



May 23, 2016

VIA OVERNIGHT MAIL AND EMAIL

Commissioner Jonathan A. Harris
Lila M. McKinley, Staff Attorney
Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106



Re: Deceptive marketing used by Connecticut liquor stores

Dear Commissioner Harris and Ms. McKinley:

I write to inform you of the findings of a recent Truth in Advertising (“TINA.org”) investigation of marketing practices used by liquor stores in Connecticut. Specifically, TINA.org visited 30 liquor stores in various parts of the state at random and found that the vast majority – 26 out of the 30 visited – deceptively display signs that promote high wine ratings and other favorable characteristics, while the actual wines being sold in conjunction with the signs are different vintages and therefore either do not have the same rating or do not have a rating at all.

Photographs showing an example obtained from each of the 26 stores is available on our website at <https://www.truthinadvertising.org/wine-stores-ratings-database/>.

As these stores must know, the quality of wine can differ significantly with each vintage and consumers rely on ratings and descriptions from wine critics to help them make informed purchasing decisions. There can be no question that the marketing practice explained above is deceptive and lures consumers into buying a wine that is different from what they believe they are purchasing.

As a result of our findings, we sent warning letters to each of the 26 stores we visited that employed this tactic and urged each of them to remove the deceptive signs immediately. Even if these 26 stores eventually comply, however, TINA.org’s findings – based on a sampling – clearly suggest that this deceptive marketing tactic is widespread and must be addressed on a state-wide basis.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Smith". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Laura Smith, Esq.
Legal Director
Truth in Advertising, Inc.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "B-Patten". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Bonnie Patten, Esq.
Executive Director
Truth in Advertising, Inc.