

Insights: Alerts

Are Your Ads Sending the Wrong Message? Lessons from Total Wireless

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The National Advertising Division (“NAD”) recently took Total Wireless, a prepaid brand under Verizon, to task for a TV commercial that blurred the lines between two separate offers, leaving consumers potentially confused.

The fast-paced, 30-second ad promoted two enticing deals: **four lines of wireless service for \$25 per month** and **up to four free 5G phones**. The challenger argued that the offers seemed like part of a single package, especially with audio narration using phrases like “and to top it all off,” implying the free phones were included with the \$25 plan. However, the two deals required entirely different service plans and were not available together. The **\$25 rate** was tied to the **Total Base 5G Unlimited Plan**, but the free phones were only available with the pricier **Total 5G+ Unlimited Plan**.

While Total Wireless attempted to clarify this distinction with visual disclosures and sub-headlines, NAD found the audio narration misleading and concluded that the disclosures were insufficient to eliminate consumer confusion. NAD recommended that Total Wireless revise its advertising to clearly separate the offers and ensure consumers understand that the benefits depend on the plan selected.

This case underscores the importance of transparency and clarity in advertising, and the difference just a few words can make. For advertisers aiming to promote multiple offers in a single campaign, NAD's findings provide valuable lessons:

- **Clearly Separate Offers in Audio and Visuals:** Avoid misleading phrases like “to top it all off” that could create the impression of a bundled deal where one does not exist. Ensure the ad's narration and visuals clearly distinguish the terms and conditions of each offer.
- **Make Disclosures Clear and Conspicuous:** Disclosures should reinforce the ad's main message, not contradict it. They must be prominent, easy to read, and understandable to the average consumer.
- **Consider the Overall Consumer Impression:** NAD evaluates the ad's audio, visuals, pacing, and overall impression. Advertisers must anticipate how a reasonable consumer might interpret the advertisement as a whole.

While this decision may not have been favorable for Total Wireless, it serves as a critical reminder to advertisers across industries: clear messaging and proper delineation of offers are essential to maintaining consumer trust and avoiding scrutiny under NAD's oversight.

If you have any questions or concerns about advertising challenges at the NAD, or any advertising claims, please feel free to contact us. [Kilpatrick's Advertising and Marketing team](#)

Related People



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