CHAPTER 6
PROCESSING OF COMBINED COMPARATIVE CLAIMS
AND FRAMING EFFECTS

While the effectiveness of an advertisement depends on the presentation and strength of its claims, persuasion is not always achieved by providing new information to consumers. Advertisers also rely on the audience’s prior knowledge to frame their interpretation of a message and influence their beliefs (Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997). By activating specific concepts in memory, advertisers create meaningful associations between the advertising claims and pre-existing knowledge. Such cognitions guide the organization and integration of the information presented. They suggest the relationships by which claims will be grouped into larger units and determine how related items will be categorized (Ellis and Hunt 1983; Bransford and Franks 1971; Sulin and Dooling 1974; Bransford, Barclay and Franks 1972).

As previously discussed, there is cause for concern regarding the deceptive potential of some combined comparative claims. In this chapter it will be argued that consumers are misled when framing effects bias the interpretation of comparative claims. As a result such claims falsely suggest attributes and benefits that favor the sponsor at the expense of competing brands featured in the ad.