, 1*.
- Widijowati, D., & Denysenko, S. (2023). Securing Consumer Rights: Ethical and Legal Measures against Advertisements that Violate Advertising Procedures. *Lex Publica, 10*(1), 28-42.
- Wolin, L. D., & Korgaonkar, P. (2003). Web advertising: gender differences in beliefs, attitudes and behavior. *Internet Research, 13*(5), 375–385. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10662240310501658>