

NPFL063 - Implicature in Adverts

Andrew McIsaac



DFS Sales: There are adverts all year round in the UK about sales at DFS - a sofa retailer. It is implied that everything will be discounted at a special limited time rate. But it is never specified exactly what is on sale, so very often only a small section of their stock is on sale, while the rest is full price. And the sales are so often that if you wait a bit of time for what you want to buy (e.g. a specific sofa) it will inevitably go on sale soon. Further, according to Panorama (a BBC investigative TV programme) there are only 5 days a year when there is not a sale.



Carlsberg - “Probably the best beer in the world.” Implicature would be that even if it is not the best in the world, it is right up there as one of the top. But there is no backing to that claim, because it is a very general statement that has no way of being tested. What is ‘probably the best’ about it? The taste? The smell? The cost? Because it is not specified, it cannot be proved wrong.



9 out of 10 dentists recommend this brand of toothpaste. The assumption is that in a trial of various kinds of competing toothpastes, 90% of dentists chose the particular brand (e.g. Sensodyne). But we don't know what question has been asked. If the question is whether a dentist recommends Sensodyne toothpaste over no toothpaste, it seems obvious that they would. But it could still not be the best toothpaste available in their opinion.

It could also be that the brand hires dentists to support their product, making a recommendation in the interest of the dentist. No information is given about the sample size as well, so the reliability of the study cannot be tested.