

# next tuesday afternoon

april 1, 2008

A recent commercial from Wal-Mart shows a family taking off on a long awaited vacation. Another shows a father and son preparing to buy a used car. In both, Wal-Mart shopping bags are visible in their cars.

Wal-Mart, the ads claim, saves the average family \$2,500 a year. The implication seems clear: shop at Wal-Mart, save money, and you can buy things you normally couldn't afford.

But it turns out you save \$2,500 even if you never step foot inside a Wal-Mart.

The figure represents the company's calculation of its overall impact on an American household, not the average savings for Wal-Mart shoppers, and this has led the influential National Advertising Division of the Council of Better Business Bureaus to recommend that the campaign be fixed or halted.

Yesterday, they announced its finding that the "implied claim" in the ads — that families shopping at Wal-Mart will save \$2,500 a year more than those that shop at other big stores — is misleading. It is a message "for which the advertiser provided no support and, in fact, conceded that there was none," the group says.

The claim of saving \$2,500 dates to 2005, when Wal-Mart, under mounting criticism from unions and elected leaders over its business practices, commissioned a study of its economic impact on Americans. An outside firm, paid by Wal-Mart, found that the company's emphasis on low prices led to a 3 percent decline in overall consumer prices. That translated into \$287 billion in savings in 2006, or \$2,500 a household, whether a family shops at Wal-Mart or a competitor, according to the study.

While the watchdog group had no gripe with the "express claim" of the ad, that it saves families \$2,500 a year, they found that the ads — which imply that savings from Wal-Mart allowed the families to take a vacation and buy a car — could lead consumers "to quite reasonably take away the message that families that shop at Wal-Mart will save \$2,500 per year more than families that shop at other stores."

Wal-Mart said it was "surprised" by that inference. "It was not the intended message, nor was it a reasonable interpretation," it responded. Hmmm. No April Fool's here.

I'm Lisa Davis. Let me know if I can help you in any way, please feel free to visit at [OneAlliance.com](http://OneAlliance.com) and I'll be back next Tuesday afternoon.

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