



By AMY KRAFT / CBS NEWS / July 28, 2015, 3:15 PM

# Most "scientific" beauty product claims are bogus, study finds



/ IHAR ULASHCHYK

We've all seen beauty claims in magazines that promise to give us "better skin in just two weeks" or to "dramatically reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles."

But many women are not convinced. A new study found fewer than one out of five of such claims was considered truthful by a panel of readers -- and ads that used scientific language to describe the benefits were even less persuasive.

Researchers at Valdosta State University in Georgia and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln analyzed 289 makeup, hair care, fragrance and skin care advertisements from April 2013 issues of seven fashion magazines including *Vogue*, *Marie Claire* and *Glamour*.

The claims were divided into categories such as scientific claims like "clinically proven" and endorsement claims like "dermatologists recommend." Three female judges with varying levels of knowledge about the cosmetics industry sorted these claims into four categories: outright lie, omission, vague or acceptable.

Results showed that only 18 percent of all claims were deemed acceptable. Among scientific claims, 86 percent were considered vague (omitting important information) or false.

"For the past 30 years a fundamental belief that advertisers hold is that women are more emotional, so whatever we write should be sensitive and emotional," study author Jie Fowler, assistant professor of marketing at Valdosta University, told CBS News. "But consumers today are more cynical so this type of plan may not work as well."



The researchers found that most claims of a products' superiority, including phrases such as "award-winning product," and claims about performance, such as "your skin feels softer," were considered false, whereas most endorsement claims were deemed acceptable.

The study was published in the *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing: Bridging Fashion and Marketing*.

The Food and Drug Administration only regulates cosmetics for their physical safety, not the truth or exaggeration of their advertising claims.

The researchers say that deception undermines credibility of advertising as a whole by making consumers defensive and distrustful of such claims. Fowler said that past research surveys have shown that only 17 percent of consumers trusted the cosmetics industry. "That's an indication that if we don't change our approach it might harm the future impression of the brand," she said.

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# That Makeup Ad Is Probably Lying to You

Alexandra Sifferlin @acsifferlin | July 27, 2015



New study reveals how many ads for cosmetics are inaccurate or false  
Only 18% of all claims made in commercials for cosmetics are generally trustworthy, according to new research released Monday.

Cosmetics firms often use advertising verbiage like “clinically proven” or “inspired by groundbreaking DNA research.” But researchers combed through these claims and found that the majority were vague and many are outright lies, according to a new study [published](#) in the *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*.

The researchers assessed 289 cosmetic ads, including ads for products like makeup, skincare and fragrance, featured in magazines like *Vogue* and *Marie Claire*. They then separated the various claims into different categories, including environmental claims, endorsement claims and scientific claims. The researchers rated them as “acceptable,” “vague,” “omission” or “outright lie.”

The study authors conclude that claims of “wellbeing and happiness” are usually not substantiated. “Those who back the claims with scientific evidence and consumer testing often use questionable methodologies for their substantiation,” the authors wrote.



## Four in five beauty claims cannot be substantiated

Nearly one in four wrinkle removal claims were found to include 'outright lies', a study of cosmetic adverts found



For millions the beauty industry offers the promise of eternal youth with an ever-growing array of potions to reduce wrinkles, mend split-ends, restore a youthful glow or contour the face.

But if the claims have always sounded too good to be true, that is because most of them are. Just like the rehydration creams they advertise, [the promises simply do not hold water](#).

A new study found that fewer than one in five upmarket cosmetic adverts stands up to scrutiny, with companies criticised for their 'vague' science and false claims of superiority over rivals. [Nearly one in four wrinkle removal claims were found to include 'outright lies'](#).

Researchers also highlighted the meaningless and often [baffling lexicon of pseudo-science](#) used to support the assertions such as 'clinically proven' 'dermatologically tested' and 'regenerating.'

They point out that if many of these so-called 'cosmeceuticals' actually did what they claimed, they would be having such an impact on the metabolism that they should be labelled as medicines.

The authors say that companies must start to provide scientific results in laymen's terms so the public could understand research findings.

"Researchers need to explain how and why lip gloss can last for 12 hours," said Professor Jie Fowler, from Valdosta State University in Georgia, US.

"Deception not only undermines the credibility of advertising as a whole by making consumers defensive, but also produces damaging effects for the advertisers who are directly responsible for making the claims.

"The study makes it clear that marketers have a powerful self-interest in upholding the truth in cosmetics advertising. This article presented the genesis and current status of cosmetics claims and suggested that more regulations need to be developed."





The authors also criticised subjective and fanciful claims which could not be tested, such as ‘time is on your side’ or ‘all you need for all day confidence.’ And they warned people to be careful of vague assertions such as ‘inspired by science’ which was meaningless.

Researchers examined almost 300 full-page ads in fashion magazines such as Vogue, Glamour and Marie Claire. The adverts were dedicated to a wide range of products, including make-up, facial skincare, body products, fragrance, hair products and nail polish.

Claims scrutinised included ‘no testing on animals’, ‘recommended by dermatologists’ clinically proven’ and ‘scientific claims’.

A panel of three judges then categorised the claims under four labels: ‘outright lie’; ‘omission’; ‘vague’ and ‘acceptable’.

They found that in just seven magazines, there were 757 claims by cosmetic companies, and 621 did not stack. Just 18 per cent were found to be ‘acceptable.’ And even fewer ‘scientific claims’ were judged to be trustworthy, just 14 per cent.

The study authors concluded that claims of “well-being and happiness” are usually not substantiated.

“Those who back the claims with scientific evidence and consumer testing often use questionable methodologies for their substantiation,” they said.

However Dr Chris Flower, the Director General of the Cosmetic Toiletry and Perfumery Association, said regulation was much more stringent in the UK with cosmetic companies needing to satisfy the European Union, Trading Standards and the Advertising Standards Authority.

“EU law requires that you do not make any claim that you cannot substantiate, so it is illegal to make a false claim,” said Dr Flower.

“Cosmetic companies in the UK are actually very good at policing themselves and will report competitors of they do not think their claims stand up.

“It is a huge embarrassment for companies to be found to be making misleading claims and it messes up their advertising campaigns so they tend to be very careful and make sure they have the research backing it up.”

The results, published in the [Journal of Global Fashion Marketing](#).

# The Most Important Beauty Secret Women Need to Know Today

By Tim Boyer G+

20150729 02:27

Truth in beauty advertising is uglier than many once thought. Find out now why being a critical consumer of beauty products is so important today.

According to a new study published in the *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing: Bridging Fashion and Marketing*, researchers recently revealed that less than one out of every five beauty ads that you read is considered truthful. In fact, over 86% of beauty ads were deemed vague or outright lies by a panel of experts analyzing the reasonability of advertising claims.

Researchers at Valdosta State University in Georgia and the University of NebraskaLincoln analyzed nearly 300 makeup, hair care, fragrance and skin care advertisements from a sampling of seven fashion magazines that included including popular titles such as *Vogue*, *Marie Claire* and *Glamour*. What they found was that only 18 percent of all claims made by beauty advertisers of their products were deemed acceptable. Furthermore, of those that alluded to being scientifically sound, 86 percent were actually found to be vague or false.

According to a *CBS News* report on the study, "For the past 30 years a fundamental belief that advertisers hold is that women are more emotional, so whatever we write should be sensitive and emotional," says study author Jie Fowler, assistant professor of marketing at Valdosta University. "But consumers today are more cynical, so this type of plan may not work as well."

A troubling trend the researchers warn is that eventually consumers will become overly wary of advertised claims that in turn will lead to undermining a company's credibility and its brand. Previous studies have shown only approximately 17% of consumers actually trust the cosmetics they buy.

"That's an indication that if we don't change our approach it might harm the future impression of the brand," stated Ms. Fowler for *CBS News*.

One of the conclusions reached by the researchers is that more regulations need to be developed within the industry to prevent such deceptive advertising not only for the good of the consumer, but to protect the industry from itself.

For a sampling of earlier published beauty secrets and some warnings, here are some recommended links to follow:

[New Beauty Tips to Avoid Being Scammed](#)

[Don't Use These 17 Beauty Products, Avoid Them](#)

[Beauty Secrets Mean Lead in Lipstick, Arsenic in Eyeliner](#)

References:

CBS News "[Most "scientific" beauty product claims are bogus, study finds](#)"

Journal of Global Fashion Marketing: Bridging Fashion and Marketing; Volume 6, Issue 3, 2015;

["Deception in cosmetics advertising: Examining cosmetics advertising claims in fashion magazine ads"](#)

## VITALITY

## Some Makeup Companies Aren't Telling The Truth In Their Ads; 4 Out Of 5 Make False Claims

Jul 28, 2015 06:15 PM By Kristin Magaldi

makeup

When testing a wide array of cosmetic advertisements for truth, a lot of them didn't seem to hold up.

pdwpdw67, CC BY-SA 2.0.

That alluring [makeup](#) ad telling you a new cream or concealer will take years off your face while revitalizing your skin to its once previous firmness is lying to you. A recent [study](#) released Monday has found that only 18 percent of all claims made in cosmetic advertisements are actually true, while the rest are covering up for something. The study, published in the *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, found that only one in five [advertisements](#) could be proven for accuracy, while most dashed the truth with vague, scientific-sounding terms like “clinically proven” and “dermatologically tested.”

For the study, researchers looked at 289 full-page advertisements in fashion magazines, like *Vogue*, *Glamour*, and *Marie Claire*, that featured [makeup](#), body care products, facial skincare products, fragrances, hair products and nail polishes. A panel of three judges then examined so-called “scientific claims,” and categorized them into one of four groups: outright lie, omission, vague, and acceptable. After going through just seven magazines, researchers discovered that 621 out of 757 claims made by these companies did not add up. Only 18 percent were filed into the “acceptable” category, while just 14 percent were concluded to be trustworthy.

“Deception not only undermines the credibility of advertising as a whole by making consumers defensive, but also produces damaging effects for the advertisers who are directly responsible for making the claims,” Professor Jie Fowler, from Valdosta State University in Georgia, told the [Telegraph](#). “The study makes it clear that marketers have a powerful self-interest in upholding the truth in cosmetics advertising. The article presented the genesis and current status of cosmetic claims and suggested that more regulations need to be developed.”

What’s more, researchers also noted that if on-sale cosmetics were actually able to do half of the things they claimed, they would have such an effect on metabolism that they’d have to be considered medicine. Claims of “wellbeing and happiness,” the age-old advertising tactic, were also found to be unsubstantiated by researchers. Overall, they found that “those who back the claims with scientific evidence and consumer testing often use questionable methodologies for their substantiation.”

This is not the first instance in which cosmetic companies danced around the truth. The potential for the chemicals used within cosmetics to [cause harm](#) is also relatively unknown to consumers, and mostly unregulated. A proposed amendment to the current federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act cited that women typically put [168 chemicals on their bodies each day](#), the health repercussions of which are mostly unknown.

Scott Faber, Environmental Working Group’s vice president of government affairs, told [ABC](#), “Cosmetics are sort of the last unregulated area of consumer product laws. I can’t overstate how little law is now on the books. The FDA virtually has no power to regulate the products we use every day.”

And with little consumer knowledge or government regulation going into these products, cosmetic companies are free to make these advertising claims that we see so often. Your best bet when dealing with cosmetics: proceed with caution, and take everything with a grain of salt. Most products are not the miracle they claim to be, and looking up chemicals that are used within your favorite creams and shampoos is the best way to avoid potential health repercussions.

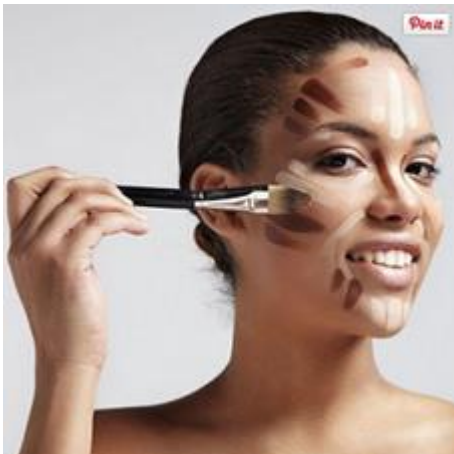
Source: Fowler J, Reisenwitz T, Carlson L, et al. Deception in cosmetics advertising: Examining cosmetics advertising claims in fashion magazine ads. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*. 2015.

BEAUTY &amp; STYLE | Jul 27, 2015

# 82 Percent of Cosmetic Advertising Claims Are Bogus

A new study sheds light on an alarmingly high amount of false advertising for makeup and beauty products in the media

By Rachel Jacoby Zoldan



If you've ever wondered exactly how good that "miracle" serum is at reducing wrinkles or how it's possible that a cream is "clinically proven" to mend split ends after seeing a well-styled ad for it, well, you're not alone. Some of the claims seem practically outrageous—after all, can something in a bottle actually make you look ten years younger? Your skeptical gut is probably right. According to [new research published in the Journal of Global Fashion and Marketing](#), only 18 percent of all claims made in commercials for cosmetics prove to be trustworthy. ([10 Invisalign Truths to Know Before You Try.](#))

Researchers completed a content analysis of advertising claims, looking at the following types: superiority, such as "award-winning product;" scientific, like "clinically proven;" stand-alone performance ("your skin feels softer"); endorsement, such as "dermatologists recommend this;" and subjective, like "all you need for a day of confidence." Similarly, they classified each ad's claim as vague/ambiguous ("inspired by science"), an omission, a false/outright lie, or as acceptable. Every category of beauty products was looked at, including makeup, skincare, body and bath, fragrance, hair, and nail.

Despite the variation of categories and claims, only 18 percent of the 757 claims reviewed actually stood up to their advertised features. Makeup ads made most of the claims in the beauty industry—294 of them, in fact. And as for the other classifications, researchers found that almost half of the brands reviewed actually make *false* scientific or subjective claims. All of this suggests that even though the FDA monitors the industry, they can only guarantee that the beauty products are *safe*. It's really up to you to know whether the ingredients in that bottle will solve your skincare woes, which means you need to do your own research. Be wary of any miracle products that don't have a scientific study or unaffiliated doctor specifically backing up its claims. Most magazines will specifically call out if they or their sources have tried the products out themselves (like [Shape's 2014 Beauty Awards](#), for which we tested hundreds of products). If you want to guarantee that a beauty hack will make you prettier, skip the makeup entirely and slap a smile on your face—a study last year proved that women with nicer personalities are perceived as more physically attractive than their mean counterparts. Beauty from the inside—now that's the perfect place to start.



# Deceptive claims in cosmetics advertising

July 29, 2015

If you're sceptical about the claims made by cosmetics firms about the attributes of their lotions and potions, you're not alone. A study by US academics just published in the Journal of Global Fashion Marketing shows how little truth there seems to be in those glossy magazine ads – as well as how unlikely we are to believe them anyway.

Jie G. Fowler, Timothy Reisenwitz and Les Carson examined 289 full-page cosmetics ads from the April 2013 issues of seven fashion titles such as Vogue, Glamour and Marie Claire. The ads studied covered a wide range of product categories, such as make-up, facial skincare, body products, fragrance, hair and nail products.

The researchers first divided the claims made in the glossy ads into categories, including 'environmental claims' ('no testing on animals'), endorsement claims ('recommended by dermatologists') and 'scientific claims' ('clinically proven'). A panel of three judges then classified the claims made into one of four categories of truthfulness: 'outright lie', 'omission', 'vague' and 'acceptable'.

In the end, only 18% of all claims made by the cosmetics companies were deemed 'acceptable' by the panel. Just 14% of 'scientific' claims were deemed acceptable, as opposed to 50% of those made about a product's environmental attributes. Even more troubling for women worried about their wrinkles, the panel judged only 25.1% of performance claims to be acceptable, with 23% deemed to be an 'outright lie'.

In addition to how unlikely consumers seem to be persuaded by the claims made in glossy magazines, the research also draws attention to the quirks of the regulatory processes by which 'grey-area' products like cosmeceuticals are considered to be a drug or a cosmetic – which in turn influence how a product can be marketed. "Categorization as a drug subjects the product to extensive regulatory requirements for new drugs," the authors write, "so, ironically, cosmeceutical marketers do not want to prove the efficacy of their product, since drug regulation would then apply. Consequently, cosmeceutical advertising needs to attract consumers, but not regulators."

The authors also note that given their results and the clear disbelief expressed by the judges regarding the cosmetic claims put before them, consumers (at least as represented by the judges) are already sceptical of product claims and are likely to consider them lies, omitting important information, or too vague to be of use. Their observations thus have implications for advertisers, who, it seems, need to promote their products to customers increasingly distrustful that miracles can really be found in a jar.

Explore further: TV drug ads: The whole truth?

More information: "Deception in cosmetics advertising: Examining cosmetics advertising claims in fashion magazine ads." Journal of Global Fashion Marketing: Bridging Fashion and Marketing. DOI: 10.1080/20932685.2015.1032319

Provided by: Taylor & Francis

# Over 80 percent of cosmetic product claims are untruthful, study suggests



Harry Readhead for Metro.co.uk Wednesday 29 Jul 2015 6:58 pm



You know those glossy whole-page advertisements for beauty products in magazines?

They make all sorts of claims to show you how great whatever they're selling is.

'Clinically-proven.' 'Recommended by dermatologists.' 'No testing on animals.'

But it seems that the vast majority of those claims may not exactly be true.

80 per cent, in fact, according to a new US study published in the [Journal of Global Fashion Marketing](#).

ScienceAlert reports that researchers from Valdosta State University pored through magazines from April 2013 and assessed 289 full-page cosmetic ads.

They put these claims into various categories, including environmental (claims about animal testing, for instance), endorsement (recommendations by professionals) and scientific ('clinically proven'). A panel of judges then ranked and classified each advertisement claim as 'outright lie', 'omission', 'vague' or 'acceptable'.

Though much of the public already approaches advertisement claims with a healthy dose of skepticism, what the judges decided was still significant.

Just 18 percent of the claims were deemed 'acceptable' by the panel. 'Deception not only undermines the credibility of advertising as a whole by making consumers defensive, but also produces damaging effects for the advertisers who are directly responsible for making the claims,' one of the study's co-authors told [The Telegraph](#).

## Beauty science is BOGUS: Just 14% of claims made by cosmetics firms are acceptable, say researchers

- Researchers at Valdosta State University, Georgia and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, studied beauty adverts in seven women's magazines
- Categorised claims into: 'outright lie', 'omission', 'vague' and 'acceptable'
- Found just 14 per cent of all the claims made were 'acceptable'
- Almost a quarter of claims made in wrinkle adverts were dubbed lies

By [Sarah Griffiths for MailOnline](#)

Published: 13:02 GMT, 27 July 2015 | Updated: 20:27 GMT, 27 July 2015



© Lumina Images/Blend Images/Corbis

'Here comes the science bit' must be one of the most memorable catch phrases in a beauty advert. But just 14 per cent of scientific claims made in make-up and skincare advertisements have been deemed 'acceptable' by a panel of experts. The study also uncovered lies about wrinkle creams and revealed that consumers are already sceptical of many products masquerading as miracles in jars.

Marketing experts at Valdosta State University in Georgia and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, studied how much truth lies in glossy beauty adverts in women's magazines such as Vogue and Elle. They looked at 289 full-page make-up, skincare, fragrance, hair and nail adverts from April 2013 issues of seven fashion titles. They divided the claims made in the adverts into different categories, including endorsement claims, such as 'recommended by dermatologists' and scientific claims, such as 'clinically proven'.

Three female judges then sorted these claims into four categories of truth, from: 'outright lie', 'omission' and 'vague' to 'acceptable'. The results showed that 'more cosmetics claims were classified as deceptive than were deemed as acceptable,' the study authors write. They found that just 18 per cent of all the claims made were 'acceptable,' with only 14 per cent of scientific claims found to reach this level, AlphaGalileo reported.

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF CLAIMS MADE IN GLOSSY COSMETICS ADVERTS

Cosmetics Claims	Description	Example
<b>Superiority claim</b>	Focuses on the superior nature of the product	'Our award-winning product.'
		'This is the best lotion in the world.'
<b>Scientific claim</b>	Emphasises the results of clinical evaluation, scientific process or product formula	'Clinical proven.'
		'Inspired by groundbreaking DNA research.'
		'2% BHA'
		'100% fragrance free'
<b>Stand-alone performance claim</b>	Focuses on performance without evidence	'Your skin feels softer.'
		'Looks more radiant.'
		'12-hour makeup to instantly cover flaws.'
<b>Endorsement claim</b>	Uses endorsers in claims	'Dermatologists recommend ingredient that treats and helps prevent breakouts.'
<b>Environmental claim</b>	Associated with environmentally-friendly attributes a product possesses	'No animal testing.'
<b>Subjective claim</b>	Expresses fanciful or exaggerated statements of the type no reasonable person would take literally	'All you need for all day confidence.'
		'Make visibly clearer skin a way of life.'
		'Time is on your side.'



© Eric Hernandez/Lived In Images/Corbis

'Scientific claims tended to be classified as vague or as omitting important information,' the research says. The study, published in the 'Journal of Global Fashion Marketing: Bridging Fashion and Marketing', reported three quarters of claims made in wrinkle adverts were less than acceptable, with 23 per cent deemed to be an 'outright lie'.

It says that most superiority claims, such as 'our award winning product' were found to be false, while performance claims, such as 'your skin feels softer' tended to be vague.

'In addition, most of the endorsement claims were deemed to be acceptable and most of the subjective claims were classified as vague or false,' the marketing experts write.

**THE MISLEADING TYPES OF CLAIMS MADE IN BEAUTY ADVERTS**

Misleading types	Description	Example
Vague/Ambitious	The claim is overly vague or ambitious. It contains a phrase or statement that is too broad to have a clear meaning	'Inspired by science'
Omission	The claim omits important information necessary to evaluate its truthfulness or reasonableness	'The product is clinically tested.' This omits information on how and where the product was tested.
False/Outright lie	The claim is inaccurate or a fabrication	'This product brings miracles to your skin.'
Acceptable	The claim is classified as being acceptable	

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## Because it's not worth it: deceptive claims in cosmetics advertising

27 July 2015 Taylor & Francis

If you're sceptical about the claims made by cosmetics firms about the attributes of their lotions and potions, you're not alone. A study by US academics just published in the *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing* shows how little truth there seems to be in those glossy magazine ads – as well as how unlikely we are to believe them anyway.

Jie G. Fowler, Timothy Reisenwitz and Les Carson examined 289 full-page cosmetics ads from the April 2013 issues of seven fashion titles such as *Vogue*, *Glamour* and *Marie Claire*. The ads studied covered a wide range of product categories, such as make-up, facial skincare, body products, fragrance, hair and nail products.

The researchers first divided the claims made in the glossy ads into categories, including 'environmental claims' ('no testing on animals'), endorsement claims ('recommended by dermatologists') and 'scientific claims' ('clinically proven'). A panel of three judges then classified the claims made into one of four categories of truthfulness: 'outright lie', 'omission', 'vague' and 'acceptable'.

In the end, only 18% of all claims made by the cosmetics companies were deemed 'acceptable' by the panel. Just 14% of 'scientific' claims were deemed acceptable, as opposed to 50% of those made about a product's environmental attributes. Even more troubling for women worried about their wrinkles, the panel judged only 25.1% of performance claims to be acceptable, with 23% deemed to be an 'outright lie'.

In addition to how unlikely consumers seem to be persuaded by the claims made in glossy magazines, the research also draws attention to the quirks of the regulatory processes by which 'grey-area' products like cosmeceuticals are considered to be a drug or a cosmetic – which in turn influence how a product can be marketed. "Categorization as a drug subjects the product to extensive regulatory requirements for new drugs," the authors write, "so, ironically, cosmeceutical marketers do not want to prove the efficacy of their product, since drug regulation would then apply. Consequently, cosmeceutical advertising needs to attract consumers, but not regulators."



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## Because it's not worth it: deceptive claims in cosmetics advertising

27 July 2015 Taylor & Francis

The authors also note that given their results and the clear disbelief expressed by the judges regarding the cosmetic claims put before them, consumers (at least as represented by the judges) are already sceptical of product claims and are likely to consider them lies, omitting important information, or too vague to be of use. Their observations thus have implications for advertisers, who, it seems, need to promote their products to customers increasingly distrustful that miracles can really be found in a jar.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20932685.2015.1032319>

•**Full bibliographic information** Deception in cosmetics advertising: Examining cosmetics advertising claims in fashion magazine ads

Jie G. Fowler, Timothy H. Reisenwitz & Les Carlson

Journal of Global Fashion Marketing: Bridging Fashion and Marketing

Volume 6, Issue 3, 2015

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<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20932685.2015.1032319>

## Because it's not worth it: Deceptive claims in cosmetics advertising

Date: July 27, 2015  
Source: Taylor & Francis  
Summary: If you're skeptical about the claims made by cosmetics firms about the attributes of their lotions and potions, you're not alone. A new study shows how little truth there seems to be in those glossy magazine ads -- as well as how unlikely we are to believe them anyway.  
Share: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
Total shares:

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## Cosmetic Ads' Science Claims Lack Foundation

An analysis of some 300 cosmetics ads in magazines found the vast

majority of their science claims to be either false or too vague to judge

By [Erika Beras](#) | August 25, 2015

“Clinically Proven.” “[Breakthrough Technology](#).” “Ten Years of [Genetic Research](#).” These are phrases you might expect to find in the pages of *Scientific American*. But these descriptions also show up in commercials and print ads for cosmetics.

Now a study finds that some—well, make that a lot—of those science-sounding claims are simply not true.

Researchers looked at nearly 300 ads in magazines such as *Vogue*. They analyzed claims in the ads and ranked them on a scale ranging from acceptable to outright lie. And they found that just 18 percent of the boasts that the researchers looked at were true. 23 percent were outright lies. And 42 percent were too vague to even classify. The study is in the *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*. [Jie G. Fowler, Timothy H. Reisenwitz and Les Carlson, [Deception in cosmetics advertising: Examining cosmetics advertising claims in fashion magazine ads](#)]

The Food and Drug Administration regulates what goes into your cosmetics and what goes on the label. If a claim is blatantly untrue, the FDA can take action. Vague language on labels may be a way to keep the FDA at bay.

Meanwhile, ads are regulated by the Federal Trade Commission. Just last year they charged L’Oreal for [deceptive advertising](#) of its Génifique products, which the company said were “clinically proven” to boost genes’ activity that would lead to the production of proteins causing “visibly younger skin in just seven days.” A settlement agreement forced L’Oreal to back off on the claims.

So take those cosmetic ads with a grain of that salt scrub—after all, if scientists had really come up with a product that reversed your wrinkles or grew your eyelashes, it would sell itself.

—Erika Beras

[The above text is a transcript of this podcast.]

# Cosmetics advertising in women's print magazines under scrutiny



By Deanna Utroske 

28-Jul-2015

Last updated on 28-Jul-2015 at 17:39 GMT

Related tags: [Journal of Global Fashion Marketing](#), [Magazine](#), [Advertising](#), [Marketing](#), [Deceptive](#), [Consumer behavior](#)

**Research published in the Journal of Global Fashion Marketing illustrates what content comes across as deceptive, what claims are believable, and which sorts of ads consumers trust most.**

Marketing scholars affiliated with both the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Valdosta State University in Georgia studied full-page beauty ads in these popular titles: Elle, Glamour, Harper's Bazaar, InStyle, Marie Claire, People StyleWatch, and Vogue.

A full spectrum of beauty products were represented in the sample, including color cosmetics, nail care, hair care, skin care, body care, and fragrance. According to its message, each ad was categorized as an outright lie, an omission, vague, or acceptable.

The work resulted in the newly published article, *Deception in cosmetics advertising: Examining cosmetics advertising claims in fashion magazine ads*.

## Unbelievable

Subjective copy—with wording such as, *“All you need for all day confidence”*—was most likely to be perceived as an outright lie. The study found that nearly 50% of the subjective claims in fashion magazine ads were seemingly false.

Product superiority claims, which appeared much less frequently, were also perceived as false almost half of the time. And, scientific claims, those that feature clinical evaluation results, product formulations, or scientific processes, were often found to be vague or as omitting information. Performance claims were also often vague.

Prominent media outlets are spreading the bad news. Time magazine just ran an item by Alexandra Sifferlin titled, *That Makeup Ad Is Probably Lying to You*, which opens with this disheartening line, *“Only 18% of all claims made in commercials for cosmetics are generally trustworthy.”*

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## Dependable

Advertising claims that make use of endorsers, like dermatologists, performed best. *“Most of the endorsement claims were deemed to be acceptable,”* according to the journal article.

Jie G. Fowler, Timothy H. Reisenwitz, and Les Carlson, the marketing scholars behind the study, make some suggestions for how brands can build on that winning tactic. *“This research suggests that advertisers should strive to develop concrete strategies for dealing with distrustful consumers in the marketplace.”*

*“Many endorsement claims were deemed to be ‘acceptable’, which suggests a positive effectiveness level for this claim format. Continued use of endorsement claims may be a beneficial tactic for advertisers regarding cynical consumers,”* they write.



## Fundamental

Beauty industry advertising can easily be read as of-a-type, that is to say consumers may well believe that if much of the industry's messaging seems false, it all must be false, regardless of the company or brand featured in the ad.

The Deception in cosmetics advertising article points to earlier research that found deceptive advertising can guide consumers to inaccurately assess products and could *"turn us into a community of cynics, [who] doubt advertisers, the media, and authority in all its forms....Deceptive claims can also be considered annoying, offensive and insulting to the consumer's intelligence."*

So for the good of the industry and consumers, Fowler, Reisenwitz and Carlson, discuss how guidelines and more transparent marketing practices could be beneficial.

A full text version of the academic article is available [here](#), from Taylor & Francis.

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[Cosmetics advertising in women's print magazines under scrutiny](#)

By Deanna UtroskeDeanna Utroske, 28-Jul-2015

**Research published in the Journal of Global Fashion Marketing illustrates what content comes across as deceptive, what claims are believable, and which sorts of ads consumers trust most.**

<http://www.cosmeticsdesign.com/Market-Trends/Cosmetics-advertising-in-women-s-print-magazines-under-scrutiny>

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29 JULY, 2015

# THE MAJORITY OF CLAIMS ON COSMETIC ADS ARE CRAP, SAYS NEW RESEARCH



MANY ADS FOR COSMETIC BRANDS CONTAIN SOME FORM OF STATEMENT ON THE AD, SUCH AS 'SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN', 'AWARD-WINNING' AND 'MIRACLE', HOWEVER NEW RESEARCH SUGGESTS 82 PER CENT OF THESE CLAIMS ARE PURE RUBBISH.

The study comes from the Journal of Global Fashion Marketing: Bridging Fashion and Marketing, entitled [\*\*Deception in cosmetics advertising: Examining cosmetics advertising claims in fashion magazine ads.\*\*](#) It was authored by Jie G. Fowler, Timothy H. Reisenwitz and Les Carlson.

The research looked at a total of 757 ads for cosmetic products in well-known global magazines such as *marie claire*, *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Elle*.

It focused on six specific claims many of them make; superiority claims such as 'award-winning product', scientific claims 'clinically proven', stand-alone performance claim like 'skin feels softer', endorsement claim such as 'recommended by dermatologists', environmental claim like 'no animal testing' and subjective claims 'visibly clearer skin'. Of the total 757 products looked at within the six categories, only 136 (18 per cent) of them were deemed acceptable.

Some 316 were considered too vague, 130 had omissions from the claims that would have made them testable for truthfulness, and 175 were just outrightly false.

The research however found that many consumers are already well aware of the potentially false claims on beauty product ads, which leads to consumers already feeling defensive about the glossy ads when they see them.

For advertisers, the authors suggested the need to tackle "distrustful consumers" in the marketplace. One way proposed was to use more of the endorsement claims which appeared to be the most positively associated claim on beauty products. For example, using claims such as 'recommended by dermatologists' – of course, provided that the product actually is recommended.

"Deception not only undermines the credibility of advertising as a whole by making defensive, but also produces damaging effects for the advertisers who are directly responsible for making the claims," the authors note in the conclusion.

# Majority of beauty product claims could be deceptive to consumers

Jul 29, 2015 By Georgia Seago



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Beauty professionals often have a hard time convincing others to take the industry seriously, people who just don't see any real value or worth in the business of beauty.

Unfortunately, new research circulating today might not do much to help the cause. A report from US Journal of Global Fashion Marketing: Bridging Fashion and Marketing analysed the level of deception in cosmetics advertising claims and found the majority to be either false or unsubstantiated and therefore potentially deceptive to consumers.

The report, titled Deception in cosmetics advertising: Examining cosmetics advertising claims in fashion magazine ads, studied close to 300 full-page ads in magazines including Vogue and Glamour for make-up, skin and body care products among others. People judging the research then categorised all the claims into four groups – 'outright lie', 'omission' (meaning the claim fails to include important information needed to evaluate its truthfulness), 'vague' (containing a phrase too broad to have a clear meaning) and 'acceptable'. Perhaps unsurprisingly to some, 621 of the 757 claims were deemed either a lie, omission or vague, and just 136 were acceptable to judges.

Some of the often-unsubstantiated claims highlighted range from the common, such as 'dermatologically tested' and 'natural' to the slightly more far-fetched, like 'beautifies' and 'soothes the senses'.

Particular concern was given to cosmeceutical products, or those that are defined as having both aesthetic and medicinal properties. Though the authors say that though consumers often treat these with extra scrutiny, the category is unregulated and somewhat of a grey area in terms of the related claims that are made around it, things like 'backed by science' and 'clinically proven'. The authors said: "There is usually no substantiation of these claims, and those who back the claims with scientific evidence and consumer testing often use questionable methodologies for their substantiation."

Rather than try to warn consumers, the authors of the research know that many beauty shoppers are already well aware of the minefield that is sorting through the claims and promises sold by cosmetics advertising, and are actually more likely to be defensive and avoid these products as a result. They explained: “We might argue that consumers (at least as represented by our judges) are already sceptical of such claims and are likely to designate claims like these as lies, omitting important information and/or presenting vague claims. As such, our findings are consistent with past research on ‘defensive consumers’. The research concludes that it is in the advertiser’s best interest to give consumers clarity and evidence to support a product’s claims. When it comes to scientific claims, “The concrete evidence of ingredients, the scientific research processes used and lab results should be provided in laymen’s terminology,” advised the authors.

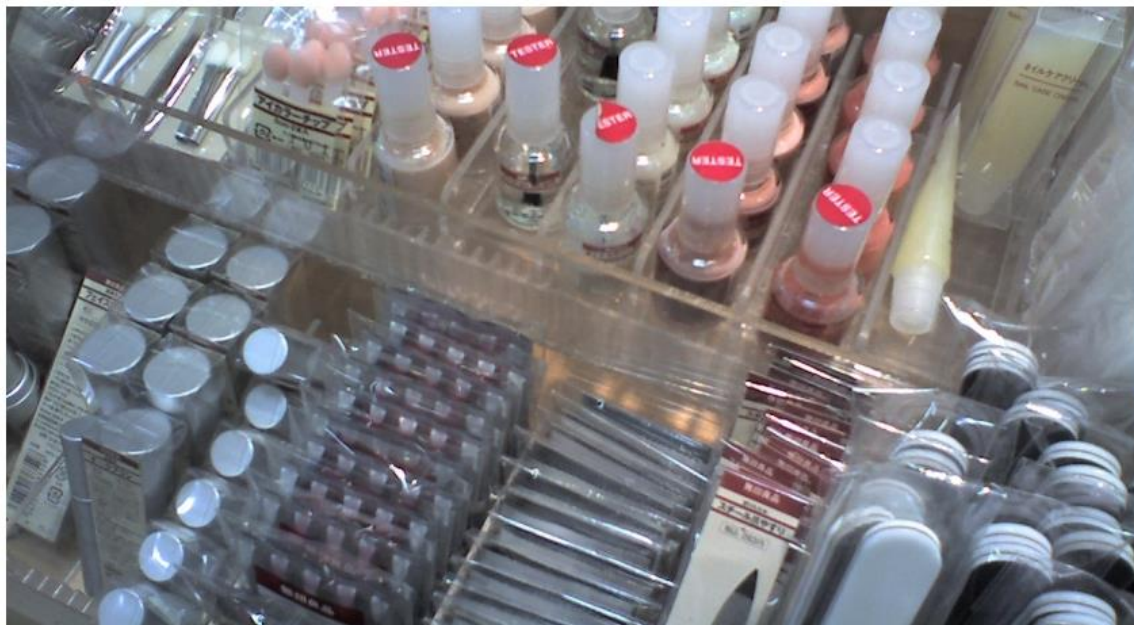




# Liar, Liar: Most Cosmetic Product Claims Deemed False

The cosmetics industry's pants are on fire. Find out which advertising claims have been labeled everything from "ambiguous" to "outright lie."

By Karla Bowsher on July 31, 2015 / Photo (cc) by Akira Ohgaki



The cosmetics industry's pants are on fire.

A new study deems only 18 percent of product claims in magazine ads as acceptable. The vast majority of claims fell into one of the following categories:

Examples of these types of unacceptable claims include "this product brings miracles to your skin," "inspired by science" and "this product is clinically tested."

Titled "Deception in cosmetics advertising: Examining cosmetics advertising claims in fashion magazine ads," the study was written by researchers from the marketing departments of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Valdosta State University in Georgia and published in the Journal of Global Fashion Marketing.

Find the best price on everything you buy on our deals page!

The evaluated ads were pulled from the April 2013 issues of seven fashion magazines, such as InStyle, Glamour and Marie Claire. Most of the ads were for makeup, skin care or hair products.

Researchers also divided the ads into categories. Lies were most common in the superiority claim category (example: "our award-winning product") and the subjective claim category (example: "all you need for all-day confidence").



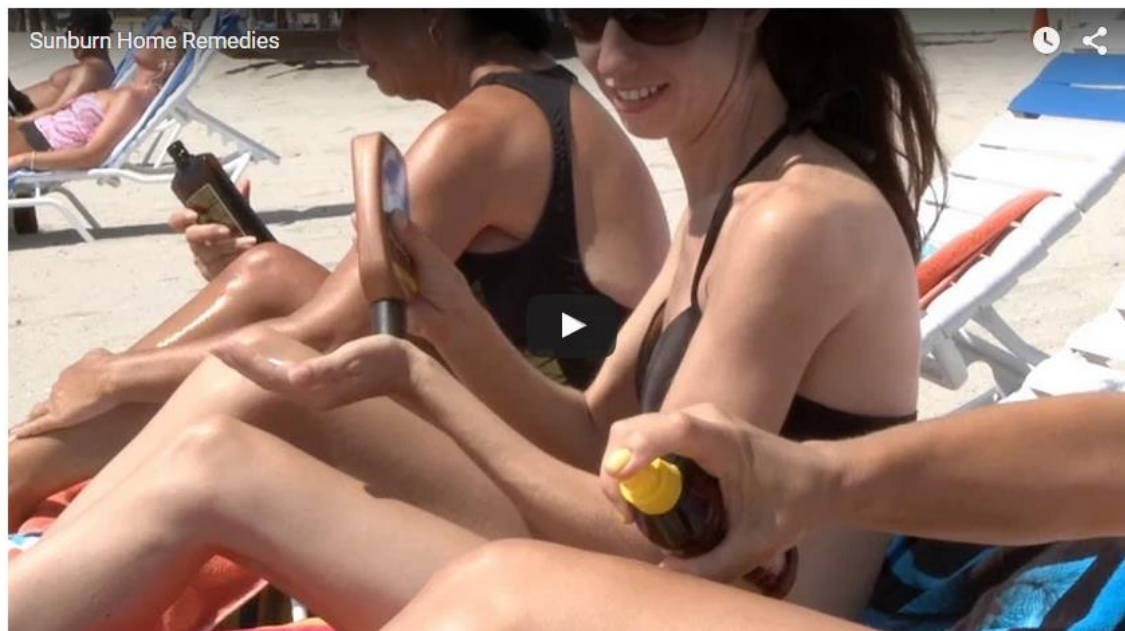
Study author Jie Fowler, who teaches marketing at Valdosta State, tells CBS News:

"For the past 30 years a fundamental belief that advertisers hold is that women are more emotional, so whatever we write should be sensitive and emotional. But consumers today are more cynical so this type of plan may not work as well."

Still, the study points out that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not regulate cosmetic product claims, and the researchers suggest that advertisers and the FDA address policy changes:

Deception not only undermines the credibility of advertising as a whole by making consumers defensive, but also produces damaging effects for the advertisers who are directly responsible for making the claims.

Are you surprised to learn how many beauty product claims are false, vague or missing necessary information? Share your thoughts with us by commenting below or on our Facebook page.

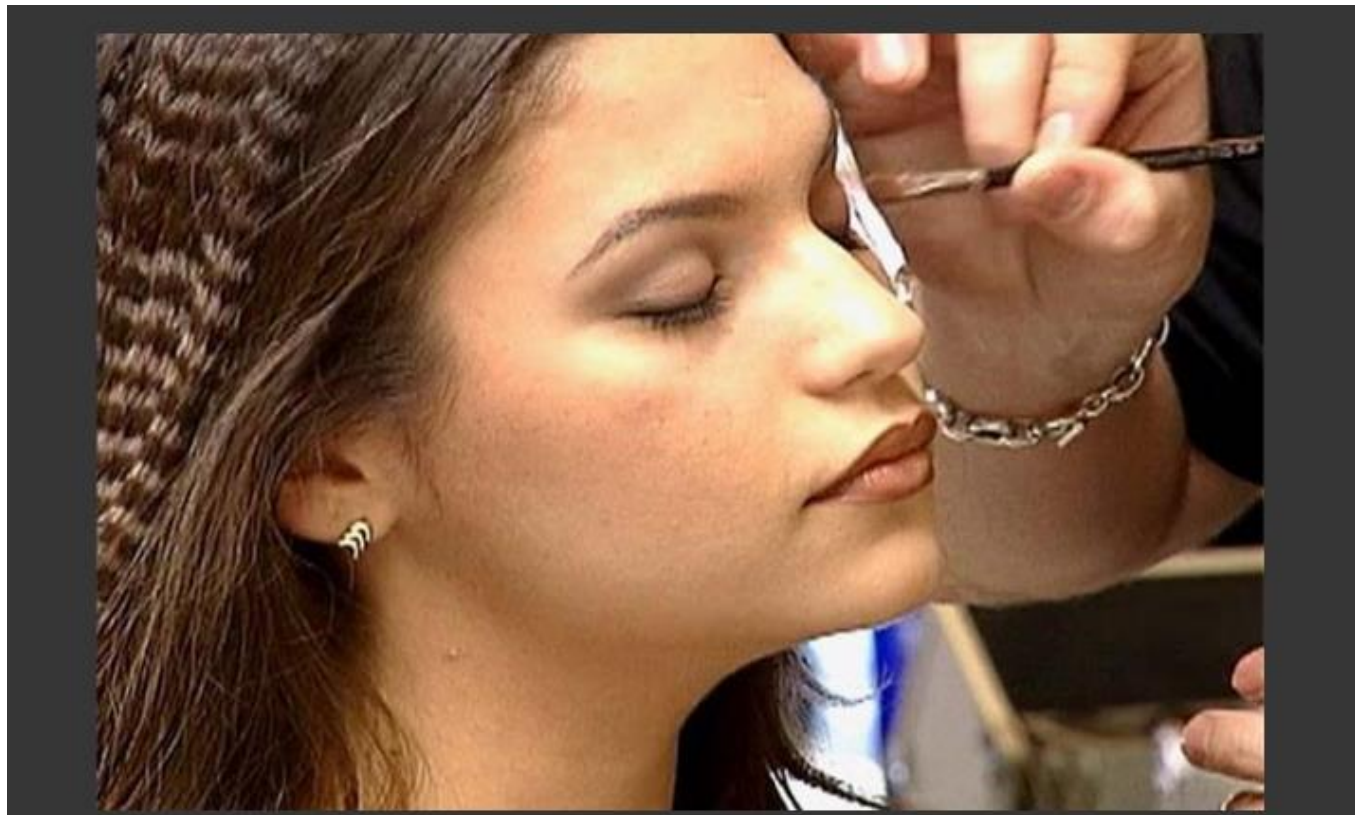


# Cosmetic Lies

By NBC News

Published 07/28 2015 03:49PM

Updated 07/28 2015 03:52PM



Researchers analyzed claims made in cosmetic ads and found that the majority of those claims were vague and many were outright lies.

A new study published in the Journal of Global Fashion marketing assessed claims made in 289 cosmetic ads for products including make-up, skin care and fragrances.

Advertising for these products often included claims like "clinically proven" but researchers say only 18 percent are generally trustworthy.

The authors conclude that even those that back claims with "consumer testing" or "scientific evidence" often use questionable methods.



## News

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Particular concern was given to cosmeceutical products, or those that are defined as having both aesthetic and medicinal properties. Though the authors say that though consumers often treat these with extra scrutiny, the category is unregulated and somewhat of a grey area in terms of the related claims that are made around it, things like ‘backed by science’ and ‘clinically proven’. The authors said: “There is usually no substantiation of these claims, and those who back the claims with scientific evidence and consumer testing often use questionable methodologies for their substantiation.”

Rather than try to warn consumers, the authors of the research know that many beauty shoppers are already well aware of the minefield that is sorting through the claims and promises sold by cosmetics advertising, and are actually more likely to be defensive and avoid these products as a result. They explained: “We might argue that consumers (at least as represented by our judges) are already sceptical of such claims and are likely to designate claims like these as lies, omitting important information and/or presenting vague claims. As such, our findings are consistent with past research on ‘defensive consumers’.

The research concludes that it is in the advertiser’s best interest to give consumers clarity and evidence to support a product’s claims. When it comes to scientific claims, “The concrete evidence of ingredients, the scientific research processes used and lab results should be provided in laymen’s terminology,” advised the authors

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2009

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APPLICATION OF ALL ECOMAAT BULGARIA ORGANIC PRODUCTS IS EFFORTLESS WITH EACH INDIVIDUAL OIL AND SECRET FORMULATION IMPARTING HIGHLY DESIRABLE, INTENSELY EFFECTIVE, PROFESSIONAL SPA QUALITY RESULTS THAT HAVE BEEN CREATED SPECIFICALLY FOR EACH AND EVERY SKIN TYPE AND SKIN CONDITION.

OILDEOLOGY PRODUCTS SUCCESSFULLY HELP IN COMBATING AND ADDRESSING THE EFFECTS AND SIGNS OF PREMATURE AGEING, FINE LINES, WRINKLES, CROWS FEET & CELLULITE - LEAVING YOU WITH YOUTHFUL, ILLUMINATED, SCULPED AND THOROUGHLY REJUVENTED APPEARANCE.

TREAT FOR THE SPECIAL ONE IN YOUR LIFE WITH THE GIFT OF POTENT BEAUTY AND INTENSE SKINCARE OF ROSE - MOISTURISE, HYDRATE AND REINVIGORATE, GIVE THE SPECIAL TREATMENT AND REWARDS DESERVES!

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