addressed the processing and integration of several combined comparative claims featured in a single ad. The purpose of this dissertation is to identify instances when processing of combined comparative claims leads to 1) biasing of claim interpretation as a result of the linguistic construction of one of the claims; 2) inferences about attributes or benefits that the advertiser cannot substantiate; 3) false or inaccurate consumer perceptions of comparison brand or brands.

The following chapter provides background on legal issues on deceptive advertising as they pertain to federal regulation, private litigation, and industry self-regulation. Subsequent chapters will review consumer research on implied claims, and behavioral concepts relevant to the processing of combined comparatives. In those sections it is argued that the linguistic format of combined comparative claims biases consumer interpretation of advertising information to the detriment of competitors and consumers. The empirical work follows.

Study one investigates comparative claims that differ in specificity, and the interpretive biases that result when these are featured in a single ad. A second study investigates combined comparatives of different directions (parity and superiority) and interpretive biases when these target different competitors in a single ad. The final chapter discusses the implications of the results and limitations of the studies, suggesting avenues for future investigations.