

A Spoonful of Transportation Helps the Comparison Go Down:
Using Narrative Transportation to Make
Comparative Advertisements More Palatable

Rebecca K. Prettyman

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Chapel Hill
2011

Approved by
Anne Johnston, Ph.D.
Janas Sinclair, Ph.D.
Michael S. Waltman, Ph.D.

© 2011
Rebecca K. Prettyman
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

Rebecca K. Prettyman: A Spoonful of Transportation Helps the Comparison Go Down: Using Narrative Transportation to Make Comparative Advertisements More Palatable
(Under the direction of Anne Johnston, Ph.D.)

Drawing direct comparisons between one's brand and its competitors is widely used in advertising. Previous research has shown positive effects of comparative advertising: consumers have an improved attitude toward the brand. However, comparisons can be risky, leading consumers to develop more source derogations, perceive the advertisement as more aggressive, and have increased negative emotions and attitude toward the ad.

A plausible question posed by a brand manager or advertiser would be: how can we maintain the positive effects of drawing a comparison, while mitigating the negative effects? Research into the effects of narrative transportation shows that subjects react very favorably toward advertisements that induce them to imagine themselves in the described product scenario. This thesis was designed to investigate how coupling narrative transportation with comparisons in an advertisement affects consumers' reactions, and if the use of transportation can calm the negative effects of a comparison. The results of this study suggest that a transportive comparative ad is as effective as a transportive noncomparative ad—when paired with transportation, a comparison's negative effects are assuaged.

To my parents, Henry and Lorrie, for providing unconditional
love, opportunity and encouragement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the encouragement and guidance provided by the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, particularly the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Anne Johnston, Dr. Janas Sinclair and Dr. Michael Waltman.

I would also like to recognize the School of Journalism and Mass Communication faculty members Dr. Lois Boynton, Dr. Joe Bob Hester, Dr. Laura Ruel and Dr. Ruth Walden for enriching my graduate student experience.

I am grateful and appreciative of Graduate School Associate Dean Sandra Hoeflich, who has been a source of encouragement and support to myself and other graduate students at UNC-Chapel Hill, and who sincerely believes in both our academic and personal contributions.

To my fellow students at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, thank you for challenging me to think differently, for being an invaluable sounding board and for making the journey a joyful one.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	3
Comparative Advertising	3
Narrative Transportation and Imagery	6
Bringing the Two Together	8
Hypotheses	9
III. METHOD	12
Participants	12
Procedure	12
Stimuli	12
Dependent Measures	15
Pre-Tests	17
Manipulation Checks	18
IV. RESULTS	20
Description of Subjects and Analyses	20
Hypotheses 1 _a and 1 _b	21

Hypotheses 2 _a and 2 _b	22
Hypothesis 3	23
Hypothesis 4	25
V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	28
Alternate Analyses	31
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research	34
Practical Implications and Recommendations for Advertisers	36
APPENDIX A	40
APPENDIX B	44
APPENDIX C	47
APPENDIX D	48
REFERENCES	54

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	11
Figure 1.2	11
Figure 2.1	48
Figure 2.2	48
Figure 3.1	49
Figure 3.2	49
Figure 4.1	50
Figure 4.2	50
Figure 4.3	51
Figure 4.4	51
Figure 5.1	52
Figure 5.2	52
Figure 5.3	53
Figure 5.4	53

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Attitude toward the Ad	A_{Ad}
Attitude toward the Brand	A_B

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Advertising that employs direct comparison between brands is hardly a new phenomenon. Since the 1970s, comparative advertising, which can be defined as “advertising that [c]ompare[s] two or more specifically named or recognizably presented brands of the same generic product or service class, and [m]ake[s] such a comparison in terms of one or more specific product or service attributes” (Wilkie & Farris, 1975, p. 7), has become increasingly popular, and is commonplace today.

However, comparative advertisements are not always well received. Viewers of such ads can become defensive, are more likely to generate source derogations and may be more doubtful of the claims made by the advertised brand. However, drawing comparisons between your brand and a competitor’s can be an effective approach when positioning your brand in the marketplace. Dependent measures commonly used to measure consumers’ attitudes are attitude towards the ad, abbreviated A_{Ad} , and attitude towards the brand, abbreviated A_B . Compared to noncomparative ads, consumers perceive comparative ads as more aggressive (Wilson & Muddirisoglu 1980), make more source derogations after viewing comparative ads (Belch 1981), have a more negative attitude towards the ad (A_{Ad}), yet have a more favorable attitude towards the brand (A_B) (Dröge 1989; Grewal, Kavanoor, Fern, Costley, & Barnes 1997). Increasing positive A_B is an unequivocally desirable outcome. So how can comparative advertisements be made more palatable to consumers?

Can comparisons be made while avoiding the negative affect that they create in viewers, yet maintain the positive effects on A_B ?

Research on the use of narrative transportation and imagery in advertisements may provide some guidance in cracking how to ameliorate the undesirable effects of comparative ads. Green and Brock (2000) assert that narrative transportation can affect “real-world beliefs.” They conceptualize transportation as absorption into a story or narrative world, and that “transportation into a narrative world...is a distinct mental process, an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feelings” (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 701). More recently, Escalas adapted the theory of narrative transportation to the advertising context. Her work on transportation has shown that consumers who are exposed to ads encouraging them to imagine product usage scenarios have reduced cognition in thinking about the ad’s arguments, increased positive affect toward the ad, and more favorable A_{Ad} and brand evaluations (Escalas 2004; Escalas 2007).

The purpose of this thesis is to discover if presenting brand comparisons in a narrative format, using the tools of imagery and transportation, can moderate the negative responses to comparative ads. Specifically, this experiment seeks to determine the relationship between advertisements that make brand comparisons in a transportive context and affect, A_{Ad} , A_B and behavioral intentions. The following sections review previous research examining comparative advertising, the use of narrative transportation in advertisements and how the two might be used together.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Comparative Advertising

Previous research investigating differential effects of noncomparative versus comparative advertising has shown that generally, comparative advertisements are disliked (Belch 1981; Grewal et al. 1997; James & Hensel 1991; Wilson & Muddersoglu 1980). Belch (1981) found that comparative ads induce strong source derogations, disparagement of the advertiser, and more negative thoughts, which might increase skepticism and greater disbelief of claims. Additionally, Wilson and Muddersoglu (1980) found that comparative ads are seen as more aggressive than noncomparative ads. However, subsequent research has shown that though consumers have increased negative cognition and affect in response to comparative ads, this negative A_{Ad} does not accurately predict a negative A_B .

The relationship between A_{Ad} and A_B is not necessarily a positive correlation for comparative ads as it is for noncomparative ads. Although A_{Ad} is generally negative for comparative ads, A_B is actually more positive for target brands in comparative ads compared to noncomparative ads. Dröge (1989) grounds her research in Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model and reasons that comparative ads encourage central route processing. Her research demonstrated that comparative ads are centrally processed and that A_{Ad} was not a good predictor of A_B for comparative ads. Dröge reasons that "no link is found

between A_{Ad} and A_B ,” because “peripheral cues are relatively unimportant when processing is central” (Dröge, 1989, p. 201).

Grewal et al. (1997) confirm Dröge’s findings that A_{Ad} is not a good predictor of A_B for comparative ads. Their results also showed that not only is A_{Ad} more negative for comparative versus noncomparative ads, but A_B is actually more *positive* for comparative ads. Additionally, their meta-analysis showed that subjects had a greater intent to purchase a target brand after viewing a comparative ad.

However, research on comparative ads has not consistently shown increased purchase intent. An earlier study by Golden (1979) found that there are no significant differences between comparative and noncomparative ads for purchase intent, claim believability and advertising credibility. It is important to note however, that a measure of purchase intent taken in the lab may not always accurately capture how a subject may act in the future. The inconsistency in findings regarding purchase intention may be partly due to the difficulty of measuring it. Although research findings have not all pointed to increased purchase intent, Grewal et al.’s (1997) meta-analysis reveals that taken together, the majority of research in this area shows that both behavioral intentions and *actual behavior* are positive in response to comparative ads. At the time Grewal et al.’s research was published, the links between cognition and affect to the conative dimension had not been tested for comparative ads.

Advertisers may be wary of using comparisons in their ads when they have been shown to increase source derogations, are seen as aggressive, and do not produce a positive A_{Ad} . James and Hensel (1991) warn against the negative effects of attacking a competitor in an ad. However, they make important distinctions between comparative and negative ads. Comparative ads become negative ads when

consumers perceive a violation of ‘fair play’ standards...and perceive derogatory references or image damaging inferences made by a sponsor through the use of either non-mistakable visual stimuli or an explicit verbal reference naming the competitor in a malicious or vicious personal attack against a specific brand, service, issue, company, or candidate (p. 56).

James and Hensel believe that there will be more backlash against market leaders (the number one brands) using negative ads, that negative ads are more effective for new brands, that they have more influence on brand loyalists, and that they are more effective when consumers are highly involved. Although negative comparative ads are more extreme “malicious” versions of comparative ads, there is no existing research demonstrating that these propositions for negative ads do not also hold true for milder comparative ads. Indeed, other research (discussed above) does show that in response to comparative ads, consumers experience more negative emotions and perceive the ads as more aggressive.

Previous research shows both negative and positive effects of comparative ads. Research has demonstrated that comparative ads produce a positive A_B , increase intent to purchase, and possibly influence actual purchase behavior. For advertisers, a critical question is whether the positive effects of A_B and purchase intent outweigh the negative effects of using comparisons. Based on the findings in a different vein of research, imagery and transportation, the undesirable effects of comparative ads could possibly be counteracted. The following section details previous research findings pertaining to the use of transportation in advertisements.

Narrative Transportation and Imagery

Existing research on imagery and transportation in the context of advertising has shown overwhelmingly positive results from using such tactics in ads. Transportation is conceived as immersion and absorption into a story, resulting in a “subjective distance from reality” (Green and Brock, 2000, p. 702). Images and photos, vivid product descriptions, and instructions to imagine a product scenario are the chief features of transportive ads.

In their research on transportation in stories more generally, Green and Brock (2000) found that “highly transported readers [report] more story-consistent beliefs” (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 711). Narratives with descriptive language have the powerful ability to engage and transport readers to the extent that readers may believe assertions in the narrative that conflict with the external world.

Building on Green and Brock’s findings, Escalas (2004) examined the effect of transportation in actual advertisements. Transporting subjects into a positive usage scenario creates strong, positive affective responses while also decreasing critical thoughts in response to the ad. She found that transportation significantly increased upbeat feelings, and those upbeat feelings subsequently had a positive effect on A_{Ad} and A_B (or what she calls “brand evaluation,” or BE). There were no significant effects on behavioral intention. In conditions without transportation, subjects had more critical thoughts and fewer positive emotions, as well as less favorable A_{Ad} and A_B . The influence of positive affect caused by transportation cannot be ignored. Research by Sujan, Bettman and Baumgartner (1993) has also demonstrated that autobiographical memories, a form of transportation, increase positive affect, which subsequently increases A_{Ad} .

Other research on imagery and transportation has shown that the most effective imagery tactics to transport readers are concrete words rather than abstract words (Babin, Burns & Biswas 1992; MacInnis & Price 1987), vivid descriptions of product attributes (Petrova & Cialdini 2005), concrete pictures (Babin et al. 1992; Babin & Burns 1997; MacInnis & Price 1987), and explicit instructions to imagine (Babin et al. 1992; Babin & Burns 1997; MacInnis & Price 1987). Many researchers have found that instructions to imagine are highly effective in transporting the reader. Keller and McGill (1994) agree that consumers use an imagery heuristic to evaluate brands based on their affective responses to imagined scenarios; they also point out that “imagery can affect preferences even without explicit instructions to use imagery” (Keller & McGill, 1994, p. 46). The effect of imagery and transportation, even when subtly presented can be significant.

These specific transportive tactics may be effective individually, but using all of them in one ad does not necessarily augment the ad’s effectiveness. Interestingly, Babin and Burns (1997) found main effects for concrete pictures (versus abstract pictures) and instructions to imagine on A_{Ad} and A_B , but no significant interaction. Instructions to imagine seem to be a better fit with Green and Brock’s conception of narrative transportation than images, though both are effective. Babin and Burns stress that “multiple instructions to imagine stimulate vividness and elaboration in mental imagery processing, which mediate effects on ad and brand attitude” (Babin & Burns, 1997, p. 43).

Instructions to imagine may be very effective in inducing transportation, but Escalas’s (2004) findings seem to contradict Babin and Burns’s reasoning. Escalas asserts that transportation actually *reduces* elaboration and systematic analysis of the argument, whereas ads that do not induce transportation produce more analytical and critical thoughts. Escalas

(2007) has also shown that ad skepticism moderates narrative transportation (in this study, a particular type of transportation, “self-referencing”); skepticism increases sensitivity to weak arguments, even when narrative processing is encouraged. Considering the positive results in using transportation in ads, it is possible that using transportation in a comparative ad could ease the negative effects of the comparison.

Bringing the Two Together

There has been little research examining transportation in comparative ads. Thompson and Hamilton (2006) conclude that noncomparative ads are more effective than comparative ads “when consumers use imagery processing” (Thompson & Hamilton, 2006, p. 531). In one study, they used instructions to manipulate subjects’ information processing mode (analytical or imagery). Subjects in the analytical condition were asked to focus on attributes of the product and how the product could meet their needs. Subjects in the imagery condition were asked to view the product in their mind and “imagine as vividly as possible” their experience with the product (a car). Their results demonstrated that subjects favor ads congruent with information processing mode. In a second study, they manipulated ad format, using both comparative and noncomparative ads. Their comparison manipulation is a matrix, a chart with side-by-side comparisons of the brands on different product attributes, and their imagery manipulation is descriptive, imagery-heavy text. They found a significant interaction between ad format and processing mode. When there was congruency between processing mode (analytical versus imagery) and ad format (comparative versus noncomparative), subjects’ processing of the ad was enhanced, and enhanced processing led to increased message persuasiveness. Their research presents a “boundary condition for the positive effects of imagery processing on persuasion. When ad format is inconsistent with imagery

processing, inducing imagery processing produces more negative brand evaluations and purchase intentions than analytical processing” (Thompson & Hamilton, 2006, p. 536).

However, Thompson and Hamilton presume that an imagery usage scenario is appropriate for a single brand usage scenario, whereas analytical processing is appropriate for comparing across brands. Certainly two usage scenarios can be presented using imagery in a comparative ad. Using narrative transportation to make a comparison, there would be two usage scenarios presented, using imagery for *both* the target brand *and* the comparison brand. In my study, processing mode was not manipulated.

In Thompson and Hamilton’s second study, they manipulated the presence of a comparison matrix, neutral versus imagery text, and comparative versus noncomparative ad format. My study did not present conflicting modes of information to subjects as in Thompson and Hamilton’s study (e.g., a matrix present in a noncomparative ad).

Hypotheses

Previous research examining imagery tactics and narrative transportation in ads has shown that transportation increases positive affect and increase A_{Ad} and A_B . Comparative ads tend to increase negative affect, reduce A_{Ad} and increase A_B . Because previous research has shown that using narrative transportation can reduce readers’ critical thoughts about an ad’s arguments, it might also temper readers’ negative reactions toward a comparison present in the ad. Additionally, it is possible that a positive attitude toward the brand could lead to an increased intention to try or purchase the product advertised. The four experimental conditions are: nontransportive noncomparative, nontransportive comparative, transportive noncomparative and transportive comparative. Based on previous research findings, the following hypotheses are presented:

H1_a: Transportive noncomparative ads will elicit more positive A_{Ad} than the comparative ads (transportive and nontransportive), and nontransportive noncomparative ads.

H1_b: Nontransportive comparative ads will elicit more negative A_{Ad} than the noncomparative ads (transportive and nontransportive), and transportive comparative ads.

H2_a: Transportive noncomparative ads will elicit more positive affect than the comparative ads (transportive and nontransportive), and nontransportive noncomparative ads.

H2_b: Nontransportive comparative ads will elicit more negative affect than the noncomparative ads (transportive and nontransportive), and transportive comparative ads.

H3: Transportive comparative ads will elicit more positive A_B than the nontransportive ads (noncomparative and comparative), and transportive noncomparative ads.

H4: Transportive comparative ads will elicit more positive behavioral intentions than the nontransportive ads (noncomparative and comparative), and transportive noncomparative ads.

Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 show the hypothesized results in graphical form.

Figure 1.1

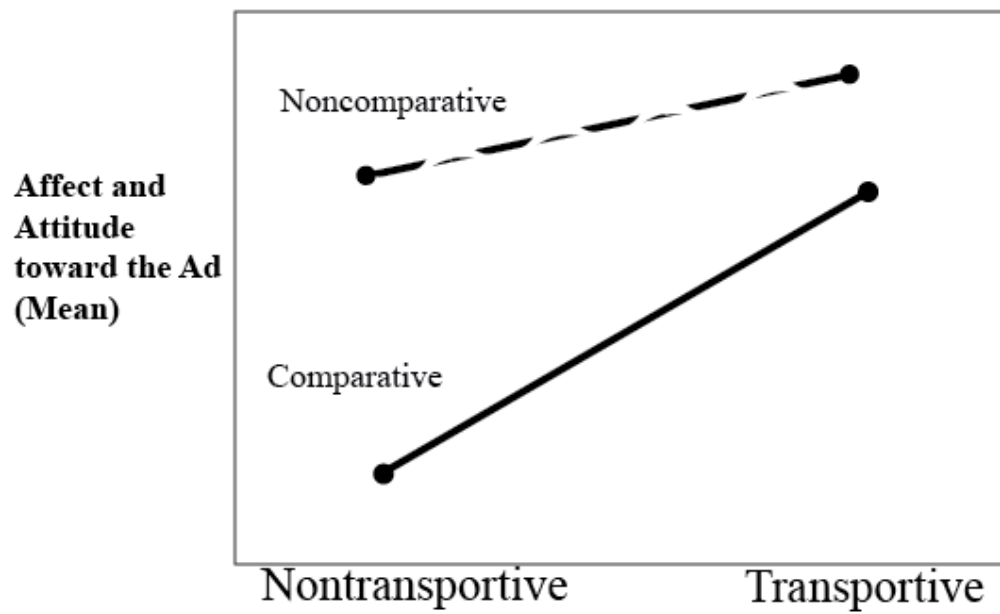
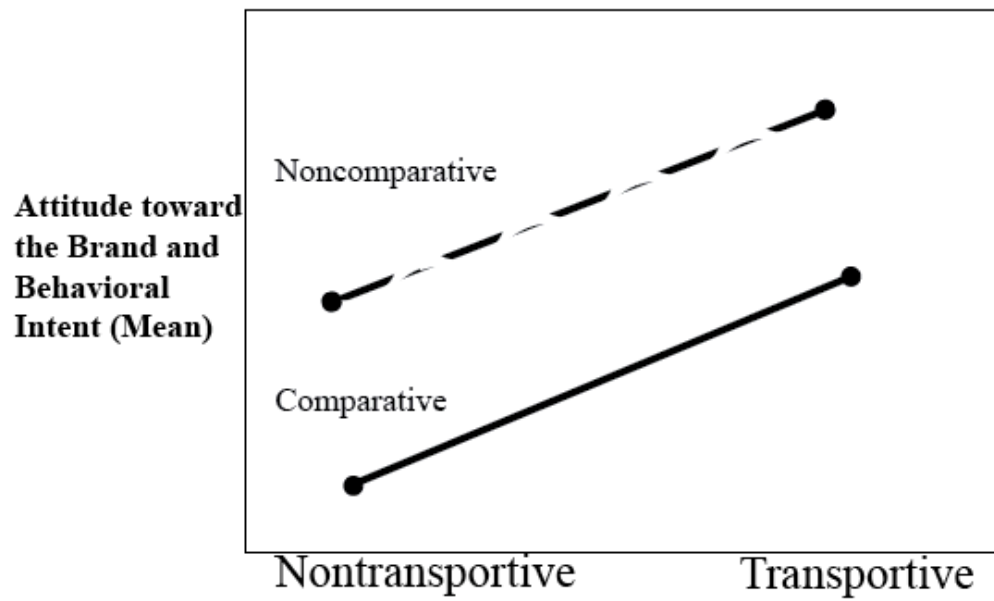


Figure 1.2



CHAPTER THREE

Method

Participants

Ninety-two undergraduate students from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication's research participant pool at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill participated in this study for research credit to fulfill course requirements.

Procedure

This experiment employed a 2 x 2 between-subjects design with two levels of transportation (nontransportive and transportive) and two levels of comparison (noncomparative and comparative). Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions and given a consent form and identical instructions; narrative transportation was not manipulated by encouraging a certain style of information processing (Thompson & Hamilton 2006), but by features of the ad itself. After viewing the ad for as long as they wished, subjects were asked to answer questions about the ad they viewed, asked to give demographic information, and were given a debriefing form thanking them for their participation and explaining the purpose of the experiment.

Stimuli

In all four conditions, subjects were instructed to view a hard copy of a one-page, black-and-white print advertisement. Ads in all four conditions described the same product

attributes for the same product category. See Appendix A to view the ads used for the four conditions.

Because the noncomparative ads described only one brand and the comparative ads described two brands, the noncomparative ads were necessarily shorter than the comparative ads. Although controlling for length would have been desirable, it is more important in the context of this experiment to control for the content rather than the length of the ads.

Products best suited to transport readers are those that produce rich sensory experiences. The subjects reading the ad should be able to create a brand usage scenario in their mind; the product should be something with which the subject sample is familiar. Because the subjects were undergraduate students, headphones were chosen as the advertised product, assuming headphones are a popular product among the subjects and that a product usage scenario could be easily imagined.

Transportive ads.

Transportation was manipulated by the use of concrete description and instructions within the ad itself. Because research has shown that concrete language and explicit instructions to imagine are effective in transporting readers, the body copy encouraged the subject to “Envision yourself using the most comfortable headphones you can imagine...”

Previous research shows that images (actual photos or pictures) in ads have a significant main effect on positive affect and attitudes (Babin & Burns 1997). Although an image in the nontransportive ads may have an effect on affect and attitudes, this experiment controlled for transportation that might be induced by an image—all four conditions had the same image.

The product descriptions in the transportive ads used concrete language and focused on sensory experience and benefits (or drawbacks in the case of the comparison brand) of the product.

Transportive comparative.

The transportive comparative ad first encouraged subjects to envision themselves in an unhappy or uncomfortable experience. The copy began with, “Think back to the last time you used headphones,” followed by a description of product attributes that could contribute to a negative experience using headphones. The names of the comparison brands were explicitly stated. The second part of the copy asked the subjects to imagine themselves in a positive brand experience. This part of the copy began with, “Now envision yourself using the most comfortable headphones you can imagine,” followed by a description of desirable product attributes and positive experience one could have by using the advertised brand.

Transportive noncomparative.

The transportive noncomparative ad had the same description of the advertised brand (second part of the comparative ad) without first describing an undesirable experience and without referring to other brands.

Nontransportive ads.

The nontransportive ads did not use language encouraging transportation. These ads focused more on the technical specifications of headphones, rather than the benefits to the user. Technical specifications are less likely to induce transportation because they describe product features in a dry, matter-of-fact manner, and do not use language that describes the sensory benefits to the user.

Nontransportive comparative.

The nontransportive comparative ad first described the undesirable features of other brands using a bulleted list, and then described the desirable features of the advertised brand and how it is superior on those attributes, also using a bulleted list. Subjects were not asked to imagine themselves using the product nor did the ad describe an experience with the product. In Thompson and Hamilton's (2006) study, comparisons were made more explicit to subjects by using a chart format that showed features offered by each brand. However, subjects who were induced to analytically process ads actually *avored* these ads. The hypotheses presented for this experiment predicted that the nontransportive comparative ad would have the most negative affect, A_{Ad} and A_B . The justification for using a bulleted list to describe each brand individually was that it would be sufficiently comparative and nontransportive, while avoiding the positive results Thompson and Hamilton found when subjects were given a chart with side-by-side comparisons.

Nontransportive noncomparative.

The nontransportive noncomparative ad touted the desirable product attributes of only the target brand without using images or transportive language. No other brands were mentioned.

Dependent Measures

Participants were asked a set of questions to measure their A_{Ad} , affect, A_B and behavioral intent in response to the ads. See Appendix B for the dependent variable measures.

To measure A_{Ad} , this experiment used Babin and Burns's five-item, seven-point semantic differential scale which consists of the following items: boring/interesting,

good/bad (reverse scored), unpleasant/pleasant, nice/awful (reverse scored), and favorable/unfavorable (reverse scored) (Babin & Burns, 1997, p. 37).

To measure A_B , this experiment used Babin and Burns' eight-item, seven-point semantic differential scale, but with one important change. The original items are attractive/unattractive (reverse scored), desirable/undesirable (reverse scored), not for me/for me, uninteresting/interesting, appropriate/inappropriate (reverse scored), unreasonable/reasonable, unappealing/appealing, and a bad car/good car (Babin & Burns, 1997, p. 37). The "bad car/good car" item was changed to "bad headphones/good headphones" to fit appropriately with the product category used in this experiment.

To measure affect, subjects were asked how well twelve words fit with how they felt while viewing the ad, on a five-point Likert scale. The items included: alive, cheerful, delighted, happy, pleased, stimulated, active, energetic, interested, relaxed, positive and content. This scale is an adaptation of Escalas's (2004) feelings scale, which she adapted from Goodstein, Edell and Moore (1990).

This experiment used Sinclair and Irani's (2005) three-item, seven-point semantic differential scale to measure behavioral intent. The instructions asked subjects, "If you were shopping for headphones, how likely would you be to buy headphones made by Prantz?" The response items for this question consist of not at all likely/very likely, impossible/possible, improbable/probable. This experiment also used one of Escalas's (2007) questions to measure behavioral intentions: "How willing would you be to try Prantz headphones in a store?" To be consistent in format, a seven-point semantic differential scale anchored with very willing/not at all willing was used for this item. Because this scale included a question

about *trying* the headphones (rather than only *purchasing*), this measure is called “behavioral intent” rather than “purchase intent.”

Pre-Tests

The ads themselves were pre-tested to determine whether the comparative ads were judged comparative versus the noncomparative ads, and that the transportive ads were judged as more transportive than the nontransportive ads. Forty-seven undergraduate students in an introductory journalism course of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication’s at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill participated in the pre-test.

Pre-tests for the transportation manipulation used an adapted version of Escalas’s (2004) two items adapted from Green and Brock’s (2000) degree of transport scale. Two scale items ranging from 1 to 7 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) measured participants’ self-assessed degree of mental simulation (“While viewing the ad, I simulated listening to music on the headphones” and “while looking at the ad, I imagined myself listening to music on the headphones”).

The four conditions were collapsed into two groups depending on the level of transportation. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the degree of transportation in the nontransportive and transportive conditions. There was a significant difference in the scores for nontransportive ads ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.66$) and transportive ads ($M = 5.02$, $SD = .94$); $t(45) = -3.46$, $p = .002$.

Pre-tests for the comparison manipulation asked subjects, “Did the ad compare two or more specifically named brands?” Subjects answered either “Yes” or “No.” This question was adapted from Wilkie and Farris’s (1975) definition of comparative advertising.

In the nontransportive noncomparative condition ($N = 11$), 100% of the subjects stated that no comparison was present. In the nontransportive comparative condition ($N = 11$), two subjects stated that there was no comparison present. In the transportive noncomparative condition ($N = 12$), one subject stated that there was a comparison present. In the transportive comparative condition ($N = 13$), five subjects stated that no comparison was present.

One change in the ad stimuli was made in response to the results of the pre-test. Because five of 13 pre-test subjects did not recognize the comparison in the transportive comparative condition, a change was made to the copy of this advertisement. In the pre-test ad, the sentence, “These are the most common complaints in reviews by users of Normax, SVD and Jeddou headphones,” was the last sentence of the first paragraph. To make the presence of a comparison more evident in this condition, the sentence was separated from the paragraph and stood on its own as a single-sentence paragraph before the description of the Prantz brand headphones in the ad for the full experiment.

Reliability for the four dependent measure scales was tested using Cronbach’s alpha. All items for affect, A_{Ad} , A_B and behavioral intent scales showed high correlation.

Manipulation Checks

The same questions used for the pre-tests were given to the subjects in the actual experiment to check the manipulations.

As in the analysis of the pre-test results, the four conditions were collapsed into two groups depending on the level of transportation. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the degree of transportation in the nontransportive and transportive

conditions. There was a significant difference in the scores for nontransportive ads ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.62$) and transportive ads ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.65$); $t(90) = -5.62$, $p < .001$.

Ninety-one percent of subjects in the nontransportive noncomparative condition stated that there was no comparison present in the ad. Only two subjects said there was a comparison present. One hundred percent of subjects in the transportive noncomparative condition stated that there was no comparison present. Seventy-eight percent of subjects in the transportive comparative condition stated that there was a comparison present. Five subjects said there was no comparison present. The nontransportive noncomparative condition was unusual. Only 52% of subjects in this condition stated that there was a comparison present. This ad consisted of two bulleted lists. The first list was prefaced with, “These are the most common complaints in reviews by users of Normax, SVD and Jeddson headphones.” The next bulleted list touted the attributes of the Prantz headphones. It is unusual that 11 of the 23 subjects in this condition did not see the ad as comparative. Possible reasons for the manipulation check results and how the comparison manipulation could have been made stronger are addressed in the “Discussion” section.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Description of Subjects and Analyses

Ninety-two subjects participated in this experiment, with 23 subjects in each condition. The mean age of the subjects was 20.59 years; there was one outlier—a subject who was 42. The sample consisted of 71 females and 21 males. Of the 92 subjects, 37 were sophomores, 19 were juniors and 36 were seniors. All subjects were recruited from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication's research participant pool, so it is likely that every participant was enrolled in at least one course in the School.

A two-factor ANOVA was run for each of the dependent variables (A_{Ad} , A_B , affect and behavioral intention). An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

A second set of analyses was run on the data with subjects who said there was a comparison present when one was not, and vice-versa, were eliminated from the analyses. Two subjects were removed from the nontransportive noncomparative condition ($N = 21$); 11 subjects were removed from the nontransportive comparative condition ($N = 12$); no subjects were removed from the transportive noncomparative condition ($N = 23$); and five subjects were removed from the transportive comparative condition ($N = 18$). Results from this set of analyses ($N = 74$) are reported when they differ from the analyses with the entire sample ($N = 92$).

Hypotheses 1_a and 1_b

Hypothesis 1_a predicted that the transportive noncomparative ad would elicit more positive A_{Ad} than the other three conditions (nontransportive noncomparative, nontransportive comparative and transportive comparative ads).

The means and standard deviations for A_{Ad} for all treatment conditions are shown in Appendix D, Figure 2.1. Means are presented graphically in Figure 2.2. The two-factor analysis of variance showed a significant main effect for transportation, $F(1, 88) = 30.13, p < .001$. The main effect for comparison was non-significant, $F(1, 88) = .22, p > .05$. The interaction effect was non-significant, $F(1, 88) = .03, p > .05$.

The mean A_{Ad} for the transportive noncomparative ad was the most favorable of all the conditions ($M = 5.14$). However, it was significantly different from only the nontransportive noncomparative ($M = 3.94$) and the nontransportive comparative ($M = 3.88$) ads. The mean A_{Ad} for the transportive noncomparative ad was not significantly different from the transportive comparative ad ($M = 5.00$). Hypothesis 1_a received partial support.

Hypothesis 1_b predicted that the nontransportive comparative ad would elicit more negative A_{Ad} than the other three conditions (nontransportive noncomparative, transportive noncomparative and transportive comparative ads). The mean A_{Ad} for the nontransportive comparative ad was the least favorable of all the conditions ($M = 3.88$). However, it was significantly different from only the transportive noncomparative ($M = 5.14$) and the transportive comparative ($M = 5.00$) ads. The mean A_{Ad} for the nontransportive comparative ad was not significantly different from the nontransportive noncomparative ad ($M = 3.94$). Hypothesis 1_b received partial support.

Figure 2.2 shows that the four conditions create two groups depending on the degree of transportation—the comparison did not make a difference. Based on these results, the degree of transportation (present versus absent) is the only factor that affected A_{Ad} .

Hypotheses 2_a and 2_b

Hypothesis 2_a predicted that the subjects who viewed the transportive noncomparative ad would experience more positive affect than subjects in the other three conditions (nontransportive noncomparative, nontransportive comparative and transportive comparative ads).

The means and standard deviations for affect for all treatment conditions are shown in Appendix D, Figure 3.1. Means are presented graphically in Figure 3.2. The two-factor analysis of variance showed a significant main effect for transportation, $F(1, 88) = 33.61, p < .001$. The main effect for comparison was non-significant, $F(1, 88) = 1.20, p > .05$. The interaction effect was non-significant, $F(1, 88) = .00, p > .05$.

The mean affect for the transportive comparative ad ($M = 3.33$) was significantly different from only the nontransportive noncomparative ($M = 2.48$) and the nontransportive comparative ($M = 2.64$) ads. The mean affect for the transportive noncomparative ad was not significantly different from the transportive comparative ad ($M = 3.50$). The nontransportive noncomparative and nontransportive comparative ads did not significantly differ from each other either. Hypothesis 2_a received partial support.

Hypothesis 2_b predicted that the subjects who viewed the nontransportive comparative ad would experience more negative affect than subjects in the other three conditions (the nontransportive noncomparative, transportive noncomparative and transportive comparative ads). The mean affect for the nontransportive comparative ad ($M =$

2.64) was significantly different only from the transportive noncomparative ($M = 3.33$) and the transportive comparative ($M = 3.50$) ads. The mean affect for the nontransportive comparative ad was not significantly different from the nontransportive noncomparative ad ($M = 2.48$). Hypothesis 2_b received partial support.

Figure 3.2 shows that the four conditions create two groups depending on the degree of transportation—the comparison did not make a difference. Based on these results, the degree of transportation (present versus absent) is the only factor that affects A_{Ad} .

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the transportive comparative ad would elicit a more favorable A_B than the other three conditions (nontransportive noncomparative, nontransportive comparative and transportive noncomparative ads).

The means and standard deviations for all treatment conditions are shown in Appendix D, Figure 4.1. Means are presented graphically in Figure 4.2. The two-factor analysis of variance showed a significant main effect for transportation, $F(1, 88) = 14.72, p < .001$. The main effect for comparison was non-significant, $F(1, 88) = .74, p > .05$. The interaction effect was non-significant, $F(1, 88) = 1.91, p > .05$.

The mean A_B for the transportive comparative ad ($M = 5.29$) was significantly different from only the nontransportive comparative ($M = 4.78$) and the nontransportive noncomparative ($M = 4.31$) ads. The difference in A_B between the transportive comparative ad and the transportive noncomparative ad ($M = 5.40$) was not significant. Hypothesis 3 received partial support.

Figure 4.2 shows that the four conditions form two groups depending on the degree of transportation—the comparison did not make a difference. Based on these results, the degree of transportation (present versus absent) is the only factor that affects A_B .

The second set of analyses conducted using only the subjects who recognized a comparison when one was present and who accurately recognized when no comparison was present revealed different results for A_B . The means and standard deviations are shown in Figure 4.3. Means are presented graphically in Figure 4.4. The two-factor analysis of variance showed a significant main effect for transportation, $F(1, 70) = 6.158, p < .05$. The main effect for comparison was non-significant, $F(1, 70) = 2.63, p > .05$. In contrast with the other results, the interaction effect was significant, $F(1, 70) = 6.38, p < .05$.

The main effect of transportation is qualified by the disordinal interaction, demonstrated by the crossed lines in Figure 4.4. The presence of a comparison had no effect on A_B when the ad is transportive, but had a significant effect on A_B when the ad is nontransportive.

Tukey's HSD post hoc tests revealed differences in A_B between pairs of conditions. The nontransportive noncomparative ad was significantly different from all three other conditions (nontransportive comparative, transportive noncomparative and transportive comparative ads). The nontransportive comparative ad was significantly different from only the nontransportive comparative ad. It was not significantly different from the transportive comparative and the transportive noncomparative ads. The transportive noncomparative ad was significantly different only from the nontransportive noncomparative ad. It was not significantly different from the nontransportive comparative and the transportive comparative ads. The transportive comparative ad was significantly different from the nontransportive

noncomparative and transportive noncomparative ads. The nontransportive noncomparative condition elicited significantly less favorable A_B compared to the nontransportive comparative condition, a result that none of the hypotheses predicted.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the transportive comparative ad would elicit a more favorable behavioral intent than the other three conditions (nontransportive noncomparative, nontransportive comparative and transportive noncomparative ads).

The means and standard deviations for all treatment conditions are shown in Appendix D, Figure 5.1. Means are presented graphically in Figure 5.2. The two-factor analysis of variance showed a significant main effect for transportation, $F(1, 88) = 23.19, p < .001$. The main effect for comparison was non-significant, $F(1, 88) = 2.50, p > .05$. The interaction effect was non-significant, $F(1, 88) = 2.20, p > .05$.

The mean score for behavioral intent for the transportive comparative ad ($M = 5.34$) was significantly different from only the nontransportive comparative ($M = 4.59$) and the nontransportive noncomparative ($M = 3.91$) ads. The difference in behavioral intent between the transportive comparative ad and the transportive noncomparative ad ($M = 5.32$) was not significant. There was no significant difference between the nontransportive noncomparative and nontransportive comparative ads either. The transportive noncomparative and transportive comparative ads had equivalent effect on behavioral intentions. Hypothesis 4 received partial support.

Figure 5.2 shows that the four conditions create two groups depending on the degree of transportation—the comparison did not make a difference. Based on these results, the

degree of transportation (present versus absent) is the only factor that affects behavioral intentions.

The second set of analyses with 74 subjects revealed different results for behavioral intent. The means and standard deviations are shown in Figure 5.3. Means are presented graphically in Figure 5.4. The two-factor analysis of variance showed a significant main effect for transportation, $F(1, 70) = 11.78, p < .05$; a main effect for comparison that approached significance, $F(1, 70) = 3.88, p = .053$; and a significant interaction between transportation and comparison, $F(1, 70) = 4.70, p < .05$.

The main effect of transportation is qualified by the presence of the interaction. Figure 5.4 shows the lines converging, indicating that there was no difference between the transportive noncomparative and transportive comparative conditions. Tukey's HSD post hoc tests revealed differences in behavioral intent between pairs of conditions. The nontransportive noncomparative ad was significantly different from all three other conditions (nontransportive comparative, transportive noncomparative and transportive comparative ads). The nontransportive comparative ad was significantly different from only the nontransportive comparative ad. It was not significantly different from the transportive comparative and the transportive noncomparative ads. The transportive noncomparative ad was significantly different only from the nontransportive noncomparative ad. It was not significantly different from the nontransportive comparative and the transportive comparative ads. The transportive comparative ad was significantly different from the nontransportive noncomparative and transportive noncomparative ads.

The presence of a comparison had no effect if the ad was transportive. However, the presence of a comparison did have an effect on the nontransportive ads. Interestingly, there

was no interaction effect for the transportive comparative ad as predicted, but there was a significant interaction for the nontransportive ads. The nontransportive comparative ad elicited a significantly greater mean for behavioral intent than the nontransportive noncomparative ad, a result none of the hypotheses predicted.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusions

Based on previous research studying the use of transportation and comparisons in advertisements, this study's hypotheses predicted subjects' reactions to an ad when transportation and a comparison are used together. The results of this experiment showed that the presence or absence of a comparison did not have a significant effect on attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, affect and behavioral intentions, as predicted by the hypotheses. The four dependent variables were affected only by the presence or absence of transportation; whether the ad was noncomparative or comparative did not matter. These findings strongly support Escalas's research: narrative transportation has a strong effect on readers, increasing upbeat feelings and positive attitudes toward both the ad and the brand. Green and Brock (2000) assert that transportation causes readers to suspend their real-world beliefs in order to cultivate story-consistent beliefs. The present study bolsters findings that transportation has strong, measurable effects on emotion, attitudes and behavioral intentions.

The results of this experiment found significant main effects of the presence of transportation on all four dependent variables, findings that support previous research demonstrating the positive, desirable effects of using transportation as a persuasive device. However, the results of this study do not fully support previous research showing that the presence of a comparison has a positive effect on attitude toward the brand. Interestingly, the mean attitude toward the brand for the nontransportive comparative ad was greater than the

nontransportive noncomparative ad. These results are in the hypothesized direction, but fail to achieve significance. The same holds true for behavioral intent: the nontransportive comparative ad had a greater mean for behavioral intent than the nontransportive noncomparative ad, but failed to achieve significance.

The transportive comparative ad elicited more positive attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, affect and behavioral intentions than the nontransportive comparative ad. As this study proposed, the presence of transportation *does* “help the comparison go down.” However, the hypotheses for attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent were only partially supported because they predicted that the transportive comparative ad would elicit the most positive attitude toward the ad and behavioral intent than *all* the other ads. The results indicate that the subjects found transportation appealing (main effects of transportation for attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, affect and behavioral intent) whether the ad was comparative or not. Although transportation does make the comparison more acceptable (the transportive comparative ad was rated more favorably than the nontransportive comparative ad)—subjects seemed to like the “sugar” with or without the “medicine.” The presence of transportation was appealing in both the noncomparative and comparative ads.

Although the hypotheses predicted that the transportive noncomparative ad would elicit the most favorable attitude toward the ad and affect, there was no difference between the transportive ads. Whereas previous research found unfavorable attitude toward the ad and affect in response to comparative advertisements, the transportive comparative ad was as benign as the transportive noncomparative ad. Although these results did not fully support Hypotheses 1_a, 1_b, 2_a and 2_b, they supported the notion that transportation could ameliorate

the negative effects of a comparative ad. The transportive comparative and transportive noncomparative ads were statistically equivalent for the four dependent variables. These results suggest that there is certainly something about narrative transportation that “neutralizes” the negative attitude toward the ad and affect caused in response to a comparative ad.

What is the mechanism of transportation that “makes the comparison go down?” As Escalas (2004, 2007) suggests, transportation increases upbeat feelings, which subsequently have a positive effect on attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand. She argues that simulation reduces critical thoughts about the ad. This experiment’s findings suggest that because subjects are transported, they might not systematically evaluate the claims made in a comparative ad. Subjects in the transportive comparative condition might not have made as many source derogations because the use of narrative transportation distracted them from the comparison.

Looking beyond the specific hypotheses (1_a, 1_b, 2_a, and 2_b), the larger purpose of this study was to determine if using narrative transportation could make the comparison more palatable. Across the board, subjects in this study reacted significantly more favorably to the transportive comparative ad than to the nontransportive comparative ad.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 predicted that the transportive comparative ad would be the most effective in creating favorable attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent. Because previous research has shown that both transportation and comparisons have positive effects on subjects’ attitude toward the brand, I expected the transportive comparative ad to have the best attitude toward the brand (behavioral intent is conventionally measured as well in advertising and marketing research). The use of narrative transportation in a comparative

format was expected to interact with the comparison in the transportive comparative condition to elicit the most favorable attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent in subjects. In fact, this study showed only a main effect for transportation—the transportive comparative and transportive noncomparative ads were statistically the same. Based on this study’s findings, the influence of the comparison on subjects’ attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent is negligible—it is only the use of transportation that matters. The transportive comparative ad did elicit more favorable attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent than the nontransportive noncomparative and nontransportive comparative ads. Although previous research has established that comparative ads can have some negative effects, a transportive comparative ad might be more effective than a nontransportive noncomparative ad. Because the transportive comparative condition failed to surpass the transportive noncomparative ad for both attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent, advertisers should consider their goals and brand positioning when deciding whether to employ a comparative or noncomparative ad format when using narrative transportation.

Alternate Analyses

Although the analyses for attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent showed only main effects for transportation when responses from the entire sample of 92 subjects were used, the results paint a different picture when subjects who did not recognize a comparison when one was present, and vice-versa, are removed. As discussed in the “Manipulation Check” and “Results” sections, a second set of analyses were run using 74 subjects based on their answer to the comparison manipulation check question. How these alternate results fit with existing research, as well as possible reasons why subjects might

have judged noncomparative ads as comparative and comparative ads as noncomparative, are discussed.

Two interaction effects were found when the second set of analyses was run: one for attitude toward the brand and another for behavioral intent. Interestingly, the results for the two variables are the same—the presence of a comparison had no effect when the ad was transportive, but the comparison had a significant effect when the ad was nontransportive. For both attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent, subjects had significantly more favorable attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent in response to the nontransportive comparative ad than the nontransportive comparative ad. These results are entirely unexpected and were not at all foreseen by the hypotheses. Though the nontransportive noncomparative ad was expected to be the least interesting of the four ads, it was expected to be “neutral” and fall somewhere in the middle of the four conditions on the dependent variables: not as negatively rated as the nontransportive comparative ad, but not as positively rated as the two transportive ads.

Upon further reflection, these alternative results are consistent with previous research on comparative advertising. Grewal et al. (1997) and Dröge (1989) demonstrated that comparative ads create negative affect and attitude toward the *ad*, but that they *increase* positive attitude toward the *brand*. For attitude toward the ad and affect, the nontransportive noncomparative and nontransportive comparative ads were not significantly different. In this experiment, the presence of a comparison elicited more favorable attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent, but only for the nontransportive ads. The presence of a comparison, when it was recognized, did boost subjects’ attitude toward the brand (and behavioral intent) beyond the noncomparative ad when the ads were nontransportive.

Nearly half of the subjects in the nontransportive comparative condition said that the ad did *not* “compare two or more specifically named brands.” The design of this ad was based on Thompson and Hamilton’s (2006) matrix-style presentation of comparisons between different brands’ attributes. Instead of using a matrix, this experiment used three bullet points for the competitors and three for the advertised brand. The comparison was intended to be as explicit and obvious as possible. Perhaps subjects did not see the ad as comparative because the brands were not listed side-by-side and were instead listed one after the other (the competitors were listed first and Prantz listed second). The subjects might have thought the ad was not comparative because the competitors were listed at the beginning of the ad before the first bulleted list, and the Prantz brand name was not mentioned until after the second bulleted list. It is possible that the language of the manipulation check question (“...specifically named brands...”) confused subjects. However, if this were the case, then subjects in the transportive comparative condition would have also been confused, but only five subjects in this condition said there was no comparison, as opposed to 11 in the nontransportive comparative condition. Of course it is also possible that the subjects might have not been reading the ad very carefully.

Future research ought to consider designing a nontransportive comparative ad that makes the comparison unambiguous. In this experiment, a yes-or-no forced-choice question was used to check the comparison manipulation. In future studies, a scale could be used to measure a degree of comparison in the same way the degree of transportation was measured by a one-to-seven Likert scale.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As with many consumer psychology experiments conducted in the lab, creating ads for imaginary brands controls for subjects' previous brand exposure, but also reduces external validity. It would be nearly impossible to find ads that meet all four experimental conditions for the same brands (and comparing the same brands in the comparative conditions). The formats of the ads were used to effectively manipulate the independent variables, but actual ads for real brands would likely not use bulleted lists nor describe the competitor brand(s) in extensive detail; the advertised brand would likely be described in more depth.

This experiment examined only print advertisements and did not test comparisons or transportation in other media such as radio, television, or Internet, nor face-to-face marketing, such as an in-store interaction with a retail or car salesperson. The qualities of comparisons and narrative transportation would likely be experienced differently in these contexts. Face-to-face persuasion using comparisons might be perceived as more aggressive and result in more negative affect. Future research ought to test comparative and transportive ads in media other than print.

Television, for example, might be inherently more transportive; moving images, audio narration, and a theatrical quality to television might induce more transportation than a print ad. A well-known series of transportive comparative ads on television is the "Get a Mac" campaign by Apple Inc. Each commercial begins with "Hello, I'm a Mac...And I'm a PC." Next, a direct comparison is made between a specific computer feature on which Mac claim to be superior to PCs. It would be interesting to see if the results for attitude toward the

ad, affect, attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent for television commercials are similar to the results for print ads.

This experiment was conducted on university students, a well-educated sample of young people, usually 18-22. An experiment demonstrates cause-and-effect, but the results cannot be generalized to a wider population. Advertisers hoping to use the results of this experiment to guide the creation of ad designs should consider their target consumers. For example, advertisers of a product aimed at a demographic having considerably different characteristics than university students ought to replicate the experiment for the targeted segment of consumers to determine what approach is most desirable.

For example, consumers who are very loyal to a certain brand might find comparative ads more appealing because they reinforce their beliefs about which brand they believe is superior. Consumers “comparison shopping” for a vacation destination might welcome a side-by-side comparison because it could alleviate the amount of research they would have done themselves. Authors and publishers marketing books and magazines presumably target many consumers who enjoy literature, fiction, fantasy and imagination and who therefore might react very favorably to the use of narrative transportation in an ad. The psychographic characteristics of one’s targeted consumers affect how they react to brand comparisons and narrative transportation in ads. Future research ought to be tailored to the consumer segments that one’s brand is intended to target.

Future research could also investigate the differences in the features of the ad and their effect on the degree transportation to determine what is most effective. Does using the first (“I”), second (“you”) or third (“he/she,” “they,” etc.) person to describe a product usage scenario affect the degree of narrative transportation experienced? Are real-life or fantasy

product scenarios more transportive? Measuring the effectiveness of different narrative approaches in advertising could assist art directors and copywriters in crafting powerful transportive advertisements.

Another important issue to consider is how narrative transportation might be fundamentally different in a fictional story versus an advertisement. Does the reader's suspension of disbelief occur the same way during a novel, for example, as it does while one reads an advertisement? Transportation invoked by advertisements might come about through different mental processes altogether. Further investigation into the mental processes of transportation in response to advertisements is needed to develop and advance transportation theory. Research methods such as in-depth interviews, free response questionnaires and thought listing could permit more insight into subjects' mental processes and experiences of transportation via a traditional narrative story versus a transportive advertisement.

Practical Implications and Recommendations for Advertisers

The results of this experiment indicate that if advertisers want to draw comparisons between their brand and a competitor, using transportation as a strategic device is effective in increasing consumers' attitude toward the ad, affect, attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent. Creating a transportive comparative ad will result in favorable attitude toward the ad, affect, attitude toward the brand and behavioral intentions, as opposed to a nontransportive comparative ad.

However, if an advertiser is trying to decide whether or not to include a comparison in an ad, and the ad is transportive, he or she must consider the needs, goals and brand positioning of his or her brand. Because this experiment found that the transportive

comparative and transportive noncomparative ads were not significantly different on any of the four dependent variables, it might not matter whether a comparison is used or not; what matters is whether a comparison is appropriate for the circumstances. Advertisers ought to consider James and Hensel's (1991) advice to avoid negative or malicious comparisons and to consider if one's brand is a market leader. In this study, the description of the competitors' headphones was not presented maliciously; the undesirable features and product usage scenarios given for the competitor brands were presented as legitimate complaints by users of those brands.

Looking at the alternate results run with 74 subjects, it might be better for an advertiser to draw comparisons between competitors and the advertised brand if he or she wants to positively impact attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent when using narrative transportation is not practical. For example, if a brand has only a small space for an ad, there might not be room for the long, descriptive copy that would be used to transport readers. The minimal space might dictate the creation of a nontransportive ad. In this case, the advertiser should choose to create a comparative advertisement. However, an advertiser must decide whether attitude toward the ad and affect, or attitude toward the brand and behavioral intentions are more desirable, which will depend on the industry, as well as the branding and marketing goals. Increasing positive attitude toward the ad and affect would likely be appropriate if a company wants to create "buzz" about a product, attempt to create a campaign that will "go viral," or inform consumers about new features or an updated model. Increasing positive attitude toward the brand and behavioral intent would likely be appropriate if a company needs to strengthen its reputation, is concerned with a lack of sales, or is trying to get people to act, for example, a volunteer organization.

In addition to considering the position of one's product or service in the marketplace, brand managers and advertisers need to consider if narrative transportation and comparisons are suited to the industry. Of course, any product-usage scenario can be described using rich narrative description; however some products or services might be more difficult for people to imagine. For example, narrative transportation would likely work well for travel, retail, consumer goods, restaurants and food—products and services that provide an *experience* for the consumer.

Comparisons can be created as long as brand managers have sufficient knowledge about the competitors and can make claims about their product or service in direct contrast to the competition. In this experiment, comparisons were made between the same headphone features—how competitors are inferior on specific attributes, and how the advertised brand, Prantz, was superior on those same attributes. An optimal comparative ad would likely draw contrasts between the same product and service attributes. Knowledge of one's competitors, their weaknesses and what consumers say about their experiences with competitor brands is crucial in order to create effective comparisons.

Comparative advertisements can be created in a variety of ways. This experiment compared the specific product attributes of two brands in the same product category. A brand might also want to draw comparisons between a consumer's experience with and without it. A transportive comparative ad would be apropos in such a case. PAM Cooking Spray has employed such transportive comparative ads in a television campaign. In the first scenario, someone is shown cooking a pork chop and trying to “unstick” the meat from the pan. The meat flies through the window and the protagonist experiences a chain of misfortunes set off by the kitchen trouble. In a second scenario, the protagonist is shown having a pleasant

cooking and dinner experience as a result of using PAM. This is an example of how a comparison can be made without mentioning another brand at all.

Based on this study, my general advice to brand managers and advertisers would be to use narrative transportation whenever possible, if space allows and a consumer experience with the product or service can be described in a narrative. The language of narrative transportation is powerfully persuasive. A transportive ad will increase consumers' positive attitude toward the ad, affect, attitude toward the brand and behavioral intentions as opposed to a nontransportive ad. Additionally, a transportive comparative advertisement is better than nontransportive noncomparative and nontransportive comparative ads. As with any campaign tactic or strategy, advertisers should consider the needs and goals of brands on a case-by-case basis to determine if a transportive and/or comparative approach is the most advantageous.

APPENDIX A: Advertisement Stimuli

Nontransportive noncomparative ad:

These headphones are ergonomically designed to provide maximum comfort. The 40mm electrostatic drivers have a high frequency response, eliminating ambient noise. Transient response technology and low output impedance offer high-fidelity sound reducing total harmonic distortion to less than 1%. Musicians record their music in the studio with the best equipment—you deserve to listen to your favorite song the way the artist intended you to hear it.

Introducing the Auralab RK8 by Prantz. Our audio engineers' finest innovation yet.



Nontransportive comparative ad:

These are the most common complaints in reviews by users of Normax, SVD and Jeddou headphones:

- The plastic on the ear cushions cracks and scratches after long-term use; the earbuds are too big to fit in your ears.
- The moving coil drivers allow too much ambient sound to come through.
- Output impedance between 20 and 50 Ohms causes the total harmonic distortion to be as high as 5%.

Our headphones change all that.

- Our headphones are ergonomically designed to provide maximum comfort.
- The 40mm electrostatic drivers have a high frequency response, eliminating ambient noise.
- Transient response technology and low output impedance offer high-fidelity sound reducing total harmonic distortion to less than 1%.

Musicians record their music in the studio with the best equipment—you deserve to listen to your favorite song the way the artist intended you to hear it.

Introducing the Auralab RK8 by Prantz. Our audio engineers' finest innovation yet.



Transportive noncomparative ad:

Envision yourself using the most comfortable headphones you can imagine. No pressure, no pinching, just soft cushions hugging your ears. All distracting background noise drops away. The sound is sonorous, resonant and rich. You discover secret nuances that you never knew existed in your favorite songs. Musicians record their music in the studio with the best equipment—you deserve to listen to your favorite song the way the artist intended you to hear it. Experience it.

Let the sound envelop you.

Introducing the Auralab RK8 by Prantz. Our audio engineers' finest innovation yet.



Transportive comparative ad:

Think back to the last time you used headphones. Maybe your mp3 player is an extension of you, an audiophile who can't tolerate a moment without music. Or perhaps you're a more casual listener who listens while exercising or walking on campus. The headphones pinched and squeezed your ears. Maybe they were earbuds that just didn't fit the shape of your ears. Maybe you were on an airplane and all you could hear was the engine noise, even with your volume all the way up. Your music didn't sound as full and rich as it should—too tinny. Distant. Detached.

Those are the most common complaints in reviews by users of Normax, SVD and Jeddou headphones.

Now envision yourself using the most comfortable headphones you can imagine. No pressure, no pinching, just soft cushions hugging your ears. All distracting background noise drops away. The sound is sonorous, resonant and rich. You discover secret nuances that you never knew existed in your favorite songs. Musicians record their music in the studio with the best equipment—you deserve to listen to your favorite song the way the artist intended you to hear it. Experience it.

Let the sound envelop you.

Introducing the Auralab RK8 by Prantz. Our audio engineers' finest innovation yet.



APPENDIX B: Dependent Variables Scales

For each pair of adjectives, please circle the number that reflects the extent to which you believe the adjectives describe the **advertisement**.

Boring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interesting
Good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Pleasant
Nice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Awful
Favorable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfavorable

For each pair of adjectives, please circle the number that reflects the extent to which you believe the adjectives describe the **Prantz brand**.

Attractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unattractive
Desirable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Undesirable
Not for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	For me
Uninteresting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interesting
Appropriate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Inappropriate
Unreasonable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Reasonable
Unappealing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Appealing
Bad headphones	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good headphones

Please tell us how the advertisement for Prantz headphones made you **feel**. Here we are interested in **your reactions to the ad** and **not** how you would describe it.

Please tell us how well you think each of the words listed below describes your feelings in response to the ad you just saw. If the word describes the way you feel extremely well, circle a 5; very well, circle a 4; fairly well, circle a 3; not very well, circle a 2; not well at all, circle a 1.

Alive

Not well at all					Extremely well
1	2	3	4	5	

Cheerful

Not well at all					Extremely well
1	2	3	4	5	

Delighted

Not well at all					Extremely well
1	2	3	4	5	

Happy

Not well at all					Extremely well
1	2	3	4	5	

Pleased

Not well at all					Extremely well
1	2	3	4	5	

Stimulated

Not well at all					Extremely well
1	2	3	4	5	

If you were shopping for headphones, how likely would you be to buy headphones made by Prantz?

Not at all likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very likely
Impossible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Possible
Improbable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Probable

How willing would you be to try the headphones in a store?

Not at all willing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very willing
---------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---------------------

While viewing the ad, I simulated using the headphones.

Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
--------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----------------------

While looking at the ad, I imagined myself using the headphones.

Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
--------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----------------------

Did the ad compare two or more specifically named brands?

Yes No

Demographic Information

Age (in years): _____

Gender (circle one): M F

Year in School (circle one): Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate Other

APPENDIX C: Pre-Test and Manipulation Check Questions

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following two statements by circling the appropriate number, from 1 to 7, where “1” indicates that you strongly disagree, and “7” indicates that you strongly agree.

While viewing the ad, I simulated listening to music on the headphones.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **Strongly agree**

While looking at the ad, I imagined myself listening to music on the headphones.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **Strongly agree**

Did the ad compare two or more specifically named brands?

Yes

No

APPENDIX D: Figures for Results

Figure 2.1

Means and Standard Deviations for Attitude Toward the Ad

		Transportive	
		Yes	No
Comparative	Yes	$M = 5.00$ $SD = .82$	$M = 3.88$ $SD = 1.47$
	No	$M = 5.14$ $SD = .86$	$M = 3.94$ $SD = 1.78$

Figure 2.2

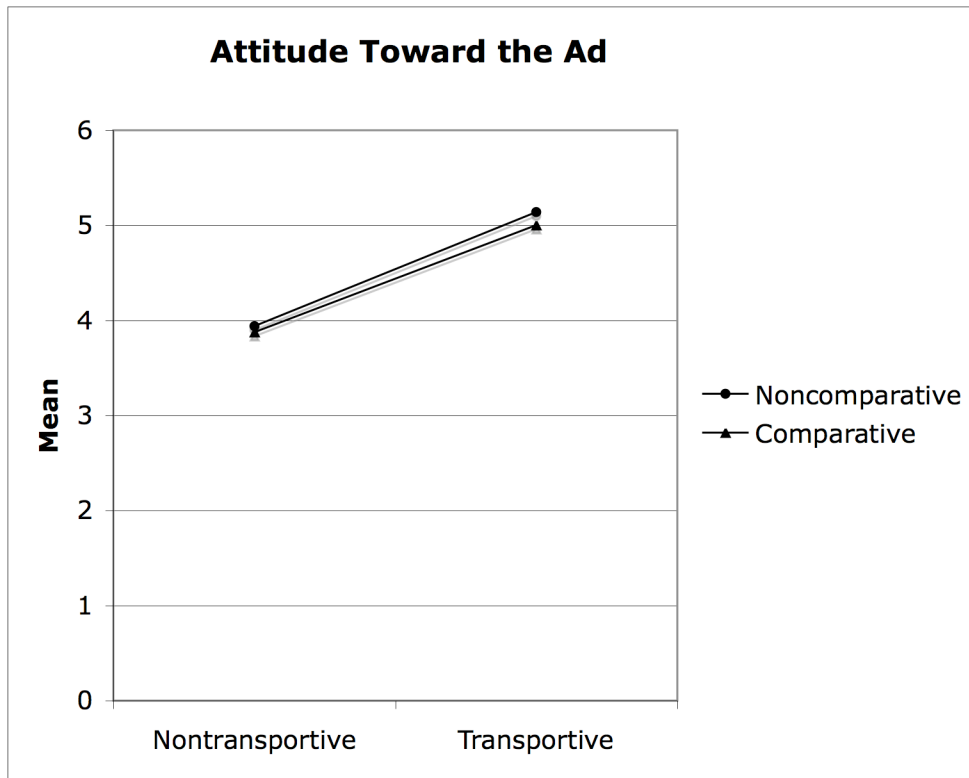


Figure 3.1

Means and Standard Deviations for Affect

		Transportive	
		Yes	No
Comparative	Yes	$M = 3.50$ $SD = .73$	$M = 2.64$ $SD = .72$
	No	$M = 3.33$ $SD = .43$	$M = 2.48$ $SD = .84$

Figure 3.2

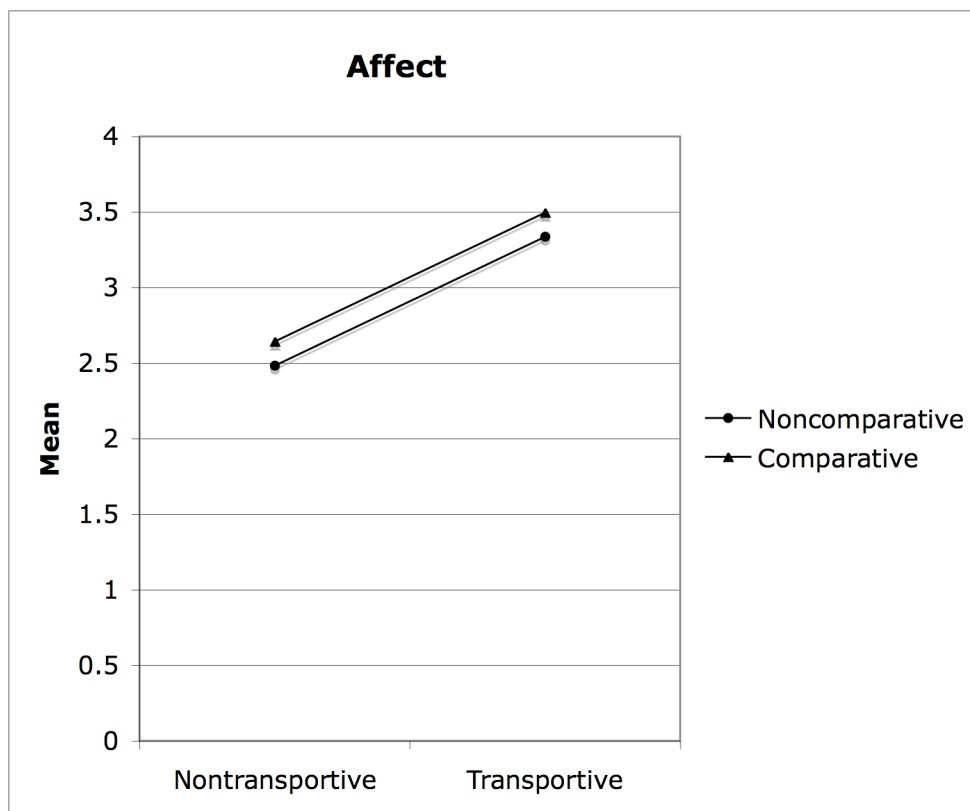


Figure 4.1

Means and Standard Deviations for Attitude Toward the Brand

		Transportive	
		Yes	No
Comparative	Yes	$M = 5.29$ $SD = .89$	$M = 4.78$ $SD = 1.08$
	No	$M = 5.40$ $SD = .70$	$M = 4.31$ $SD = 1.24$

Figure 4.2

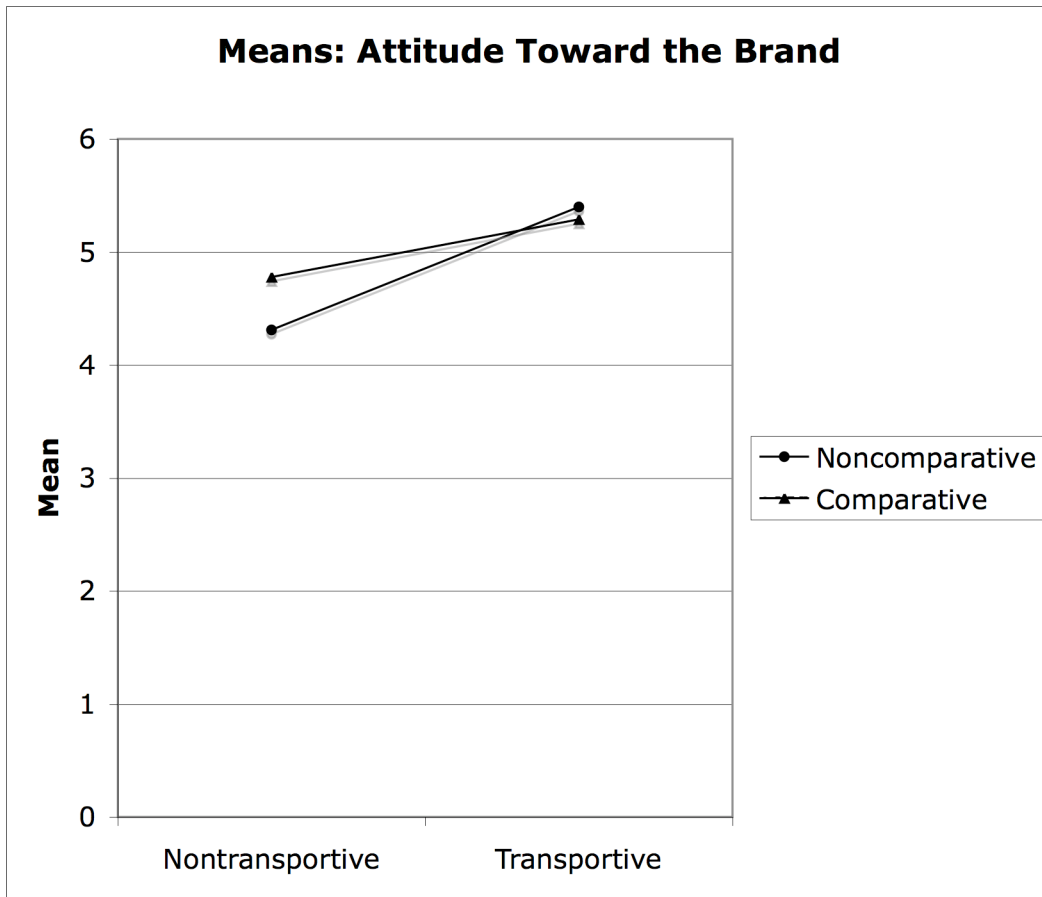


Figure 4.3

Means and Standard Deviations for
Attitude Toward the Brand ($N = 74$)

		Transportive	
		Yes	No
Comparative	Yes	$M = 5.19$ $SD = .90$	$M = 5.20$ $SD = .97$
	No	$M = 5.40$ $SD = .70$	$M = 4.24$ $SD = 1.23$

Figure 4.4

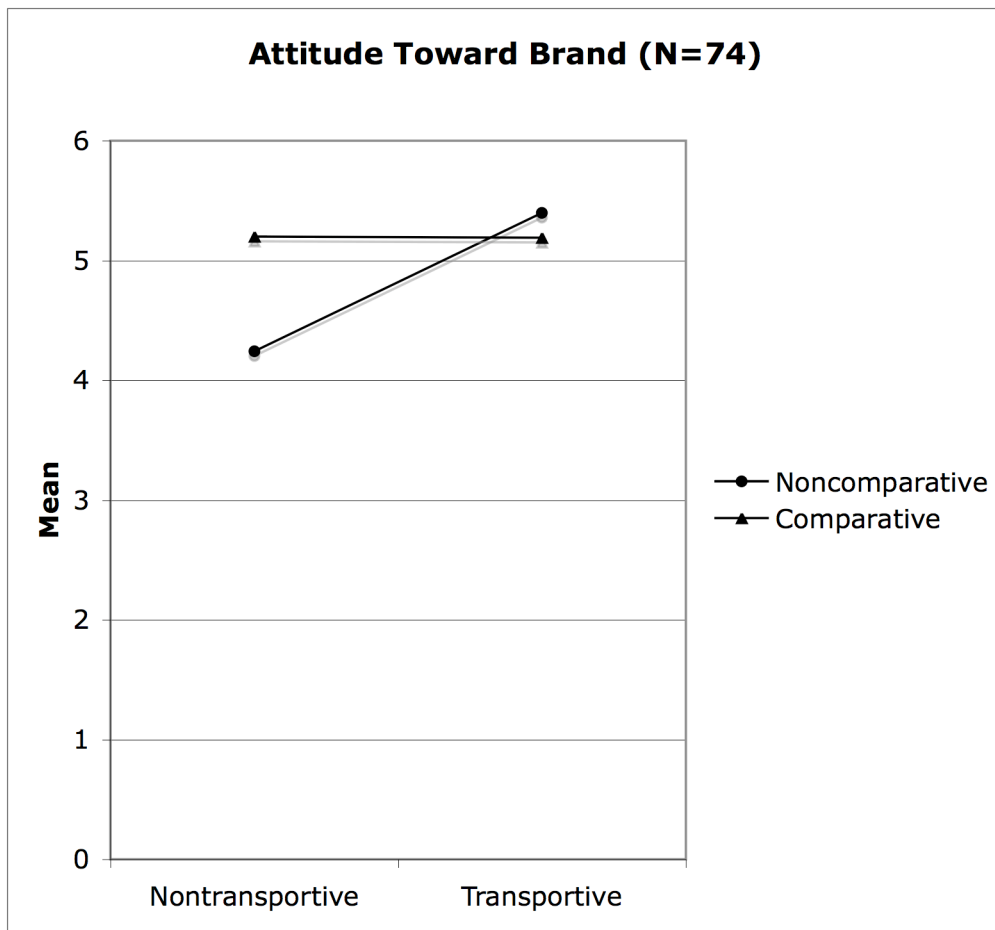


Figure 5.1

Means and Standard Deviations for Behavioral Intention

		Transportive	
		Yes	No
Comparative	Yes	$M = 5.34$ $SD = 1.11$	$M = 4.59$ $SD = .81$
	No	$M = 5.32$ $SD = .91$	$M = 3.91$ $SD = 1.31$

Figure 5.2

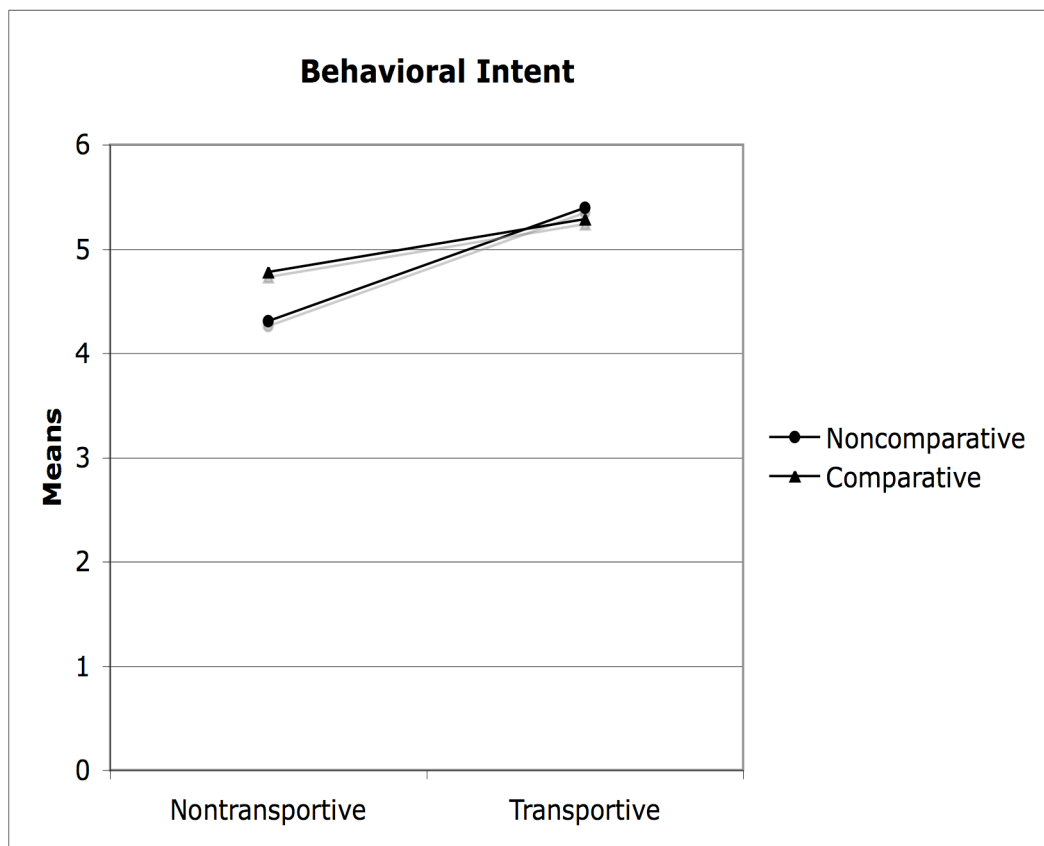
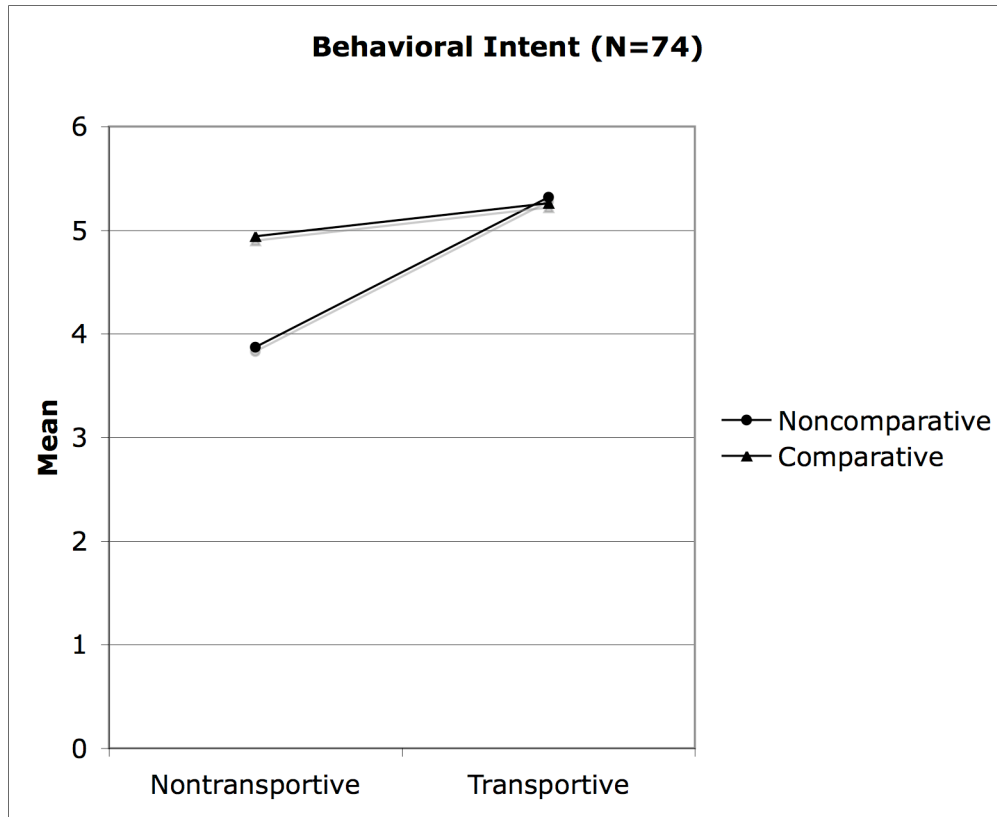


Figure 5.3

		Transportive	
		Yes	No
Comparative	Yes	$M = 5.19$ $SD = .90$	$M = 5.20$ $SD = .97$
	No	$M = 5.40$ $SD = .70$	$M = 4.24$ $SD = 1.23$

Figure 5.4



References

- Babin, L. A., Burns, A. C., & Biswas, A. (1992). A framework providing direction for research on communication effects of mental imagery-evoking advertising strategies. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 19, 621-28. Retrieved from Business Source Premier database.
- Babin, L. A., & Burns, A. C. (1997). Effects of print ad pictures and copy containing instructions to imagine on mental imagery that mediates attitudes. *Journal of Advertising*, 26(3), 33-44. Retrieved from PsycINFO database.
- Belch, G. E. (1981). An examination of comparative and noncomparative television commercials: The effects of claim variation and repetition on cognitive response and message acceptance. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18, 333-49. Retrieved from Business Source Premier database.
- Dröge, C. (1989). Shaping the route to attitude change: Central versus peripheral processing through comparative versus noncomparative advertising. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 26, 193-204. Retrieved from Business Source Premier database.
- Escalas, J. E. (2004). Imagine yourself in the product: Mental simulation, narrative transportation, and persuasion. *Journal of Advertising*, 33(2), 37-48.
- Escalas, J. E. (2007). Self-referencing and persuasion: Narrative transportation versus analytical elaboration. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33, 421- 29.
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), 701-21. doi: 10.1037//0022-3514.79.5.701.
- Golden, L. L. (1979). Consumer reactions to explicit brand comparisons in advertisements. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 16, 517-32. Retrieved from Business Source Premier database.
- Goodstein, R. C., Edell, J. A., & Moore, M. C. (1990). When are feelings generated? Assessing the presence and reliability of feelings based on storyboards and animatics. In S. J. Agres, Edell, J. A., & T. M. Dubitsky (Eds.), *Emotion in Advertising: Theoretical and Practical Explorations* (pp. 175-210). Westport, CT: Quorum Books.
- Grewal, D., Kavanoor, S., Fern, E. F., Costley, C., & Barnes, J. (1997). Comparative versus noncomparative advertising: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, 61, 1-15. Retrieved from Business Source Premier database.
- James, K. E., & Hensel, P. J. (1991). Negative advertising: The malicious strain of comparative advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 20(2), 53-69. Retrieved from Business Source Premier database.

- Keller, P. A., & McGill, A. L. (1994). Differences in the relative influence of product attributes under alternative processing conditions: Attribute importance versus attribute ease of imaginability. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 3(1), 29-49. Retrieved from Business Source Premier database.
- MacInnis, D. J., & Price, L. L. (1987). The role of imagery in information processing: Review and extensions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13, 473-91. Retrieved from Business Source Premier database.
- Petrova, P. K., & Cialdini, R. B. (2005). Fluency of consumption imagery and the backfire effects of imagery appeals. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32, 442-52. Retrieved from Business Source Premier database.
- Sinclair, J., & Irani, T. (2005). Advocacy advertising for biotechnology: The effect of public accountability on corporate trust and attitude toward the ad. *Journal of Advertising*, 34(3), 59-73.
- Sujan, M., Bettman, J. R., & Baumgartner, H. (1993). Influencing consumer judgments using autobiographical memories: A self-referencing perspective. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 30, 422-36. Retrieved from Business Source Premier database.
- Thompson, D. V., & Hamilton, R. W. (2006). The effects of information processing mode on consumers' responses to comparative advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32, 530-40.
- Wilkie, W. L., & Farris, P. W. (1975). Comparison advertising: Problems and potential. *Journal of Marketing*, 39, 7-15. Retrieved from Business Source Premier database.