

# Food Ads: Bigger than Reality

## VOCABULARY WORDS

1. Misleading /ˌmɪsˈliːdɪŋ/ (Adjective) - giving the wrong idea or impression and leading to misunderstanding.  
Example: The advertisement was misleading and caused confusion among the customers.
2. Plaintiff /ˈpleɪntɪf/ (Noun) - a person who brings a case against another in a court of law.  
Example: The plaintiff is seeking compensation for the damages caused by the defendant.
3. Dismiss /dɪsˈmɪs/ (Verb) - order or allow to leave; send away.  
Example: The teacher dismissed the class early due to the power outage.
4. Lawsuit /ˈlɔːsuːt/ (Noun) - a claim or dispute brought to a court of law for adjudication.  
Example: The company is facing a lawsuit for violating the environmental regulations.
5. Deceive /dɪˈsiːv/ (Verb) - cause (someone) to believe something that is not true, typically in order to gain some personal advantage.  
Example: The con artist deceived the elderly couple into giving him their life savings.
6. Synthetic /sɪnˈθetɪk/ (Adjective) - made by chemical synthesis, especially to imitate a natural product.  
Example: The synthetic fabric was more durable than the natural one.
7. Transparent /trænsˈpærənt/ (Adjective) - allowing light to pass through so that objects behind can be distinctly seen.  
Example: The glass was transparent and allowed a clear view of the garden.
8. Accountable /əˈkaʊntəbl/ (Adjective) - required or expected to justify actions or decisions; responsible.  
Example: The government officials are accountable to the public for their actions.



Food advertisements have a history of making their subjects appear larger, juicier, and crispier than they are in real life. However, some consumers claim that these ads can be **misleading**, leading to a growing number of lawsuits. Burger King is the latest company to

come under fire, with **plaintiffs** across the US suing in March 2022. They claim that advertisements and photos on store menu boards show burgers that are about 35% larger and with double the meat than the burgers they purchased. The plaintiffs said they wouldn't have bought the sandwiches if they had known the actual size.

According to law firm Perkins Coie, 214 lawsuits were filed against food and beverage companies in 2022, and 101 were filed in the first six months of 2023. This is a significant increase from 2010, when only 45 lawsuits were filed. Pooja Nair, who represents food and beverage companies with the law firm Ervin Cohen and Jessup, said that such lawsuits started hitting federal courts a few years ago. Some of the first were false advertising claims against snack chip makers for not completely filling the bags. Most of those were **dismissed**, she said.

Companies often settle cases before a **lawsuit** is filed instead of spending the time and money fighting it in court, Nair said. Earlier this summer, A&W and Keurig Dr Pepper agreed to pay \$15 million to settle claims they had **deceived** customers with the label, "Made with aged vanilla" on beverage cans which actually used **synthetic** flavoring. Nair said it's unclear how the Burger King case will turn out. Generally, she said, cases against fast food giants have been hard to win. Unlike boxes of cereal or sodas, every sandwich is different, and some might look more like the images on menu boards than others.

The Burger King case and others could cause companies to be more careful with their ads, said Jeff Galak, from Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business. He added that companies might need to be more **transparent** about the images they use in their ads. Galak also suggested that companies could use more realistic images in their ads to avoid misleading customers. The study of false advertising is a growing area of law, and it's important for consumers to be aware of their rights. False advertising can lead to financial loss and disappointment, and it's important for companies to be held **accountable** for their actions.

In conclusion, false advertising is a growing problem in the food and beverage industry. Consumers are becoming more aware of their rights and are taking action against companies that deceive them. While it's unclear how the Burger King case will turn out, it could cause companies to be more careful with their ads. Companies might need to be more transparent about the images they use in their ads, and they could use more realistic images to avoid misleading customers. It's important for consumers to be aware of their rights and to take action against false advertising.

## DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever been deceived by a food advertisement? What happened?
2. Do you think food advertisements should be more transparent about the images they use?
3. What other types of products do you think are prone to false advertising?
4. Do you think false advertising is a serious problem? Why or why not?
5. What can consumers do to protect themselves from false advertising?
6. Do you think companies should be held accountable for false advertising? Why or why not?
7. What other ways can companies advertise their products besides using images?

8. Do you think companies should be required to use realistic images in their ads? Why or why not?
9. What other types of legal action can consumers take against companies that deceive them?
10. Do you think false advertising is more prevalent now than it was in the past? Why or why not?