

# Misleading Marketing Claims

Making products seem like they're something they're not!



## Misleading marketing – use of packaging

- Food manufacturers develop packaging to market their products , sometimes using imagery and claims to make the product healthier and otherwise more appealing than their rival's products.
- To be legal, the claims have to be true but sometimes they're put in a way that can lead us to believe that the product is 'healthier' or 'better' than it really is.
- When a company highlights one aspect of a product to give us the impression that the whole product is healthy, it's called the 'Health halo' effect.



## Claims about the quality of the product (e.g., natural, fresh)

- People tend to associate the words like ‘natural’, ‘fresh’ and ‘traditional’ with healthiness and quality.
- A takeaway, battered fish product may be described as containing ‘fresh cod’ and being ‘made in the traditional way’.
- This does not make the takeaway battered fish a healthy choice, but some consumers will believe it to be a better choice than a frozen variety from a supermarket.

**Can you think of examples of foods that feature this type of claim on the packaging?**



natural product  
from bio ingredients

## Claims about animal welfare or environmental claims (e.g., dolphin-safe, recyclable)

- Consumers are often keen to do the right thing for animals or the environment.
- Manufacturers will appeal to this instinct but the claims may be a distraction from looking at the poor nutritional value of the product.

**Can you think of examples of foods that feature this type of claim on the packaging?**



## Claims about nutritional value

(e.g. no added or 50% less sugar, fortified with iron, no artificial flavourings)

- Claims about nutritional value must be true, but they can be phrased in a misleading way to make us believe that the product is healthy overall.
- A product that contains 50% less sugar than the original may still have a high sugar content. A product fortified with iron can be too high in fat or sugar.
- Not all natural flavouring are good for you.

**Can you think of examples of foods that feature this type of claim on the packaging?**



## Health claims

(e.g., boosts immunity)

- It is rare that you can link a health outcome to one product so companies are very careful in how they phrase their health claims.
- The wording used on packaging might say something like, 'This drink contains Vitamin C. Vitamin C supports immune function'.
- They cannot legally say 'This drink will boost your immune system!' if there is no good evidence to prove that

**Can you think of examples of foods that feature this type of claim on the packaging?**



## Claims that the product is socially responsible (e.g., Fair Trade, Made in Ireland, Organic)

- Products that are sourced and produced responsibly are not necessarily healthy.
- Both standard and FairTrade chocolate bars are likely to have similar nutritional value despite FairTrade being sourced and produced responsibly.

**Can you think of examples of foods that feature this type of claim on the packaging?**



## Use of colours or images to convey a healthy appearance (e.g. green fields or trees)

- Consumers get a sense of what the product is by the colours, images on the packaging and the style of packaging used.
- For example, if people see green fields or trees on packaging it gives the impression that the product is somehow healthy and natural.

**Can you think of examples of foods that feature this type of marketing tactic on the packaging?**

