

Incomplete Comparison

Description: An incomplete assertion that cannot possibly be refuted. This is popular in advertising.

Logical Form:

X is said to be superior, but to nothing specifically.

Example #1:

One of my favorite candies, *Raisinets*, advertises on their package that the product contains 40% less fat. In fairness, they do have an asterisk then in much smaller writing, "than the leading candy bar."

Explanation: The question is, "40% less fat than what?" The hope is that most people won't read the fine print and make their own assumptions. "Oh, this candy bar has 40% less fat than this apple!"

Example #2:

Our widgets cost less and last longer!

Explanation: Cost less than what? Last longer than what? By not specifically saying "our competition" they cannot get in trouble when a competitor shows that their product actually costs less and last longer.

Exception: The terminology used has to be a comparison word or phrase. For example, saying "Bo Rocks!" is great. Not just because I do rock (not musically), but because "rocks" is not a comparison word. There is a complete assertion. Another exception is when the object of comparison is assumed. For example, "Johnny, you need to better in school." Clearly, the implication here is that Johnny needs to *improve*, that is, do better than he did in the past.

References:

Incomplete Comparisons. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.mhhe.com/mayfieldpub/tsw/comp-i.htm>