

COMPARATIVE ADS AND THEIR AFFECTIVE CONSEQUENCES:
THE EFFECT OF SCHADENFREUDE ON PURCHASE LIKELIHOOD
AND ATTITUDES

by

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Abstract

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by

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Comparative ads, in which a brand compares itself to a competitor brand, are frequently used in print and television media. When marketers compare their brands to others, they often show comical situations in which misfortunes befall those consumers who are using competitors' brands instead of theirs. Extant research has examined the impact of comparative ads without taking consumers' affective reactions into account, even though persuasive messages have been shown to elicit affective reactions that may mediate consumers' attitudes and behaviors. In the current research, I examine "schadenfreude," defined as the pleasure at the misfortunes of others, as an incidental emotional response elicited by comparative ad appeals. Across a series of studies, I show that more competitive individuals are likely to experience greater levels of incidental schadenfreude when they are exposed to comparative ads. More importantly, I examine the downstream implications of invoking schadenfreude and show that more competitive individuals are more likely to buy the advertised product when a higher-status brand uses comparative ads, since these ads make them experience greater levels of incidental schadenfreude.

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INTRODUCTION

Even though we often feel happy for others' successes, victories, and good fortune, sometimes we find ourselves pleased with their failures and misfortunes. When others' troubles make us smile, it means that we feel pleased with their hardships and the word "schadenfreude" describes this malicious pleasure (Heider 1958). In my dissertation, I argue that marketers knowingly or unknowingly elicit schadenfreude in their communication strategies, especially in comparative advertisements. Comparative ads, in which marketers "identify their competitors directly or by clear implication," are becoming more and more popular in media (Roggeveen, Grewal and Gotlieb 2006). Frequently, when marketers compare their brands to others, they show comical situations in which misfortunes befall those consumers who are using competitors' brands instead of theirs. Hence they expect their consumers not to make the same mistake as the unfortunate person shown in the ad, and to choose the advertised brand instead. For instance, recent AT&T commercials present amusing situations in which misfortunes befall those who do not use the AT&T service. In their "Exploding Turkey" commercial, we see a house destroyed by an exploding deep-fried turkey since the owner of the house, who did not have AT&T service, could not be reached on time to be notified of the danger. In addition, T-Mobile advertises its "myTouch 4G" phones by jokingly illustrating how painful it is for Apple's iPhone to get the 3G service from AT&T in return for higher fees. Moreover, Apple advertises its Mac computers by showing how a PC freezes frequently and has to be restarted.

As the examples illustrate, a large number of marketers use comparative ads hoping that consumers will like them, and hence buy the advertised brands. In the current research, I suggest that when marketers show unfortunate events happening because of using a competitor's product, they may incidentally invoke "schadenfreude," or a malicious pleasure at the misfortunes of others, which in turn will impact consumers' purchase intentions and attitudes. However, although schadenfreude is often discussed in the press and has recently received increased attention in psychology and organizational behavior literature, it has received surprisingly little attention in the marketing literature. Little work has been done in terms of examining the consequences of inducing this malicious pleasure in advertisements, and questions such as "How do consumers respond to comparative ads depicting schadenfreude?" and "Does schadenfreude impact consumers' purchase intentions, and if so, under which conditions?" have remained unanswered. Moreover, even though marketers often try to induce positive or negative affect in their advertisements on purpose, I suggest that incidental emotions such as schadenfreude may also be evoked in ads unintentionally. Schadenfreude can be incidentally and naturally evoked in comparative ads just because the advertiser brand compares itself to its competitor by depicting its failure.

On the other hand, the psychology literature has investigated the antecedents of schadenfreude such as envy (Smith et al. 1996), dislike (Hareli and Weiner 2002), resentment (Feather and Nairn 2005), and deservingness (van Dijk et al. 2005). However, this type of research has mostly used a uniform approach without taking individual differences into account, although extant research has emphasized the impact of personality types on differential levels of emotions (Argyle and Lu 1990, Tangney 1990,

Gross and John 2003). Thus, the impact of individual differences on schadenfreude has not been explored and research questions such as “Who is more likely to feel schadenfreude and under which conditions?” are unexamined.

The purpose of the current research is therefore to answer all these questions and, especially, to investigate the impact of incidentally evoking schadenfreude on consumers’ attitudes and purchase likelihood. Specifically, I examine schadenfreude as an incidental emotional response elicited by comparative ad appeals. Schadenfreude appears particularly relevant in comparative advertisements because these ads often depict the unfortunate failures of competitors’ products.

In order to systematically examine the effects, I start with determining which individuals are likely to feel more schadenfreude and the conditions under which they feel this way. I suggest that the impact of schadenfreude may not be uniform for everyone and that an individual’s level of competitiveness is an important antecedent of incidental schadenfreude. Across a series of studies, I show that since they enjoy competitive situations, more competitive individuals are likely to feel greater levels of incidental schadenfreude when this malicious pleasure is incidentally elicited in comparative versus noncomparative ads. In addition, I suggest that brand status plays an important role, such that higher-status (rather than lower-status) brands invoke greater levels of incidental schadenfreude when they use comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads. More importantly, I explore the downstream implications of incidental schadenfreude in comparative ads and investigate whether feeling this malicious pleasure leads to greater purchase likelihood of the advertised product. The results show that more competitive individuals are more likely to buy the advertised product when a higher-status brand uses comparative (vs.

noncomparative ads), since these ads make them experience greater levels of incidental schadenfreude. On the other hand, purchase likelihood of less competitive individuals does not significantly differ according to ad type of the higher-status brand.

I test my hypotheses in four studies by using storyboards prepared for three different product categories, digital cameras, cars, and deodorants, to increase the robustness of the effects. In addition, while I measure the level of competitiveness of the participants in the first three studies, I manipulate competitiveness in the last study in order to expand the generalizability of the results. I establish that more competitive individuals are likely to experience greater levels of incidental schadenfreude when they are exposed to comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads in study 1. I build on these findings by adding brand status as a boundary condition in study 2. Study 3 examines the impact of inducing schadenfreude in comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads on attitudes and purchase intentions. Finally, study 4 introduces “reassurance” as a way to moderate the impact of schadenfreude on purchase intentions.

In the next sections, I review the relevant literature on comparative ads, schadenfreude, and competitiveness, followed by my hypotheses and studies testing these hypotheses. I conclude with a discussion of my findings as well as a summary of my future research on schadenfreude.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Comparative Ads

Frequently, brands try to differentiate themselves from their competitors by using comparative ads as traditional tactics to convince their consumers. Advertisers state that their product is better than the competitor's product or even better than any other product in the market and expect to attract more consumers. For instance, many of us are familiar with Subway's ads targeting McDonald's' high calorie-products. Their suggestion is clear: their food has less fat than McDonald's' offers, so consumers should prefer Subway. Moreover, comparative claims are increasingly used by industry giants such as Pizza Hut, Diet Pepsi and Apple (McArthur and Cuneo 2007) and are estimated to account for almost 80% of television commercials (Pechmann and Steward 1990).

With the increasing number of comparative ads in print and television media, extant research has examined the effects of these comparative claims on consumers' evaluations and purchase intentions. Early research on the effectiveness of comparative ads has presented mixed results. While one set of findings shows that comparative ads are no more effective than noncomparative ads, another set highlights their positive impact on consumer responses (Rogers and Williams 1989). Gotlieb and Sarel (1991) have explained the inconsistent results by the lack of research on source credibility. They have demonstrated that comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads have a more positive impact on purchase intentions when the source (e.g. a salesman or an expert) was

considered to be more (vs. less) credible. On the other hand, Donthu (1992) has suggested that the effectiveness of comparative ads (over noncomparative ads) depends on the intensity of the comparative claims such that recall of the ad increases as the intensity of the comparison increases. In addition, attitudes toward the ad “increase up to a certain point and then start to drop when the comparative ad becomes very intense.” In their meta-analysis, Grewal et al. (1997) have reconciled the mixed results of the extant research and found that comparative ads are more effective than noncomparative ads in terms of brand awareness, attitudes, and purchase intentions. Specifically, they show that comparative (vs. noncomparative) claims generally elicit more attention, greater brand and message awareness, increased information processing, more favorable brand attitudes, and increased purchase intentions. However, their results also indicate that comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads may lead consumers to question the credibility of the source, which may, in turn, negatively impact consumers’ attitudes toward the ad.

Moreover, research has investigated the role of individual differences on the impact of comparative ads. For instance, Thompson and Hamilton (2006) have suggested that consumers’ mode of information processing impacts the effectiveness of comparative ads. Specifically, they argue that comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads are more persuasive when consumers use analytical (vs. imagery) processing. In addition, Jain et al. (2007) have examined consumers’ promotion versus prevention focus as a moderator of the impact of comparative ads on brand attitudes. They have suggested that promotion (vs. prevention) focused consumers are likely to evaluate the advertised brand more favorably if the ad uses a positive (vs. negative) frame in which the advertised brand is positioned as better than the comparison brand (vs. the comparison brand

positioned as worse than the advertised brand). Polyorat and Alden (2005), on the other hand, have examined the moderating effects of need-for-cognition, defined as “the tendency for an individual to engage in and enjoy effortful thinking” (Cacioppo and Petty 1982) on brand attitudes and purchase intentions. They have demonstrated that consumers with higher need-for-cognition have more positive attitudes toward the brand and stronger purchase intentions when comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads are used. However, attitudes and purchase intentions of consumers with lower need-for-cognition are moderated by their self-construal.

Overall, extant research has examined the effectiveness of comparative ads by investigating the moderating impact of advertisement-related variables such as intensity of comparative ads (Donthu 1992), comparative valence of framing (Jain et al. 2007), credibility (Gotlieb and Sarel 1991), as well as consumer-related variables such as involvement and familiarity (Dasgupta and Donthu 1993), cognitive ability (Tashchian and Slama 1984), need-for-cognition (Polyorat and Alden 2005) and information processing (Thompson and Hamilton 2006). Surprisingly, research to date has examined the impact of comparative ad appeals without taking consumers’ affective reactions into account. However, persuasive messages used in advertisements have been shown to elicit affective reactions that may mediate consumers’ attitudes and behaviors (Holbrook and Batra 1987) and emotions are considered to be an important factor of human behavior by marketing and advertising literature (Poels and Dewitte 2006). Particularly, emotional reactions are considered to “function as the gatekeeper for behavioral reactions” (Poels and Dewitte 2006) and some researchers have suggested that emotions dominate cognition, as they are the most crucial factor in the advertising process

(Ambler and Burne 1999, Hall 2002). Therefore, like any other ads, comparative advertisements may result in different emotional responses and these feelings may, in turn, lead to differential behaviors and attitudes toward the brands. Thus, more research is needed to understand affective reactions that comparative ads invoke in consumers. Since marketers frequently emphasize the inferiority of competitors' products by showing their failures in comparative ads, these advertisements are likely to evoke a malicious pleasure because consumers often cannot resist smiling at the misfortunes shown.

The Concept of Schadenfreude

Even though we should feel sad and show sympathy when misfortunes befall others, we may also feel pleased with their misfortunes, as in the case of "schadenfreude" (Heider 1958). Schadenfreude is a borrowed word from German and does not have a direct translation in English, but that does not stop us from feeling happy when misfortunes befall others. To have a better idea about this socially reprehensible emotion (Feather and Sherman 2002) imagine that you are driving on the highway. All of a sudden, you see a car going really fast and cutting the others off. How would you feel about this situation? Next, suppose that you see the same car five minutes later, pulled over and getting a ticket. How would you feel now? A bit pleased, right? So, as the example illustrates, sometimes it is others' troubles rather than their good fortune that delight us and schadenfreude may be invoked in many situations such as when driving, working, competing with others, etc.

As explained by Leach et al. (2003), the key notion about schadenfreude is that it is passive in the sense that it implies the “pleasure at misfortune of others” and is distinct from “pleasure at making others suffer.” The early studies on schadenfreude date back to Feather (1989), who examined the role of deservingness in schadenfreude. Participants read about a student whose grades were superior (vs. average) relative to others and they indicated that they would be more pleased if the superior student (who was more resented) was caught cheating rather than the average student. Therefore, Feather (1989) has shown that the malicious pleasure is correlated with how deserved the setback is. Moreover, Feather (1999) presented participants with hypothetical scenarios in which the degree of effort by a high (vs. low) achieving student when preparing for exams was manipulated. Participants indicated that success following low effort was less deserved when compared to success following high effort. Hence their level of schadenfreude increased when the misfortune was more deserved. In addition, in their studies van Dijk et al. (2005) investigated the link between schadenfreude and deservingness by manipulating the level of deservingness of a misfortune. Schadenfreude was measured by asking participants to what extent they agreed with statements assessing this malicious pleasure (e.g., I enjoy what happened to [. . .], I couldn't resist a little smile, and I feel schadenfreude). Specifically, participants of these studies reported feeling more schadenfreude when misfortunes befell a student who was caught stealing a laptop rather than when a student was wrongly accused of stealing a laptop. Therefore, their results show that the more others are responsible for their misfortune, the more this misfortune is seen as deserved, which in turn evokes more schadenfreude.

Hareli and Weiner (2002), on the other hand, have argued that other-directed negative emotions may also lead to schadenfreude. In their study, they measured participants' attitudes and emotions toward a target person who suffered a setback. Participants were also asked to indicate to what extent they perceived the target person's character as negative. The results demonstrated that other-directed negative emotions (e.g. dislike) contributed significantly to schadenfreude. In addition, Smith et al. (1996) have found that participants felt significantly more schadenfreude when an academically superior versus an average student was caught stealing amphetamines (even when controlling for subjects' level of self-esteem and liking for the target student). The results affirmed that the differences in schadenfreude were driven by levels of both chronic envy and temporarily-induced envy.

On the contrary, Feather and Sherman (2002) have distinguished between envy and resentment and concluded that schadenfreude is more strongly linked to resentment. They have proposed that envy is conceptually different from resentment in that, contrary to resentment, envy can occur without a sense of injustice. They argue that pleasure in another's misfortune is based on resentment about undeserved outcomes, rather than envy. Participants were asked to indicate how they would feel when a high achieving (vs. an average achieving) student, who worked a lot (high-effort) versus who did not work much (low effort), failed the final exams because of his/her actions (versus because the exams were very difficult). The results showed that resentment was related to effort and perceived deservingness, whereas envy was related to differences in achievement status. More importantly, their results affirmed that resentment predicts schadenfreude, whereas envy does not.

van Dijk et al. (2006) have reconciled the opposing findings about the impact of envy and resentment on schadenfreude. They have shown that envy predicts schadenfreude when there is a similarity between the target of the schadenfreude and the envying person. However, when there is relatively high dissimilarity, they conclude that it is resentment, rather than envy, that drives schadenfreude. In their studies, they presented participants with interviews about a student's (male versus female) academic achievements (high versus average) in university. Then, participants were shown a second interview in which they were informed about a recent setback that the target student had suffered. Supporting their hypotheses, the results showed that envy predicted schadenfreude when participants were informed about the misfortune of the same gender target.

Moreover, schadenfreude has also been studied as an intergroup emotion. Leach et al. (2003) found occurrences of inter-group schadenfreude in Dutch soccer fans after Germany unexpectedly lost to Croatia in the quarterfinals, and this was especially the case for those Dutch fans who were more (vs. less) interested in soccer. They measured schadenfreude by asking participants how they felt about the loser of the relevant matches (leedvermaak [schadenfreude], blij [happy], and three synonyms of satisfied: vergenoegd, voldoening, and genoegdoening) and showed that more (vs. less) interested Dutch fans were more pleased with Germany's loss. Also, Leach and Spears (2008) argued that schadenfreude toward an out-group is more related to the "inferiority of the in-group" in the same domain rather than other self-focused explanations. In addition, Leach and Spears (2009) have found that individuals who were outshone (e.g. the Dutch) by a second party (e.g. the Dutch were defeated by Italy in international football) tended

to feel more schadenfreude when this second group suffered a misfortune (e.g. Italian failure against France). The results affirmed that dejection at the in-group's defeat was a significant predictor of schadenfreude.

Lastly, schadenfreude has even been examined in political context. Combs et al. (2009) have shown that individuals may feel schadenfreude in response to negative events happening in the competitive politics arena. Particularly, they have provided evidence that party affiliation and party identifications tend to predict to what degree negative events can invoke schadenfreude. In one of their studies, conducted two months before the U.S. Presidential Election of 2004, participants were asked to evaluate negative and humorous newspaper articles related to Presidential candidates. The results showed that even though misfortunes explained in the articles had negative consequences for everyone (e.g. an economic downturn), those who benefited from the misfortune (e.g. Democrats) felt more schadenfreude than those who did not benefit from it (e.g. Republicans). This effect was particularly significant for individuals who strongly identified with their party.

Overall, the antecedents of this malicious pleasure, such as deservingness, envy, resentment, have been largely examined in psychology literature. However, schadenfreude has received little attention in the marketing literature. This is particularly surprising considering the potential of comparative ads to induce schadenfreude and the prevalence of comparative ads used by marketers. Therefore, one of the purposes of this research is to examine schadenfreude in a marketing context, especially in case of comparative advertising where it is most likely to be evoked.

Competitiveness and Schadenfreude

Although, extant research has examined some of the antecedents of schadenfreude, not many researchers have looked at the impact of individual differences on this malicious pleasure. However, consumers' personality traits may also impact how they perceive misfortunes befalling others. In other words, some individuals may be more likely to rejoice at another's misfortune than others.

Hareli and Weiner (2002) show that pleasure at another's misfortune tends to be greater in competitive situations. Also, Leach et al. (2003) investigate intergroup schadenfreude within the context of international soccer competition. They show that it may be easier to invoke schadenfreude given the legitimate competitive drives in international sports. Given the role of competitive situations in evoking schadenfreude, one can argue that this malicious pleasure may be more likely to be evoked in individuals who chronically focus on winning or being the best (e.g. consumers with greater competitive tendencies). Psychology literature has recognized that individuals may differ in terms of their inclination to compete. Graziano, Hair, and Finch (1997) have suggested that characteristics of individuals may undermine interindividual cooperation because some individuals may "expect social relations to be competitive." Therefore, competitive individuals may be more likely to see others as competitors and may exhibit more competitive behaviors (Kelley and Stahelski 1970). Under these circumstances, individual differences may interact with situational variables and elicit distinct competitive behaviors. Competitiveness is also related to cultural patterns (Triandis 1995). Importantly, relevant to the current research, literature on individualism and

collectivism defines the vertical-individual pattern to be a characteristic of “individuals who often want to become distinguished and acquire status in individual competitions with others” (Triandis and Gelfand 1998, p. 119). Thus, given the proven impact of competitive situations on schadenfreude and individuals’ distinct and chronic inclinations to compete, I argue that individuals’ competitive tendencies may impact how they react to others’ setbacks. Specifically, I examine the moderating effect of competitiveness on the relationship between ad type and schadenfreude. I suggest that more (vs. less) competitive individuals may be more likely to be pleased to see the misfortunes in comparative ads (rather than good fortunes happening in noncomparative ads), since they are more likely to enjoy competition and chronically focus on being better than others (Kramer and Yucel-Aybat 2012). Stated formally,

H1a: More competitive consumers feel more (vs. less) schadenfreude when they are exposed to a comparative (vs. noncomparative) ad.

H1b: More (vs. less) competitive consumers feel more schadenfreude when they are exposed to a comparative ad.

I test hypothesis 1a and hypothesis 1b in my first study.

Brand Status and Competitiveness

Research has shown that more competitive individuals, who are considered to possess a vertical individualist perspective, tend to “distinguish themselves from others

via competition, achievement, and power” (Shavitt et al. 2006, p. 326). Their aim is to improve their individual status and prestige while standing out in the crowd. Shavitt et al. (2006) argue that advertisement content emphasizing hierarchy and status are more relevant for more competitive individuals. Moreover, they are considered to be more likely to “evaluate products based on characteristics reflecting hierarchy and to be persuaded by ads emphasizing status.” This may particularly be the case when more competitive individuals are exposed to ads of higher-status brands which are considered to be more prestigious than lower-status brands (Sundie et al. 2009). Since more competitive individuals consider higher-status products as a way to symbolize hierarchy and prestige, I argue that they may be more likely to experience schadenfreude when a higher-status (vs. lower-status) brand shows the failure of another brand in a comparative ad. When a higher-status brand argues that the competitive brand may fail, it may strengthen its own prestige, something more competitive individuals may be more likely to appreciate. Stated formally,

H2: Brand status moderates the relationship between the ad type, level of competitiveness and schadenfreude such that:

H2a: More competitive consumers feel more schadenfreude when a higher (vs. lower) status brand is advertised by a comparative (vs. noncomparative) ad.

H2b: More (vs. less) competitive consumers feel more schadenfreude when a higher-status brand is advertised by a comparative ad.

I test hypothesis 2a and hypothesis 2b in study 2.

Schadenfreude and Purchase Likelihood

Extant research has examined the antecedents of schadenfreude in many contexts and has shown that schadenfreude is a commonly known emotion (see also Moran and Schweitzer 2008). However, little is known about its consequences. As the examples in the introduction illustrate, schadenfreude may be incidentally evoked in comparative ads and its impact on consumers should be examined in order to assess its effectiveness. Unfortunately, very few researchers have looked at the consequences of feeling schadenfreude. One exception is Sundie and colleagues (2009), who have examined word-of-mouth prompted by schadenfreude, induced by showing a product's failure, aside from personal failures. Their studies show that schadenfreude can increase the spread of negative word-of-mouth and hence negatively affect attitude toward the failed brand when it is invoked after witnessing a prestigious product's failure. Another exception examining the downstream implications of schadenfreude is Kramer, Yucel-Aybat, and Lau-Gesk (2011) who show that individuals are more likely to choose compromise and safe options after experiencing schadenfreude (vs. happiness and vs. sadness). Considering the prevalence of schadenfreude in our daily lives and the limited research examining its consequences, more research is needed to understand the aftermath of this malicious pleasure. Thus, in this research, I aim to contribute to literature by examining the potential consequences of invoking schadenfreude in ads on consumers' responses, especially on their subsequent purchase intentions and attitudes.

Persuasive messages have been shown to elicit affective reactions that may positively impact and mediate consumers' attitudes and behaviors (Holbrook and Batra

1987, Raghunathan and Pham 1999, Andrade 2005, Agrawal, Menon, and Aaker 2007). Since more competitive individuals will be likely to feel more schadenfreude when they are exposed to comparative ads (especially ads of higher-status brands), their heightened levels of this malicious pleasure should be reflected in their purchase intentions and attitudes, such that they will be more likely to buy the advertised product after being exposed to comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads. Stated formally,

H3: Schadenfreude mediates the impact of ad type, level of competitiveness and brand status on purchase likelihood such that:

H3a: More competitive consumers feel higher levels of schadenfreude and are more likely to buy the advertised product when a higher (vs. lower) status brand is advertised by a comparative (noncomparative) ad.

H3b: More (vs. less) competitive consumers feel higher (vs. lower) levels of schadenfreude and are more (vs. less) likely to buy the advertised product when a higher status brand is advertised by a comparative ad.

On the other hand, research has shown that when schadenfreude is invoked, it may heighten the emphasis of unfavorable outcomes (Kramer et al. 2011). In other words, once incidental schadenfreude is experienced, the accessibility of potential misfortunes can increase and this can heighten individuals' anticipation of unfortunate outcomes, such as their own choices turning out badly. This may specifically be the case for less (vs. more) competitive individuals who are less (vs. more) likely to enjoy competitive situations. Since they put less emphasis on competition, when a brand

compares itself to another brand, less competitive individuals may be more likely to focus on the negative scenes, in other words on the misfortunes shown in the comparative ad, rather than the actual comparison between the brands. This negative affect may, in turn, prevent them from purchasing the product. Research has shown that reassurance is an important moderator to reduce negative beliefs (Wu and Wei 2008), decrease risk perceptions (Lion and Meertens 2005), gain confirmation or validation (Madlock and Booth-Butterfield 2012), and reduce anxiety (Spector and Sistrunk 1979). Therefore, I argue that if less competitive individuals can be reassured that misfortunes shown in the ad will not happen to them if they buy the advertised brand, their anticipation of unfortunate outcomes will be reduced. Thus, once reassured against the misfortunes, they will experience greater levels of schadenfreude and will be more likely to buy the advertised product. In other words, I suggest that when less (vs. more) competitive individuals are reassured against misfortunes shown in comparative ads, their purchase intentions will be mediated by schadenfreude as is the case for more competitive individuals without reassurance. Stated formally,

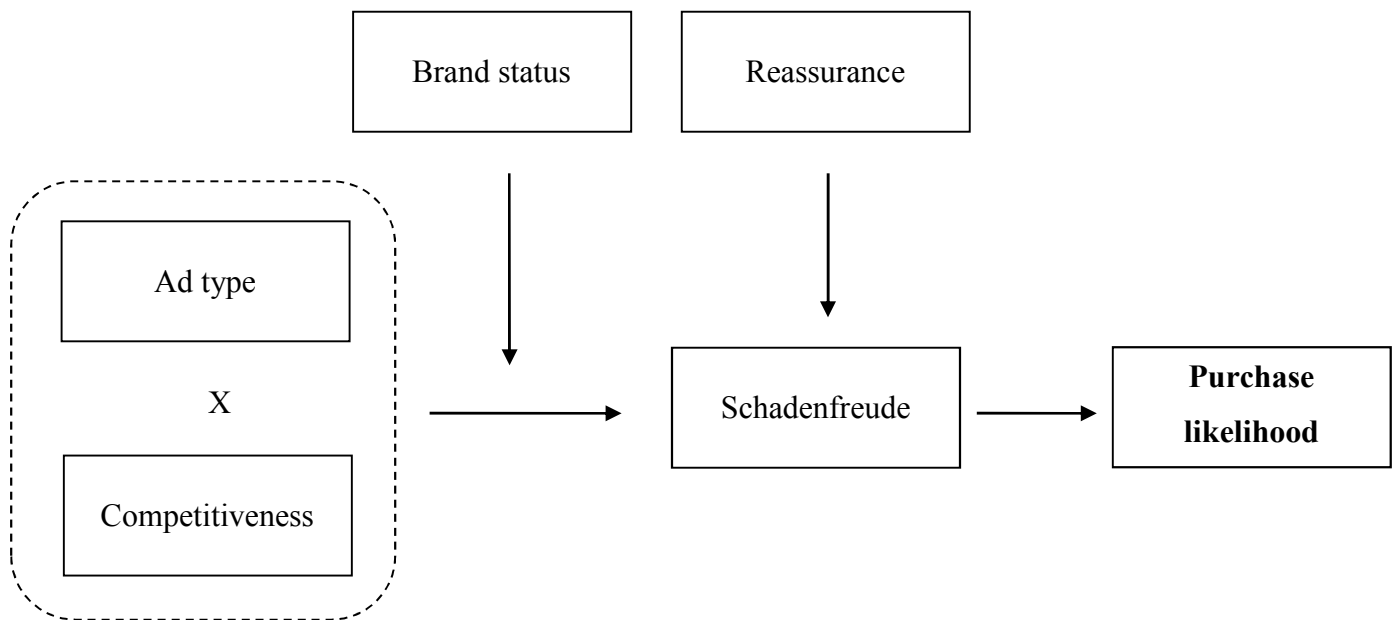
H4a: When a higher status brand reassures consumers in comparative ads, less competitive individuals will be more likely to purchase the advertised product since they will feel higher levels of schadenfreude.

H4b: More competitive individuals will not be impacted by reassurance.

I test hypothesis 3a and hypothesis 3b in study 3, and hypothesis 4a and hypothesis 4b in study 4.

In the following sections, I show that more (vs. less) competitive consumers are likely to feel more schadenfreude when they are exposed to comparative ads (study 1) and this effect is moderated by brand status (study 2). In study 3, I show that heightened levels of schadenfreude increase purchase intentions of more competitive consumers. Moreover, in study 4, I suggest that less competitive consumers are more likely to positively respond to schadenfreude when they are reassured that misfortunes shown in the comparative ads will not happen to them. The model is depicted in figure 1.

Figure 1: A Model of Ad Type and Schadenfreude



STUDY 1: THE INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF AD TYPE AND COMPETITIVENESS ON SCHADENFREUDE

The goal of the first study was to determine the effects of ad type and level of competitiveness on the level of incidental schadenfreude. Specifically, in study 1, I tested hypothesis 1a which suggests that more competitive individuals are likely to feel more schadenfreude when they see a comparative (vs. noncomparative) ad. Also, I aimed to show that, more (vs. less) competitive individuals feel more schadenfreude when they are exposed to a comparative ad (hypothesis 1b). Moreover, I wanted to distinguish schadenfreude from other positive emotions such as happiness and to show that the effect of ad type on schadenfreude is independent of its effect on positive affect.

Pretest

I ran a pretest to make sure that the stimuli used in study 1 served their purpose. Since one of the objectives of the first study was to distinguish between the differential effects of ad types (comparative vs. noncomparative), participants of the pretest were presented with a comparative versus noncomparative ad stimulus according to the condition they were randomly assigned to.

Thirty-six undergraduate students participated to the pretest. On the first page of the questionnaire, all participants were presented with a storyboard of a TV commercial prepared for a disguised company “XYZ.” On the first screen, they read that a college student Pat (a unisex name to control for gender effects) went to an electronics store to

buy a digital camera to be used in the upcoming graduation party. On the second screen, participants in the comparative ad condition were told that, instead of XYZ cameras, Pat chose an “inexpensive, outdated camera” after having an unfriendly conversation with the salesperson. Finally, on the last screen, they were informed that Pat had an ugly, out-of-focus picture from the party and they read: “For special memories, use XYZ camera instead, and remember the best moments with XYZ!” On the other hand, participants in the noncomparative ad condition were told that Pat chose a XYZ camera after having a friendly conversation with salesperson. Then, on the third screen they learned that Pat was holding a beautiful, in-focus picture from the party and they read: “For special memories, use XYZ camera, and remember the best moments with XYZ!” On the second page, all participants were asked to indicate their opinions about the storyboard. Specifically, they indicated to what extent they felt that Brand XYZ was comparing itself to another brand.

The results confirmed that ad type manipulations were effective. Participants in the comparative (vs. noncomparative) ad condition felt more strongly that Brand XYZ was comparing itself to another brand ($M_{\text{comparative}} = 4.33$, $M_{\text{noncomparative}} = 2.83$, $F(1, 34) = 7.135$, $p = .01$). Since the results of the pretest revealed that ad type manipulations were working effectively, I used the same stimuli in study 1.

Method

Participants and Design. One hundred eighty undergraduate students from a large eastern university participated to study 1 in return for partial course credit. The study had

a one-factor (ad type: comparative vs. noncomparative) between-subject design. Ad type was manipulated by showing participants either the comparative ad used in the pretest, in which the advertised brand was compared to another brand, or the noncomparative ad of the pretest which presented the advertised product without any comparison. Participants' competitiveness level was measured to examine the interactive effects of ad type and competitiveness on the level of schadenfreude.

Procedure. On the first page of the questionnaire, as a cover story, participants were told that they would see a storyboard of a TV commercial prepared for a disguised company "XYZ" which may be used in the future. After the instructions, participants were presented with a storyboard with three screens. As in the pretest, they first read that a college student Pat went to an electronics store to buy a digital camera. On the second screen, according to the ad type condition, Pat chose an "inexpensive, outdated camera" after having an unfriendly conversation with the salesperson versus the "XYZ camera" after having a friendly conversation with salesperson. Finally, on the last screen, they were informed that Pat had an ugly, out-of-focus picture versus a beautiful, in-focus picture.

Measures. The key dependent variable was the extent to which participants felt schadenfreude after they read about what happened to Pat as described in the ad. In accordance with previous literature, statements such as "I couldn't resist smiling a little about what happened to Pat," and "Actually I had to laugh a little" assessed participants' level of schadenfreude ($r = .66, p < .01$; van Dijk et al. 2005). Participants were also

asked to indicate to what extent the advertisement made them feel three positive emotions: happy, delighted and content on 7-point scales (not at all(1)/very strongly(7) ($\alpha = .77$; Richins 1997) in order to control for the impact of the positive affect induced by the ads. They were also asked to indicate the extent of their three negative emotions: sad, upset, and discontent, in order not to create any demand effects. If differences in the level of schadenfreude are still significant even when controlling for positive affect, it can be argued that what participants experienced was distinct from just positive emotions. Moreover, participants' competitive tendencies were measured by six items taken from the vertical individualism scale (Singelis et al. 1995) "Competition is the law of nature," "Winning is everything," "I enjoy working in situations involving competition with others," "It is important that I do my job better than others," "Without competition, it is not possible to have a good society," and "When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused" ($\alpha = .80$). Finally, participants' involvement in the study was measured as confound checks on a three-item scale (uninvolved(1)/involved(7), not concentrating(1)/concentrating(7), and not paying attention(1)/paying attention(7), $\alpha = .88$).

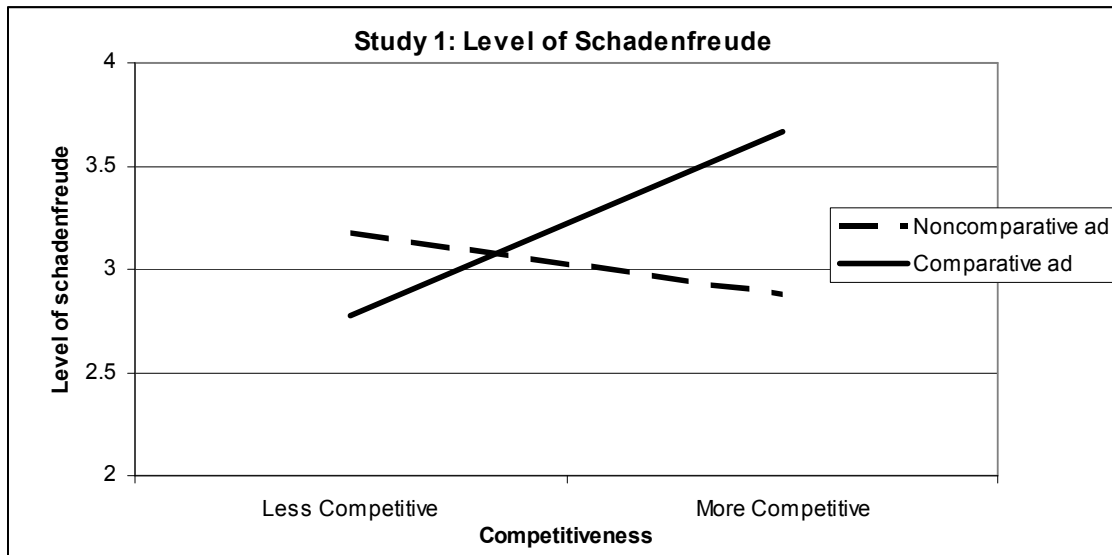
Results

Manipulation Checks. An involvement index was created by averaging participants' responses to the relevant questions. There was no significant difference in participants' involvement in the study between the ad type conditions ($M_{\text{comparative}} = 5.17$, $M_{\text{noncomparative}} = 5.19$, $F < 1$).

Schadenfreude. I predicted an interaction between participants' level of competitiveness and ad type on the level of schadenfreude. Ad type was coded as a dummy variable equivalent to "one" if the participant was randomly assigned to the comparative ad condition and it was coded as "zero" if the participant was in the noncomparative ad condition. In addition, a competitiveness index was created by averaging participants' scores to six questions assessing competitiveness. Following Aiken and West (1991), I mean-centered competitiveness scores and then conducted a regression analysis by including ad type, mean-centered competitiveness and the interaction between ad type and mean-centered competitiveness as independent variables.

The results revealed a significant two-way interaction between ad type and level of competitiveness on schadenfreude ($\beta = .500$, $t = 2.335$, $p < .05$). In order to examine the nature of the interaction, I looked at the differences across ad type conditions at both high and low levels of competitiveness. Since the competitiveness was a continuous variable, I used the spotlight analysis at plus and minus one standard deviation from the mean of competitiveness in order to examine the interaction between competitiveness and ad type (Fitzsimons 2008). The planned contrasts showed that more competitive participants felt significantly higher levels of schadenfreude when they saw a comparative (vs. noncomparative) ad ($M_{\text{comparative}} = 3.67$, $M_{\text{noncomparative}} = 2.87$, $t = 2.128$, $p < .05$) as shown in Figure 1. On the other hand, the planned contrast for less competitive participants did not revealed any significant results. Moreover, as hypothesized, more (vs. less) competitive participants felt higher levels of schadenfreude when they saw a comparative ad ($M_{\text{more_competitive}} = 3.67$, $M_{\text{less_competitive}} = 2.77$, $t = 2.287$, $p < .05$).

Figure 2: The Interactive Effect of Ad Type and Competitiveness on Level of Schadenfreude (Study 1)



Furthermore, a positive emotion index was created by averaging participants' responses indicating their positive feelings to control for positive affect. I added positive affect as a covariate and ran the regression analysis again. The results showed that even when controlling for positive affect, the interactive effect of ad type and level of competitiveness on schadenfreude was still significant ($\beta = .419$, $t = 2.037$, $p < .05$) indicating that the effect on schadenfreude was independent of positive affect evoked by ads.

Discussion

The results of study 1 supported hypothesis 1. As expected, more competitive participants reported that they felt more schadenfreude when they saw a comparative ad,

than less competitive participants. They also indicated that they experienced greater levels of incidental schadenfreude when they were exposed to comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads. Moreover, these differences remained significant even when controlling for positive affect. Therefore, the results suggest that comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads may induce incidental schadenfreude for more competitive consumers such that they are more likely to feel this malicious pleasure when they are exposed to comparative ads depicting failures of competitors' products. In study 2, I introduce brand status as a possible moderator in the model and test which brands are more likely to evoke incidental schadenfreude in their ads.

STUDY 2: THE MODERATING EFFECT OF BRAND STATUS

Study 1 showed that comparative ads lead more (vs. less) competitive individuals to feel higher levels of schadenfreude, than noncomparative ads. Although this study distinguishes between the advertisement types as well as differences in consumers' competitiveness level, it does not provide any information about what type of brands are more likely to evoke schadenfreude when they use comparative ads. Therefore, study 2 introduces a boundary condition by investigating the impact of brand status and it sheds light on the relationship between the interactive effect of ad type, level of competitiveness, and schadenfreude by showing that comparative ads are more likely to invoke schadenfreude when they are used by higher-status brands. Also, instead of using digital cameras as in study 1, this time "cars" are used as product category and Mercedes and Kia as advertisers.

Method

Participants and Design. The study had a 2 (ad type: comparative vs. noncomparative) x 2 (brands status: higher vs. lower) experimental design. One hundred twelve undergraduate students from a large eastern university participated to the study in return for partial course credit. Ad type and brand status were manipulated whereas consumers' competitiveness score was measured. Brand status was manipulated by portraying Mercedes as the advertiser in the higher-status brand condition and Kia in the

lower-status brand condition. Ad type was manipulated by showing comparative versus noncomparative ads to participants. In the noncomparative ad condition, participants just read about the advertised brand (a Mercedes car in the higher-status condition or a Kia car in the lower status condition); whereas in the comparative ad condition, the advertised brand was compared to another brand.

Procedure. As in Study 1, on the first page of the questionnaire, participants were told that they would see a preliminary storyboard that might be used in the future. On the first screen, all participants read that a student named Pat was walking into a car gallery to buy a new car. On the second screen, participants in the comparative ad condition were told that Pat bought a Mercedes (vs. Kia) car instead of a Kia (vs. Mercedes) car. On the third screen, these participants were told that the newly bought car wouldn't start after a loud grinding noise and a toll vehicle was pulling Pat's new car. The storyboard ended with the voice-over saying: "Buy a Kia (vs. Mercedes) instead and don't waste your money!" On the other hand, the second screen for participants in the noncomparative ad condition showed Pat buying the advertised car. Then, on the third screen, participants read that the newly bought car started easily without making any noise and the voice-over said: "Buy a Kia (vs. Mercedes) and don't waste your money!"

Measures. The key dependent variable of study 2 was again the level of incidental schadenfreude participants felt after they read about what happened to Pat. As in study 1, statements such as "I couldn't resist smiling a little about what happened to Pat," and "Actually I had to laugh a little" assessed participants' level of schadenfreude ($r = .65$, p

< .01; van Dijk et al. 2005). Participants' competitive tendencies were measured by six items taken from the vertical individualism scale (Singelis et al. 1995) as in study 1. As part of the manipulation checks for brand status, participants were asked to evaluate Mercedes and Kia brands on a 7-point scale (low status(1)/high status(7)). In addition, participants' familiarities with cars in general as well their enjoyment of the study, involvement, concentration and attention during the study were also measured as additional checks on 7-point scales.

Results

Manipulation and Other Checks. In order to check for ad type manipulations, I ran a pretest for study 2 as well. This time 39 undergraduate students participated to the pretest. Participants in the comparative (vs. noncomparative) ad condition were presented with the comparative (vs. noncomparative) stimuli and were asked to evaluate the ad. The extent to which they felt that Kia/Mercedes was comparing itself to another brand was assessed as in study 1. The results showed that participants in the comparative ad condition felt that the ad was more comparative than those in the noncomparative ad condition, thereby supporting the effectiveness of ad type manipulations ($M_{\text{comparative}} = 6.47$, $M_{\text{noncomparative}} = 2.45$, $F(1, 37) = 55.227$, $p < .001$). On the other hand, manipulation checks used in study 2 confirmed that participants evaluated Mercedes as a higher-status brand; whereas they considered Kia as a lower-status brand ($M_{\text{Mercedes}} = 6.21$, $M_{\text{Kia}} = 3.25$, $p < .001$). Also, checks on participants' familiarity with cars in general as well as their enjoyment, involvement, concentration and attention during the study did not

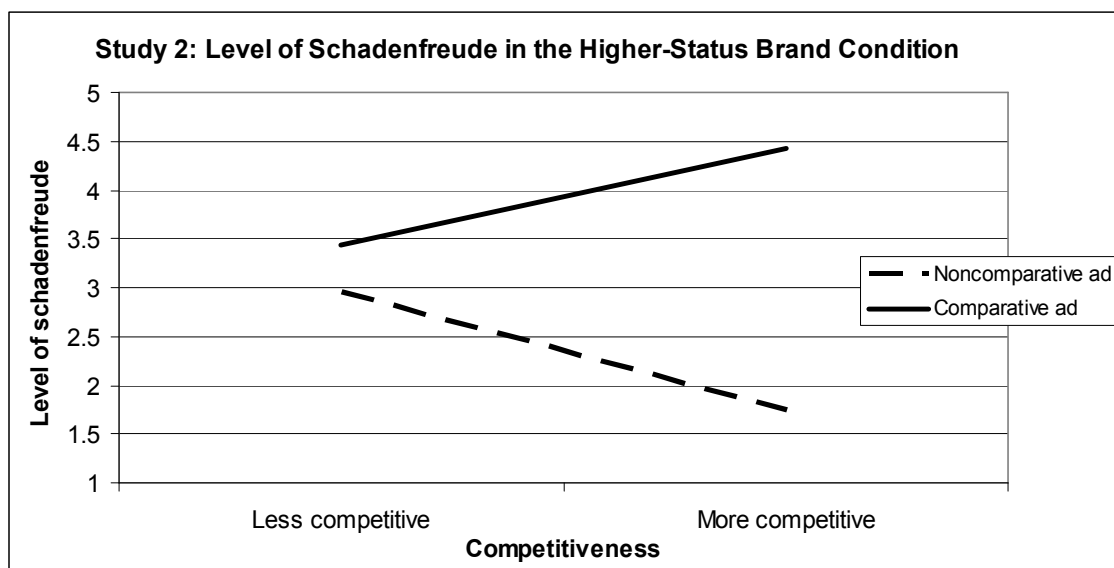
change as a function of the independent variables; therefore they will not be discussed further.

Schadenfreude. I predicted a three-way interaction between participants' level of competitiveness, ad type and brand status on the level of schadenfreude. Ad type was coded as a dummy variable equivalent to "one" if the participant was randomly assigned to the comparative ad condition and it was coded as "zero" if the participant was in the noncomparative ad condition. Also, brand status was coded as "zero" if the advertiser was the lower-status brand (Kia) and it was coded as "one" if the advertiser was the higher-status brand (Mercedes). In addition, a competitiveness index was created by averaging participants' scores to six questions assessing competitiveness as in study 1. Following Aiken and West (1991), I mean-centered competitiveness scores and then conducted a multiple regression analysis by including ad type, brand status, mean-centered competitiveness and all interaction terms among them as independent variables.

The results revealed a marginally significant three-way interaction between the ad type, brand status and competitiveness level on schadenfreude ($\beta = .987$, $t = 1.628$, $p < .10$). The decomposition of the higher order interactions revealed significant results for the higher-status brand. A simple slope analysis indicated that, consistent with the results of study 1, when the advertiser was the higher-status brand, more competitive participants felt significantly higher levels of schadenfreude when they saw a comparative (vs. noncomparative) ad ($M_{\text{comparative}} = 4.44$, $M_{\text{noncomparative}} = 1.73$, $\beta = 2.725$, $t = 4.358$, $p < .01$). However, level of schadenfreude for less competitive participants did not differ according to the ad type in the higher-status condition. In addition, consistent with study

1, more (vs. less) competitive participants felt more schadenfreude when they saw the comparative ad of the higher-status brand (i.e. Mercedes) ($M_{\text{more_competitive}} = 4.44$, $M_{\text{less_competitive}} = 3.43$, $t = 1.7564$, $p = .08$). There were no significant results in the lower-status brand condition ($\beta = 0.281$, $t = 0.674$, $p > .50$).

Figure 3: The Interactive Effect of Ad Type and Competitiveness on Level of Schadenfreude in Higher-Status Condition (Study 2)



Discussion

The results of Study 2 supported hypothesis 2a and hypothesis 2b. As predicted, brand status was the moderator of the relationship between ad type and level of competitiveness, and level of schadenfreude such that the effects shown in study 1 held only in the higher-status condition, and not in the lower-status condition. Specifically,

more (vs. less) competitive participants reported that they felt more schadenfreude when they saw the comparative ad of the higher status brand. Therefore, the results suggest that comparative ads of higher-status brands may induce higher levels of schadenfreude among more competitive consumers.

STUDY 3: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SCHADENFREUDE ON PURCHASE LIKELIHOOD

Study 1 has demonstrated that the extent of incidental schadenfreude consumers feel is impacted by ad type and their competitive tendencies. Study 2 has introduced a boundary condition to this effect by showing that more competitive individuals feel more schadenfreude when a higher-status brand uses a comparative ad. Although these studies establish that comparative ads of higher-status brands are likely to induce greater levels of schadenfreude among more competitive consumers, they do not inform us about the downstream consequences of this malicious pleasure. Specifically, they do not explore the impact of experiencing incidental schadenfreude on consumers' subsequent purchase likelihood and attitudes. Therefore, in Study 3, I aim to examine this relationship in more detail by investigating the consequences of being exposed to comparative ads depending on individuals' competitiveness level. Specifically, I explore the role of schadenfreude and its implications on purchase intentions and attitudes. Moreover, this time I use a different product category (i.e. deodorants) in order to increase the generalizability of my results.

Method

Participants and Design. The study was designed as a 2 (ad type: comparative vs. noncomparative) x 2 (brands status: higher vs. lower) between-subjects study. 176

undergraduate students from a large eastern university participated in the study in return for partial course credit. Ad type and brand status were manipulated; whereas competitiveness level was measured.

Procedure. As in Study 1, participants were told that they would see a storyboard of a TV commercial that was prepared for a deodorant which may be used in the future. As part of the cover story, they were informed that the brand names were disguised for copyright purposes; however they were provided with objective information supposedly taken from Consumer Reports 2011 which was prepared by me. “Brand A deodorant” was positioned as an average priced product with a long-lasting quality rating of 55 (on Consumer Reports scale from 10 to 90) and “Brand B deodorant” was positioned as an “expensive” product with a long-lasting quality rating of 85. Accordingly, Brand A was advertised in the lower-status condition and Brand B was advertised in the higher-status condition.

Participants who were randomly assigned to “comparative ad condition” saw the ratings for both Brand A and Brand B; whereas participants who were assigned to “noncomparative ad” condition saw only the ratings of one brand (Brand A if assigned to lower status brand condition; Brand B if higher status brand condition). After the instructions, participants were presented with a storyboard with three screens. On the first screen, all participants read that a college student named Pat was entering a store to buy a deodorant. On the second screen, participants in the comparative ad condition were told that Pat insisted on buying the lower-status Brand A (vs. higher-status Brand B) although the salesperson recommended Brand B (vs. Brand A). On the last screen, Pat was

described as using the newly bought Brand A (vs. Brand B) deodorant and then dancing in a party. The story continued with the other dancers, disturbed by the unpleasant odor, moving away one by one since Pat had underarm sweat stains all over. The storyboard ended with the voice-over saying: “Use Brand B (vs. Brand A) deodorant and dance freely!” On the other hand, participants who were assigned to the noncomparative ad condition read that Pat bought a lower-status Brand A (vs. higher-status Brand B) deodorant since the salesperson recommended this brand. On the last screen, Pat was described as using the newly bought Brand A (vs. Brand B) deodorant and dancing in a party. This time other dancers, delighted by the pleasant odor, were moving towards Pat who had no underarm sweat stains. The storyboard ended with the voice-over saying: “Use Brand A (vs. Brand B) deodorant and dance freely!”

Measures. Participants were asked to evaluate the ad on three 7-point scales (bad(1)/good(7), unlikable(1)/likable(7), unpleasant(1)/ pleasant (7); $\alpha = .90$). Participants were also asked to evaluate the advertised brand on three 7-point scales (bad(1)/good(7), unlikable(1)/likable(7), unfavorable(1)/favorable(7); $\alpha = .95$). Their purchase likelihood was measured by averaging participants’ responses to two questions (“How likely are you to purchase a Brand A (vs. Brand B) deodorant after seeing this ad?” and “How likely are you to purchase a Brand A (vs. Brand B) deodorant the next time you need a deodorant?” ($r = .863, p < .01$) on a 7-point scale anchored by “not at all likely (1)” and “very likely (7).”

Next, participants’ level of incidental schadenfreude was measured. In accordance with previous literature, statements such as “What happened to Pat gives me

satisfaction,” “I couldn't resist smiling a little about what happened to Pat,” and “Actually I had to laugh a little” assessed level of incidental schadenfreude ($\alpha = .77$; van Dijk et al. 2005). Then, participants’ competitive tendencies were measured as in study 1 and study 2.

Finally, as manipulation checks, I measured whether Brand B was perceived as a higher-status brand when compared to Brand A. Participants were asked to indicate their opinion on “How likely is it that the “Brand B” deodorant will work better than the Brand A deodorant?” on a 7-point scale anchored by “not at all likely (1)” and “very likely (7).” In addition, participants’ usage of deodorants as well as their familiarity with deodorants in general was also measured to control for possible confounds. Lastly, as additional checks, I measured participants’ level of involvement with the study by averaging their responses to three relevant questions using 7-point scales (uninvolved(1)/involved(7), not paying attention(1)/paying attention(7), not at all enjoyable(1)/very enjoyable(7); $\alpha = .87$).

Results

Manipulation checks. A pretest on ad type revealed that participants in the comparative ad condition felt that the ad was more comparative than those in noncomparative ad condition ($M_{\text{comparative}} = 5.36$, $M_{\text{noncomparative}} = 1.75$, $F(1, 28) = 79.507$, $p < .001$). Also, manipulation checks of study 3 confirmed the effectiveness of brand status manipulations as well. As expected, participants believed that Brand B would work better than Brand A ($M_{\text{higher_status}} = 4.94$, $M_{\text{lower_status}} = 4.07$, $p < .01$). In addition, checks

on usage of deodorants, familiarity with deodorants and involvement with the study did not change as a function of the independent variables.

Schadenfreude. As in previous studies, participants' level of schadenfreude was measured by averaging their responses to questions assessing their feelings toward the misfortune shown in the ad. A competitiveness index was created by averaging participants' scores to six questions assessing competitiveness. Following Aiken and West (1991), I mean-centered competitiveness scores and then conducted a multiple regression analysis by including ad type, mean-centered competitiveness and brand status as well as the two-way interactions among them and a three-way interaction term as independent variables. The analysis revealed a significant three-way interaction between the predictor variables on the level of schadenfreude ($\beta = 1.039$, $t = 2.257$, $p < .05$).

A simple slope analysis indicated that, in line with Study 2, when the advertiser was the higher-status brand, more competitive participants felt higher levels of schadenfreude when they saw a comparative (vs. noncomparative) ad ($M_{\text{more_competitive-comparative}} = 4.55$, $M_{\text{more_competitive-noncomparative}} = 3.45$, $t = 2.0563$, $p < .05$). However, level of schadenfreude for less competitive participants did not significantly differ according to the ad type in the higher-status condition. Importantly, when the higher-status brand was using comparative appeals, more (less) competitive participants felt more pleasure at the misfortune happened in the ad ($M_{\text{more_competitive-higher-status}} = 4.55$, $M_{\text{less_competitive-higher_status}} = 3.46$, $t = 2.2983$, $p < .05$). Moreover, more competitive individuals felt more pleasure when the advertiser of the comparative ad was a higher-status (vs. lower-status) brand ($M_{\text{more_competitive-higher-status}} = 4.55$, $M_{\text{more_competitive-lower_status}} = 2.86$, $t = 3.0418$, $p < .01$). As

in Study 2, there were no significant results in the lower-status brand condition.

Purchase likelihood. I conducted a multiple regression analysis by including ad type, mean-centered competitiveness and brand status as well as all interaction terms as independent variables. As expected, the analysis revealed a significant three-way interaction among the predictor variables on the purchase likelihood index ($\beta = 1.510$, $t = 3.396$, $p = .001$). In addition, the two-way interaction between competitiveness and ad type as well as the two-way interaction between competitiveness and brand status were significant ($\beta = -1.016$, $t = -2.972$, $p = .003$, and $\beta = -0.734$, $t = -2.566$, $p = .011$ respectively).

I ran a simple slope analysis and the decomposition of the higher order interactions revealed significant results. Specifically, as expected, when the advertised brand had a higher-status (i.e. Brand B), more competitive individuals were significantly more likely to buy the advertised product when they saw a comparative (vs. noncomparative) ad ($M_{\text{more_competitive-comparative}} = 4.93$, $M_{\text{more_competitive-noncomparative}} = 3.76$, $t = 2.6307$, $p < .01$). However, in higher-status condition, purchase likelihood of less competitive individuals did not significantly differ according to ad type. In addition, in the comparative ad condition, more competitive participants were more likely to buy the advertised product when the advertiser was the higher-status (vs. lower-status) brand ($M_{\text{more_competitive-higher_status}} = 4.93$, $M_{\text{more_competitive-lower_status}} = 3.68$, $t = 2.6283$, $p < .01$).

Although not predicted, when the advertised brand had a lower-status (i.e. Brand A), less competitive participants were more likely to buy the advertised product when they saw a comparative (vs. noncomparative) ad ($M_{\text{less_competitive-comparative}} = 4.88$,

$M_{\text{less_competitive-noncomparative}} = 3.63$, $t = 2.6053$, $p = .01$). In addition, although the results were marginally significant, when the advertised brand had a lower-status, more competitive participants were surprisingly more likely to buy the advertised product when they saw a noncomparative (vs. comparative) ad ($M_{\text{more_competitive-noncomparative}} = 4.53$, $M_{\text{more_competitive-comparative}} = 3.68$, $t = -1.8204$, $p = .069$).

Figure 4: The Interactive Effect of Ad Type and Brand Status on Purchase Likelihood for More Competitive Individuals (Study 3)

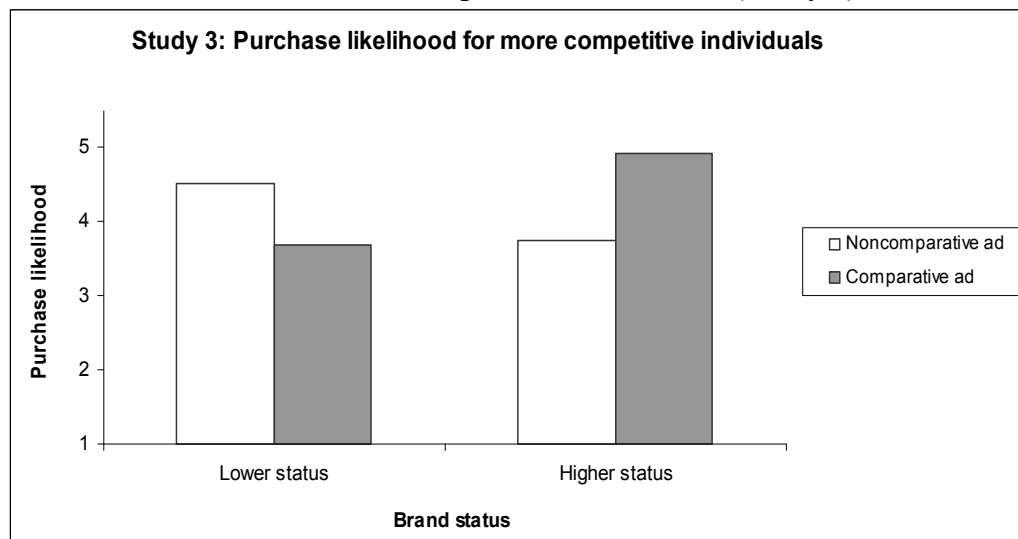
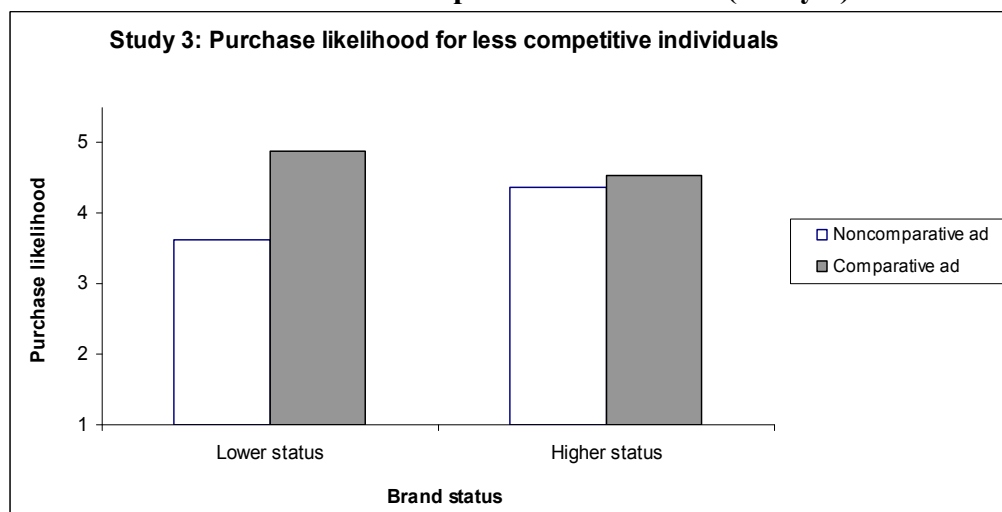


Figure 5: The Interactive Effect of Ad Type and Brand Status on Purchase Likelihood for Less Competitive Individuals (Study 3)



Brand evaluations. An attitude towards the brand index was created by averaging participants' responses to three questions assessing their brand evaluations for the advertised brand. A multiple regression analysis was conducted with the three independent variables and all interaction terms. The analysis revealed a significant three-way interaction between the predictor variables on the attitude towards the ad index ($\beta = 1.255$, $t = 3.384$, $p = .001$). Also, the two-way interaction between competitiveness and ad type was significant ($\beta = -0.614$, $t = -2.155$, $p < .05$). Moreover, the two-way interaction between competitiveness and brand status as well as the two-way interaction between ad type and brand status were marginally significant ($\beta = -0.408$, $t = -1.705$, $p = .09$; $\beta = 0.658$, $t = 1.794$, $p = .075$).

Further analyses showed that, consistent with the purchase likelihood results mentioned above, when the advertised brand had a higher-status (i.e. Brand B), more competitive participants had more positive attitude toward the brand if the ad was using comparative (vs. noncomparative) appeals ($M_{\text{more_competitive-comparative}} = 5.24$, $M_{\text{more_competitive-noncomparative}} = 4.49$, $t = 1.9567$, $p = .05$). On the contrary, less competitive participants evaluated the higher-status brand more positively after they saw a noncomparative (vs. comparative) ad ($M_{\text{less_competitive-noncomparative}} = 5.17$, $M_{\text{less_competitive-comparative}} = 4.58$, $t = -1.7524$, $p = .08$). Moreover, more (vs. less) competitive participants had more positive attitudes toward the higher-status brand in the comparative ad condition ($M_{\text{more_competitive-comparative}} = 5.24$, $M_{\text{less_competitive-comparative}} = 4.58$, $t = 1.9095$, $p = .05$).

On the other hand, when the advertiser was the lower-status brand, more competitive participants had more positive attitude toward the brand when they saw a

noncomparative than a comparative ad ($M_{\text{more_competitive-noncomparative}} = 5.22$, $M_{\text{more_competitive-comparative}} = 4.00$, $t = -3.1884$, $p < .01$) and there were no significant differences for less competitive individuals.

Therefore, when a higher-status brand shows the misfortunes befalling others because of using another brand, more (vs. less) competitive consumers evaluate the higher-status brand more (less) positively. However, more competitive consumers evaluate the lower-status brand more (vs. less) positively when this brand advertises its product without comparing itself to another brand (vs. comparing itself to another brand).

Ad evaluations. An attitude towards the ad index was created by averaging participants' responses to three questions assessing their ad evaluations. A multiple regression analysis was conducted as was the case in the analysis of the purchase likelihood. The analysis revealed a significant three-way interaction between the predictor variables on the attitude towards the ad index ($\beta = 1.059$, $t = 2.85$, $p = .005$). The two-way interaction between competitiveness and ad type was also significant ($\beta = -0.746$, $t = -2.617$, $p = .01$).

The simple slope analysis showed that when the advertised brand had a higher status, less competitive participants had significantly more positive attitude toward the ad when they saw a noncomparative (vs. comparative) ad ($M_{\text{less_competitive-noncomparative}} = 4.73$, $M_{\text{less_competitive-comparative}} = 3.95$, $t = -2.2997$, $p < .05$). Therefore, less competitive consumers like the ad better when a higher-status brand shows the benefits of using the advertised product rather than showing the disadvantages of using another brand's product. There were no significant results for more competitive individuals in the higher-

status condition. On the other hand, similar to the results on brand attitudes, when the advertised brand had a lower-status, more competitive participants had more positive attitude toward the ad when they saw a noncomparative (vs. comparative) ad ($M_{\text{more_competitive-noncomparative}} = 5.0875$, $M_{\text{more_competitive-comparative}} = 3.3127$, $t = -4.6391$, $p < .001$). Therefore, if the brand is not very strong, more competitive consumers prefer seeing ads that show the benefits of the product, rather than seeing a lower-status brand comparing itself to a higher-status brand. No other effects were significant.

Moderated Mediation. I have suggested that more competitive individuals experience higher levels of incidental schadenfreude when they are exposed to comparative ads of higher-status brands. Therefore, I ran a bootstrap analysis to examine the mediating role of schadenfreude on purchase likelihood. I tested for moderated mediation, which is also known as conditional indirect effects (Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes 2007; Preacher and Hayes 2008). Results show that the level of schadenfreude is a significant mediator of level of competitiveness and ad type on purchase likelihood when the advertiser is a higher-status brand, but not when the advertiser is a lower-status brand. More specifically, in the higher-status condition, the mean indirect effect of ad type and consumers' competitiveness on purchase likelihood is significant with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (CI: .0381 to .4546). Therefore, more competitive participants feel more schadenfreude when they see the comparative ad of a higher-status brand; and that is why their purchase likelihood is higher in that case. However, since they are not pleased enough with the misfortune shown in the ad in case of lower-status brand, schadenfreude does not mediate their purchase likelihood in the lower-status brand

condition. Results also show that the level of schadenfreude is a significant mediator on purchase likelihood for more competitive consumers, but not for less competitive consumers. More specifically, for more competitive consumers, the mean indirect effect of ad type and brand status on purchase likelihood is significant with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (CI: .0484 to .6900), whereas the interval includes zero for less competitive individuals.

A similar analysis was conducted to test whether schadenfreude also mediated the interactive effect of ad type and level of competitiveness on attitudes toward the brand. I tested the significance of indirect effect by applying the bootstrap procedures using a 95% confidence interval and zero was not included in the provided range (CI: .0160 to .2972) when the brand had a higher status, but zero was included when the brand had a lower-status. The results also revealed that schadenfreude mediated attitudes toward the ad when the brand had a higher-status (CI: .0176 to .3366). In addition, the results demonstrated that the level of schadenfreude was a significant mediator on attitude toward the brand and on attitude toward the ad for more competitive consumers, but not for less competitive consumers. More specifically, for more competitive consumers, the mean indirect effect of ad type and brand status on attitudes toward the brand and ad was significant with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (CI: .1126 to .5355 and CI: .1164 to .6374 respectively).

Lastly, a moderated mediation analysis was run to test whether positive affect induced by ads also mediated purchase likelihood. As in study 1, a positive affect index was created by averaging participants' responses indicating to what extent the advertisement made them feel positive emotions such as happy, delighted and content on

7-point scales (not at all(1)/very strongly(7) ($\alpha = .85$). The bootstrap analysis revealed that the confidence interval included zero both when the brand had a higher and lower-status; therefore positive affect was not a significant mediator in the model. Moreover, positive affect did not mediate attitudes toward the brand and attitudes toward the ad.

Discussion

The results of study 3 support hypothesis 3a and 3b by showing that more competitive individuals experience greater levels of schadenfreude when they are exposed to comparative ads of higher-status brands, and as a result they become more likely to buy the advertised product. The moderated mediation analysis demonstrates that schadenfreude is the mediator on purchase likelihood for higher-status brands. Moreover the mediating effect is valid for more competitive and not less competitive participants. In addition, study 3 shows that incidental schadenfreude also mediates brand and ad evaluations such that more competitive individuals have more positive attitudes when they are exposed to the comparative ad of a higher-status brand.

STUDY 4: REASSURANCE AS A WAY TO MODERATE THE IMPLICATIONS OF SCHADENFREUDE

In study 3, I showed the positive implications of schadenfreude on purchase likelihood for more competitive individuals. However, no such effects were present for less competitive participants. In study 4, I investigate an efficient way to convince less competitive consumers to buy the advertised product by showing them a comparative ad. Research has indicated that schadenfreude may heighten individuals' anticipation of misfortunes happening to them (Kramer et al. 2011). This may especially be the case for less competitive individuals. Since they put less emphasis on competition, when a brand compares itself to another brand less competitive individuals may be more likely to focus on the misfortunes shown in the comparative ad, rather than the actual comparison between the brands. This negative affect caused by anticipation of unfavorable outcomes may, in turn, prevent them from purchasing the product. Reassurance has been considered as an important factor to reduce negative beliefs (Wu and Wei 2008) and decrease risk perceptions (Lion and Meertens 2005). Therefore, in study 4, I aim to comfort less competitive participants by reassuring them that misfortunes shown in the ad will not happen to them if they buy the advertised product, and thus encouraging them to feel higher levels of schadenfreude. I suggest that the effect of schadenfreude can be moderated when less competitive consumers are assured that the misfortunes mentioned in the ads will not happen to them if they use the advertised product. In addition, in study 4, I manipulate competitiveness instead of measuring it as was the case in the first three studies.

Method

Participants and Design. The study had a 2 (reassurance: present vs. absent) x 2 (competitiveness: more vs. less) x 2 (brands status: higher vs. lower) between-subjects experimental design. 134 undergraduate students from a large eastern university participated to the study in return for partial course credit. All three independent variables were manipulated and all participants saw a comparative ad.

Procedure. The study was separated into two supposedly unrelated parts. The first part was the competitiveness manipulation in which participants were asked to proofread three short paragraphs and circle the errors as they found them. To manipulate competitiveness level, participants in the more competitive condition were told that they could win a competitive prize if they could find all spelling errors in the shortest time compared to the other participants of the study (Josephs et al. 2006). They were asked to indicate the time when they began and finished proofreading the paragraphs in order to put them in a more competitive mindset. On the other hand, participants in the less competitive condition were not informed about the prize and were only told to circle the spelling errors without indicating the time.

In the second part of the study, participants were told that they would see a storyboard of a TV commercial that was prepared for a deodorant which may be used in the future (as in Study 3). They were also told that the brand names were disguised for copyright purposes and they were provided with information supposedly taken from Consumer Reports 2011. As in study 3, “Brand A deodorant” was positioned as an average priced product and was advertised in the lower-status condition; and “Brand B

deodorant” was positioned as an “expensive” product and was advertised in the higher-status condition. After the instructions, participants were presented with a storyboard with three screens. On the first screen, all participants read that a college student named Pat was entering a store to buy a deodorant. On the second screen, participants were told that Pat insisted on buying the lower-status Brand A (vs. higher-status Brand B) deodorant although the salesperson recommended Brand B (vs. Brand A). On the last screen, Pat was described as dancing in a party and other dancers, disturbed by the unpleasant odor, were moving away one by one because Pat had underarm sweat stains all over. Then, participants in the reassurance condition were informed that the storyboard ended with the voice-over saying: “Rest assured! This misfortune will not happen to you if you use Brand B (vs. Brand A) deodorant. Use Brand B (vs. Brand A) deodorant and dance freely!” On the other hand, participants in the no-reassurance condition only read: “Use Brand B (vs. Brand A) deodorant and dance freely!”

Measures. Participants were asked to evaluate the advertised brand on three 7-point scales (bad(1)/good(7), negative(1)/positive(7), unfavorable(1)/favorable(7); $\alpha = .80$). Their purchase likelihood of the advertised product was measured by averaging participants’ responses to questions such as “How likely are you to purchase a Brand A (vs. Brand B) deodorant after seeing this ad?” and “How likely are you to recommend the Brand A (vs. Brand B) deodorant to others?” ($r = .623, p < .01$) on a 7-point scale anchored by “not at all likely (1)” and “very likely (7).” In accordance with previous literature, statements such as “I couldn't resist smiling a little about what happened to Pat” and “Actually I had to laugh a little” (van Dijk et al. 2005) assessed *schadenfreude*.

Moreover, to check for the effectiveness of the reassurance manipulation, participants indicated how certain/assured they were that Brand A (vs. Brand B) deodorant would work satisfactorily. On the other hand, to check for the effectiveness of competitiveness manipulation, participants were administered the vertical individualism scale (Singelis et al. 1995) to measure their competitive tendencies as in the previous three studies. Also, as confound checks, participants' usage of deodorants as well as their familiarity with deodorants in general was also measured to control for possible confounds in addition to their level of involvement and overall enjoyment of the study.

Results

Manipulation checks. As expected, participants in the reassurance condition were more certain that the advertised product would work satisfactorily ($M_{\text{reassurance}} = 4.16$, $M_{\text{no-reassurance}} = 3.71$, $F(1, 132) = 4.403$, $p < .05$). Also, as in Study 3, they believed that Brand B would work better than Brand A ($M_{\text{higher_status}} = 4.78$, $M_{\text{lower_status}} = 3.95$, $F(1, 132) = 17.83$, $p < .001$). In addition, results showed that competitiveness manipulations were successful. Participants in the more competitive condition, scored higher on the competitiveness questions ($M_{\text{more-competitive}} = 4.16$, $M_{\text{less-competitive}} = 3.61$, $F(1, 132) = 17.83$, $p = .08$). Moreover, checks on usage of deodorants, familiarity, involvement and enjoyment of the study were not impacted by the predictor variables.

Purchase likelihood. A 2 X 2 X 2 ANOVA on the purchase likelihood revealed a three-way interaction between the predictor variables ($F(1, 126) = 7.222$, $p < .01$). In

addition, the analysis indicated a significant a main effect of reassurance ($F(1, 126) = 3.510, p < .06$) as well as a main effect of status ($F(1, 126) = 6.119, p < .05$) on purchase likelihood.

The decomposition of the higher order interactions revealed significant results. The results of Study 3 were replicated in the no-reassurance condition. Specifically, when the higher-status brand was not using reassurance, participants in the more (vs. less) competitive condition were more likely to buy the advertised product ($M_{\text{high_competitive-no_reassurance}} = 4.13, M_{\text{less_competitive-no_reassurance}} = 3.34, F(1, 126) = 4.892, p < .05$). On the other hand, reassurance had significant impact on less competitive participants when the brand had a higher (vs. lower) status. When the higher-status brand reassured them (vs. no assurance), participants in the less competitive condition were more likely to buy the advertised product ($M_{\text{less_competitive-reassurance}} = 4.56, M_{\text{less_competitive-no_reassurance}} = 3.50, F(1, 126) = 9.393, p < .01$). However, the purchase likelihood of participants in the more competitive condition did not significantly differ whether reassurance was present or absent ($M_{\text{high_competitive-reassurance}} = 3.97, M_{\text{high_competitive-no_reassurance}} = 4.32, F(1, 126) = 0.638, p > .40$). Surprisingly, when they were reassured by the higher-status brand, participants in the less competitive condition were even more likely to buy the advertised product than participants in the more competitive condition ($M_{\text{less_competitive-reassurance}} = 4.56, M_{\text{high_competitive-reassurance}} = 3.97, F(1, 126) = 2.283, p = .130$). There were no significant results when the advertised brand was the lower-status brand.

Brand evaluations. An attitude towards the brand index was created by averaging participants' responses to questions that assessed their evaluations for the advertised

brand. A 2 X 2 X 2 ANOVA on attitude toward the brand revealed a three-way interaction between the predictor variables ($F(1, 126) = 5.950, p < .05$). In line with the results for purchase likelihood, participants in the less competitive condition had more positive evaluations when the higher-status brand reassured them (vs. no assurance) ($M_{\text{less_competitive-reassurance}} = 3.94, M_{\text{less_competitive-no_reassurance}} = 3.25; F(1, 126) = 8.817, p < .01$). However, reassurance did not have significant impact on brand evaluations of more competitive participants and no other effects were significant.

Schadenfreude. The analysis revealed a three-way interaction between the predictor variables on the level of schadenfreude ($F(1, 126) = 3.072, p < .08$). As in Study 3, when there was no reassurance, participants in the more (vs. less) competitive condition felt more schadenfreude when the advertiser had a higher-status. ($M_{\text{high_competitive-no_reassurance}} = 4.41, M_{\text{less_competitive-no_reassurance}} = 3.22; F(1, 126) = 4.087, p < .05$). However, in the higher-status condition, participants in the less competitive condition felt more schadenfreude when reassurance was present (vs. absent) ($M_{\text{less_competitive-reassurance}} = 4.78, M_{\text{less_competitive-no_reassurance}} = 3.22; F(1, 126) = 8.642, p < .01$). Level of schadenfreude did not significantly differ according to reassurance for more competitive participants. No other effects were significant.

Moderated Mediation. I predicted that comparative ads that emphasized reassurance would make less competitive participants, and not more competitive participants, feel higher levels of schadenfreude and hence would result in higher purchase likelihood. Therefore, I conducted a moderated mediation analysis by using

procedures provided by Preacher et al. (2007). The results revealed that schadenfreude mediated the interactive effect of reassurance and brand status on purchase likelihood only for less competitive individuals. In other words, for less competitive participants, zero was not included in the 95% confidence interval (CI = .0640 to .5164); whereas zero was included in the provided range for more competitive participants. Similar results were found for attitude toward the brand as well. The bootstrap analysis revealed an indirect effect of schadenfreude on attitude toward the brand for less competitive participants only (CI = .0378 to .2841).

Discussion

Study 4 showed that reassurance encouraged less competitive participants to buy more when the advertiser was the higher-status brand. However, reassurance did not have any significant effects in the more competitive condition. In addition, reassurance did not have any impact when the advertiser was the lower-status brand. Furthermore, the results revealed that schadenfreude mediated purchase likelihood for less competitive participants, and not for more competitive participants, when reassurance was present.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this research, I suggest that comparative ads, which are becoming ever more popular, may incidentally evoke schadenfreude, which may in turn impact consumers' purchase intentions and attitudes. Schadenfreude appears particularly relevant in comparative advertisements because these ads often depict the unfortunate failures of competitors' brands. In addition, I incorporate an individual's level of competitiveness as an important determinant of the experience of this malicious pleasure. In four studies, I show that since they focus on being better than others, more competitive individuals are likely to feel greater levels of incidental schadenfreude when this malicious pleasure is induced in comparative versus noncomparative ads. In addition, I introduce brand status as a moderator variable such that higher-status (vs. lower-status) brands invoke higher levels of incidental schadenfreude in comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads. Furthermore, I examine the downstream implications of invoking schadenfreude in comparative ads and provide evidence of the underlying process. Specifically, I show that more competitive individuals are more likely to buy the advertised product when a higher-status brand uses comparative (vs. noncomparative) ads, since these ads make them experience higher levels of incidental schadenfreude. Lastly, I suggest that reassurance can be an effective method to encourage less competitive individuals to buy the advertised products when using comparative ads.

Implications

The current research makes significant contributions. First, I contribute to the comparative advertisement literature and demonstrate that comparative ads are likely to induce affective reactions, especially *schadenfreude*, which in turn can impact purchase intentions and attitudes. Frequently, ads are meant to induce positive or negative affect and emotions mediate behaviors and attitudes (Holbrook and Batra 1987, Poels and Dewitte 2006). In my dissertation, I show that although the goal is not necessarily to induce *schadenfreude*, comparative ads may lead consumers to incidentally experience this malicious pleasure due to the presence of a comparison to the competitor. Moreover, I examine *schadenfreude* as an incidental emotional response elicited by comparative ad appeals and demonstrate under which conditions it may lead to heightened attitudes and purchase intentions. Second, I introduce level of competitiveness as an individual difference variable to the comparative ad literature and suggest that comparative ads are likely to be more effective for more (vs. less) competitive consumers. Third, I contribute to the recently growing literature on *schadenfreude* by investigating another antecedent of this malicious pleasure such as an individual's competitiveness level. Specifically, I show that more competitive individuals are more likely to experience incidental *schadenfreude* than less competitive individuals. Moreover, I examine brand status as another moderating variable affecting the experience of incidental *schadenfreude* such that higher-status (vs. lower-status) brands are more likely to induce this malicious pleasure. Fourth, I introduce *schadenfreude* to the advertising literature for the first time and show that this malicious pleasure can be evoked in ads, especially in comparative

ads. In addition, I explore the downstream implications of schadenfreude in a marketing context and demonstrate its impact on purchase intentions, attitudes toward the brand and attitudes toward the ad. Extant research has presented the effect of experiencing schadenfreude on choice of conventional options (Kramer et al. 2011) and word-of-mouth (Sundie et al. 2009). However, the current research is the first one to study the impact of this malicious pleasure on consumers' attitudes and purchase likelihood. Lastly, I introduce another method to prime participants with schadenfreude in experiments. Although extant research has manipulated schadenfreude by asking participants to recall an event that affected them personally and made them feel schadenfreude or by making them read about the profile of a target person, the current research uses advertisements to induce this malicious pleasure.

The current research also has important managerial implications. Managers have been using comparative advertisements since Federal Trade Commission has informally encouraged explicit comparisons in 1972 (Pillai and Goldsmith 2008). These practices have become even more popular with AT&T's, Apple's and T-Mobile's commercials depicting comical situations in which competitors' products fail. Therefore, more research is needed to understand the implications of these comparative ads. The findings of the current research suggest that comparative ads may be particularly effective for more competitive consumers in increasing their purchase likelihood. Therefore, managers may want to induce competitiveness in their comparative ads to increase sales. On the other hand, if consumers may not be primed with competitiveness, then managers may try to reassure consumers that the misfortunes shown in the ads will not happen to them if they buy their products. The results of study 4 suggest that reassurance positively impacts

the purchase decisions of less competitive consumers while it does not impact more competitive consumers. Therefore, managers can benefit from reassurance in their comparative ads since less competitive individuals will be more likely to buy their products and more competitive consumers will not be impacted.

On the other hand, the results of the current research reveal that higher-status rather than lower-status brands are more likely to benefit from comparative ads. Specifically, more competitive consumers are likely to experience higher levels of incidental schadenfreude which in turn increase their purchase likelihood when higher-status brands use comparative ads. Therefore, higher-status brands may depict unfortunate events happening to those who are not using their products and expect more competitive consumers to buy their products. However, if their target segment includes less competitive consumers, they should make sure that they reassure them. Lower-status brands on the other hand may advertise their brands by using noncomparative ads instead and emphasize the benefits of their own products rather than comparing themselves with competitor brands.

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of the current research mainly stem from using a laboratory environment and having undergraduate students as the sample population. Thus, current studies might be lacking external validity and future studies should seek to replicate and extend these results using real-life decisions. Another disadvantage may be that participants were asked to make hypothetical decisions when they were indicating their

purchase intentions. Although these limitations are also the concerns of many other researchers in the marketing field, replications in real-life settings in which consumers can actually buy or not buy the advertised product can definitely increase the external validity of the current results.

On the other hand, this research is one of first ones to examine the downstream implications of schadenfreude. Clearly, more studies are needed so that a more comprehensive understanding of this malicious pleasure and its implications can be presented. For instance, I showed that schadenfreude was elicited by showing others' misfortunes in comparative ads. However participants were also likely to experience sympathy, sadness at others' misfortunes, giving rise to mixed emotional experiences. In fact, when participants indicated the extent to which the ad made them feel positive emotions such as happiness in study 1, they also indicated their experience of negative emotions such as sadness. Further analysis showed that misfortunes shown in comparative ads elicited both positive affect (e.g., happiness and delight) and negative affect (e.g., sadness and discontent). Prior research has shown that mixed emotions give rise to discomfort in individuals (Williams and Aaker 2002). Therefore, it would be interesting to examine the impact of discomfort associated with the simultaneous experience of schadenfreude and sympathy on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions in future studies. Moreover, another individual difference variable such as propensity to accept duality, or the ongoing process of accepting contradiction in elements (Basseches 1980), might be an interesting moderator impacting the experience of schadenfreude and sympathy on purchase likelihood.

In addition to simultaneous feelings of schadenfreude and sympathy, comparative ads may also lead consumers to feel relieved that the misfortune shown in the ad did not happen to them. Therefore, future research may explore affective components of schadenfreude such as feeling relieved that we are not the unfortunate person shown in the ad. This can also be tied to the results of study 4 which demonstrate reassurance as a moderating variable impacting the effects of schadenfreude. Future studies can explore the impact of feeling relieved on purchase intentions, as was the case with reassurance in study 4, and test whether purchase intentions increase when consumers feel relieved that misfortunes did not befall them.

Lastly, the current research has only used digital cameras, cars, and deodorants as product categories. Thus, future studies should examine the impact of evoking schadenfreude in comparative ads by using different product categories. Research has differentiated between utilitarian and hedonic products. The consumption of hedonic products is considered to be an affective and sensory experience of pleasure, whereas the consumption of utilitarian products is seen as more cognitively driven and functional (Dhar and Wertenbroch 2000). Thus, future studies can investigate the comparative ads of utilitarian and hedonic products to test their differential impact on schadenfreude and to increase the external validity of the current research.

APPENDIX A

THE STORYBOARD USED IN STUDY 2

(HIGHER-STATUS AND COMPARATIVE AD CONDITION)

First screen:

A college student named Pat is shown walking into a car gallery to buy a new car.

Second screen:

A salesperson is shown directing Pat to a couple of cars.

Pat laughs at the salesperson, makes a rude gesture and impolitely says: "Instead, I will buy the Kia Rio over there."

Third screen:

Pat is shown trying to start the newly bought Kia Rio one month after. The car makes a loud grinding noise and does not start.

Then a tow vehicle pulls Pat's new car and Pat seems to be very angry.

The voice-over says:
Buy Mercedes SLK Roadster instead and don't waste your money!

APPENDIX B

THE STORYBOARD USED IN STUDY 3

(HIGHER-STATUS AND COMPARATIVE AD CONDITION)

First screen:

A college student named Pat is shown entering a store to buy a deodorant.

The voice-over says: “Buying a deodorant can be one of the most important decisions we make everyday.”

Second screen:

A salesperson is shown directing Pat to “Brand B” deodorants.

Pat laughs at the salesperson, makes a rude gesture and, after some unfriendly conversation, insists on buying a “Brand A” deodorant instead.

Third screen:

Pat is shown using the “Brand A” deodorant he bought and then dancing in a party.

Other dancers are moving away from Pat one by one. Pat has underarm sweat stains all over and the other dancers are very disturbed by the unpleasant odor. Pat seems to be very angry.

The voice-over says:
Use “Brand B” deodorant and dance freely!

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