Advertisers often exploit conversational rules by providing uninformative facts, by making claims for which they lack appropriate evidence, or by manipulating language in a way that falsely suggests they are following such rules (Alba and Hutchinson 1991). Harris (1977, 1983, 1989) explored pragmatic implications in the context of advertising, and proposed a typology of explicit advertising claims likely to lead to misleading inferences. One set of constructions that Harris identified is elliptical comparative phrases. These are claims that include adjectives without referent, such as "Powderpower cleanser cleans better." The statement leaves the consumer to infer the source of the comparison, usually assumed to be all competitors. Moreover, the statement cannot be disputed as long as anything true can be used to complete the comparison.

Phrases that include hedges can also mislead. Words such as may or could serve to weaken the force of the statement but do not deny its content. For instance, the statement "Scrubble Shampoo may help get rid of all dandruff symptoms" can be interpreted by consumers as will get rid of dandruff. While the former statement may be true, the interpretation falsely suggests the shampoo cures dandruff (Harris 1989). Two other examples featured in Harris' typology are claims that juxtapose imperative phrases to imply causation (e.g., "Help your child excel in school. Buy XYZ home computer"), and claims that ask negative questions to imply affirmative false answers (e.g., "Isn't quality the most important thing when buying aspirin?") (Harris 1977).

Studies show that subjects recall and believe pragmatically implied claims as if they had been explicitly stated (Harris 1974; Brewer 1977; Harris 1977; Harris and Monaco 1978; Searlman and Carter 1988). This occurred regardless of consumers’