
Finally, research suggests that consumers have difficulty processing comparative claims. For example, consumers have to devote extra effort to avoid confusing the sponsor with the comparison brand (Goodwin and Etgar 1980; Pechmann and Stewart 1990). The potential for confusion is greater with combined-comparative claims given the additional brand and attribute information consumers must process. Thus, when the format or language of comparative ads encourages inferences about the sponsor that cannot be objectively supported, combined comparatives may not only confuse but also mislead consumers and harm competitors. (Snyder 1989; Pechmann and Stewart 1990; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1991; Pechmann 1996).

Summary

As previously discussed, combined comparatives may position the sponsor brand on par with the competition or as significantly superior. Moreover, such claims may be based on specific attribute information or may be made in the form of general superiority or evaluative statements, even puffery (Pride, Lamb and Pletcher 1979; Neese and Taylor 1994; McDougall 1976; Droge and Darmon 1987; see also Alba, Marmorstein and Chattopadhyay 1992). When consumers are faced with such complex advertisements, they must devote additional cognitive resources to encode and store information, especially when claims are made against various brands.

---

6 In fact, the NAD/NARB recommended a change in the placement of the comparative claims in the Aquafresh advertisement for that reason.