

Persuasive Techniques and Advertising Claims

Bandwagon:	Advertisers make it seem that everyone is buying this product, so you feel you should buy it too. For example, the Consumeropoly game states: "The best, most exciting board game is sweeping the nation. All your friends and neighbors are playing." This statement is intended to make you feel left out if you are not playing.
Avant-Garde:	This technique is the opposite of Bandwagon. Advertisers make it seem that the product is so new that you will be the first on the block to have it. The idea is that only super-cool people like you will even know about this product.
Testimonials:	Advertisers use celebrities and regular people to endorse products. For example, a famous actor urges consumers to buy a product. Pay close attention: sometimes the celebrity does not actually say that he or she uses the product.
Facts and Figures:	Statistics, percentages, and numbers are used to convince you that this product is better or more effective than another product. However, be aware of what the numbers are actually saying. What does "30 percent more effective than the leading brand" really mean?
Transfer:	This technique may be hard to spot. To recognize it, you need to pay attention to the background of the ad or to the story of the commercial. The transfer technique wants you to associate the good feelings created in the ad with the product. For example, a commercial that shows a happy family gathered around a bowl of soup may want you to associate a feeling of comfort and security with their product.
Weasel Words:	Advertisers sometimes use words or phrases that seem significant, but on closer inspection are actually meaningless. For example, what does it really mean when a toothpaste ad claims to "help the prevention of cavities"? It does not claim to prevent, only to <i>help</i> prevent cavities. Anything that does not hurt can be said to help. Other weasel words or phrases are <i>virtually</i> , <i>looks like</i> , <i>fight</i> s, and <i>best</i> . You have to look closely to determine whether the word or the claim has merit.
The Unfinished Claim:	Normally, when you make a comparison, you state the two things that are being compared (for example, "I am taller than you"). Advertisers may intentionally not finish the comparison: "This battery has more power to get the job done right." More power than what?
The Unique Claim:	Many products on the market are nearly identical, so advertisers try to make their product stand out. Legally they cannot make false claims, so they focus on a single element that is found only in their product, hoping that consumers will think this means that the product is better. For example: "You'll find that only our cars have the Deluxe Air-flow system." Or, "Hypoglicia can only be found in our product." Do these features make the products better?
The Rhetorical Claim:	Advertisers ask rhetorical questions or make statements so that consumers associate certain ideas and emotions with their product. For example: "Shouldn't you buy the best?" Advertisers try to convince consumers to buy based on their emotional response to the questions; they have made no real claims that their products will deliver on these promises.