

MISLEADING “UP-TO” SAVINGS



Many people already know that misleading advertisements exist.

However, most people do not realize that even the honest advertisements can cause some confusion for the consumers. Research has recently been put into the advertisements that make claims that consumers can save “up to” a certain amount, and the research shows that these advertisements can be equally as misleading, according to Lifeinc on Today. Companies are always looking for a way to advertise in the best light because they are looking to attract customers. This is the primary reason that companies tend to use that “up to” claim in their advertisements. These are two words that are used often, especially during the holiday season. For example, an advertisement may say “Save up to 75 percent on sweaters.” The advertisement is honest, because it tells consumers that they can possibly save 75 percent on the sweaters that are available, but they could end up saving less. The problem with this advertisement is that most consumers will see it and they will automatically assume that they will save 75 percent on all of the different sweaters in stock, even though that simply may not be the case. A professor of marketing for the American University, Manoj Hastak, has said, “Even if there are very clear statements or very clear disclosures in an ad, people process the ad as a whole.” He also said, “They don’t necessarily read everything in great detail. They don’t necessarily parse it completely.” The Federal Trade Commission, commonly referred to as the FTC, has been interested in seeing how the consumers interpret these two words. They developed a study on an energy saving claim to get an idea of how people interpreted these advertisements. The FTC noted, “In this study, people didn’t think the words ‘up to’ qualified the claim at all.” The FTC also noted, “People look at the number that’s in the ad and that’s what they expect to get.” In many instances, companies and advertisers will place those two words in a smaller font, making it less noticeable. Even so, Hastak says, “I don’t think the issue is that people didn’t see the ‘up to’ claim. More likely, they are so jaded in seeing these claims all the time that they don’t see it as a qualifier.” After doing this extensive research, the Federal Trade Commission believes that some advertisements with the words “up to” can actually be very misleading. They believe that certain sellers should not be allowed to use these claims in advertisements. Some locations, including the state of Massachusetts, prohibit the use of these advertisements at all.