

Sample Oratory Speech

Attention Getter

What If I said that you could get the perfect body you've always dreamed of just by walking? You heard me right! Introducing the new Reebok Easytone Shoes! These kicks have been scientifically proven to work your hamstrings and calves up to 11 percent harder and tone your butt up to 28 percent more than regular sneakers just by walking! Come in now to purchase a pair of these wondrous shoes and say bye to that unflattering figure!

That sounds great! Right?

Except that... it is 100% false. According to an ABC News Report, it was discovered that Reebok was blatantly deceiving consumers by providing false scientific research in their several television advertisements (ABC News Report, 2010). The Federal Trade commission Bureau of Investigation found that the percentage numbers that Reebok displayed to consumers were completely falsified. The FTC was fast to reprimand the company, fining them a staggering sum of 25 million dollars (ABC News Report, 2010). That sounds great! Right? Except that up through 2009, Reebok's total earnings from the EasyTone line were just shy of one billion dollars (ABC News Report, 2010).

Credibility Statement

Sadly, this wasn't an isolated incident. An FTC report released in 2007 found that there were a whopping 45.7 million cases of deceptive advertising in the United States in that year alone. Their research also found that from 2003 to 2007, incidences of deceptive advertising increased in each of the major product categories.

Justification Statement

Ken Sanes, creator of transparency.com, argues that with technological advancements like Photoshop and an exponential increase in advertising exposure, deception has become an epidemic sweeping across televisions, billboards, magazines and phones.

Thesis

If we do not move to regulate and bring awareness to deceptive advertisements, consumers will continue to watch their money vanish from their pockets and have their health put in jeopardy.

Preview

Today, we are going to tune in to the definition of deceptive advertising. Then, we will story-board examples and statistics of this terrible trickery. Next, we are going to order the reasons on how this deception is harming consumers nationwide. Finally, we will get one solution, and receive another for free.

Main Point 1 - Problem

The FTC defines deceptive advertising as... a representation, omission, or practice that is likely to mislead consumers acting reasonably **under the circumstances**. This is hard to quantify because FTC regulatory language is filled with easily exploitable loopholes. Within the FTC Deception Policy Statement it reads, "...The deception must be a "material" one. The basic question is whether the act or practice is likely to affect the consumer's conduct or decision..." What consumers find "material" to their decision-making varies across the board, making this an easy out for companies. Common deceptive techniques, ranging from replacing milk with paint thinner to using fake eyelashes in mascara commercials, are not seen as "material" fabrications. Companies argue that if real milk or real eyelashes had been used, consumers still would have bought their product. According to the Bureau of Consumer Protection, the last FTC act defining deception was released in 1983. Now almost thirty years later, there is no way that the regulations are suited to deal with these new methods of fabrication.

Transition

According to businessmantra.com, Deceptive advertising can take many forms:

Main Point 2 – Cause/Types

Anything from image fabrication to hidden fees, exaggerated guarantees to omission of side-effects. Perhaps the most common type of deception is manipulation of semantics. Everyone has been to a market where the aisles are filled with "all natural" foods. The article informs us that a chicken injected with salts, fibers and enhancers that are all naturally occurring can be called an "All natural Chicken" even though those ingredients aren't naturally found in Chicken.

Now for an example: According to a Newsweek article in early 2011, an Alabama lawsuit found that Taco Bell's "ground beef" is only 36% beef. Now, that would be fine, except that they advertise beef tacos, beef burritos and beef enchiladas (Diaz, 2011). Their beef contains 28 ingredients, of which beef is only one (Diaz, 2011). The other 64% include fibers, flavors, syrups and a plethora of chemicals, that are all packed together and painted over with brown coloring to emulate the look of beef (Diaz, 2011). After consumers caught on to this food fraud taco bell quickly changed their packaging to say "taco meat filling". Yummy. This outright deception should have been regulated by government agencies- but it wasn't, allowing taco bell to fools its customers for over a decade.

Recently, advertising has become ubiquitous. "Everywhere we turn we're saturated with [advertisements] trying to get our attention." Jay Walker-Smith, President of the Marketing Firm Yankelovich, said in a CBS News interview (CBS News Report). Walker-Smith claims that we've gone from being exposed to about 500 ads a day back in the 1970's to as many as 5,000 a day today (CBS News Report). According the Journal of Consumer Research in 2009, companies plug quick, colorful and overwhelmingly deceptive images of products at times when a consumer isn't able differentiate between factual and fictitious (JCR News Release). The increase in

these actions may be a reflection of the dismal economy. According to a New York Times article in late 2009, as overall spending lags in a recession, advertising firms have to compete more for customers. This competition results in a need for more creative, and thus, more deceptive advertising.

Transition

So what's the big deal? Yeah some companies may be corrupt but why should I care? These are all good questions.

Main Point 3 - Effect

In the Federal Trade Commission report I mentioned earlier, it found that consumers lose an estimated 3 billion dollars each year because of deceptive advertising (FTC, 2007). What's worse is that according to the report, minority groups, adolescents and people in poverty are up to three times more likely to be targeted by deceptive advertising (FTC, 2007). As you can see, companies cater specifically to those in an already troubled state.

The harm goes beyond our wallets, however. According to researchers at Cornell University, deceptive weight-loss pill advertisements, the most rampant area of deception in the entire market, can result in heart disease, high-blood pressure and other health complications (Eisenberg, Cornell University). When companies hide their product's harmful side effects with extremely small written disclosures at the bottom of their advertisements, consumers are put at risk of consuming something that could significantly harm their health (Eisenberg, Cornell University). It isn't just weight-loss pills either; foods such as breakfast cereals are advertised to have health benefits such as lowering cholesterol and helping brain function. According to the Sun Sentinel, What they don't tell consumers is that their product can be up to 50% sugar and can contribute to tooth decay, diabetes and obesity (Sun Sentinel).

Transition

Earlier, I said that you would receive one solution and get one for free. Well, I deceived you, because you're going to have to pay attention.

Main Point 4 - Solutions

First off, a specific and unalterable definition of deception needs to be instituted by the FTC. In order to stop the misleading words and pictures, deception needs to be defined as using anything other than the actual product or being sold, in the advertisement. Companies cannot promote or imply information that isn't consistent with the thing directly sold to customers. Providing a clear and concise definition will sufficiently plug all the gaping loopholes that advertising firms can so easily exploit. The new definition should include a clause that requires disclosures at the bottom of advertisements to be more legible. This would also give incentive for companies to create **truthful advertising** so as to avoid having to put large disclosures in their advertisements.

The second solution is something we can all do: consumer awareness. With the advent of social networking, people can spread their awful encounters with deceptive advertising and misleading information. By using sites like Facebook and Twitter to spread word of these unethical practices, people can boycott, protest, or merely be aware that some companies are better avoided. Market Watchdogs at the Better Business Bureau and the Bureau of Consumer Protection post companies that have a deceptive history. A quick google search yields numerous lists that inform consumers of potentially dangerous advertisements. The trick is realizing that the consumer is ultimately in control. The impetus for change is in the hands of the consumers because we are the ones that hold economic power. Without revenue, no company can survive.

Review

Today, we started with the definition of deceptive advertising. Then, we took a look at examples and statistics of this terrible trickery. After that, we outlined the harms on consumers nationwide. Finally, we explored solutions to the problem.

Re-State Thesis

If we do not move to regulate and bring awareness to deceptive advertisements, consumers will continue to watch their money vanish from their pockets and have their health put in jeopardy.

Tie-Back

Eventually, Reebok was punished for its wrongdoing, but every day companies get away with the same deception- or worse. We need to enable consumers to make more informed decision by forcing companies like Rebook to stick to more realistic advertising. Columnist Hadley Freeman, gave her own version of the advertisement: "Um, here's a shoe. It's a lot like a lot of other shoes out there. But maybe you should buy this one because it's got a Reebok logo on it? And Reebok used to be quite cool. Um, somewhere?" (Freeman, The Guardian) While that probably won't sell too well, it's the first step to a more truthful future.