such claims is predicted to lead to false attribute inferences and to inaccurate consumer perceptions of the comparison brands.

Study one investigates comparative claims that differ in specificity. A second study investigates combined comparatives of different directions (parity and superiority) and interpretive biases when these target different competitors.

Study one did not provide support for the hypothesized effects when the combined comparative consisted of puffery and negated parity claims. A majority of subjects recalled that the sponsor was superior to the parity brand on the depicted attribute, and very few subjects reported a parity comparison between the sponsor and the parity brand. However, there were no statistically significant differences due to the advertising copy manipulations.

Results from the second study were supportive of the hypothesized effects. There were statistically significant effects of the advertising copy manipulation on subjects’ recall of sponsor superiority over the parity brand. Significantly more subjects falsely recalled the sponsor was superior on the depicted attribute when the parity claims were in negated parity form than when they were linguistically simplified. Moreover, the number of subjects who said the sponsor was superior over the parity brand increased with delay only in the negated parity condition. When the parity claim was simplified, significantly fewer subjects reported sponsor superiority. The ability of the simplified claims to convey the parity comparison persisted over time.