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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Hollis Jefferson Warr, Jr. entitled "Local Comparative Television Advertising: An Experiment." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Communications.

Donald G. Hileman, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

LOCAL COMPARATIVE TELEVISION ADVERTISING: AN EXPERIMENT

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects that comparative television commercials for a local retailer would have on local consumers. Specifically, this research was designed to determine if local comparative television commercials were more or less effective than local noncomparative commercials in the areas of: (1) sponsor identification; (2) recall of copy claims; (3) consumer approval; (4) believability; (5) interestingness; and (6) store patronage.

A controlled laboratory experiment was executed and data gathered from 88 subjects who were members of three Knoxville-area men's civic clubs. Two treatment commercials were produced for a local retailer which contained the same copy themes and used identical production techniques. The only difference between the two treatment commercials was that one had a comparative message while the other had a noncomparative message. Three television programs were then produced which were identical except for the commercials. These programs were then edited so the first program contained the local retailer's comparative commercial and the second program contained the local retailer's noncomparative commercial. The third program did not contain a commercial for the local retailer.

These three programs were randomly assigned to the three groups of subjects. One civic club viewed the program containing the comparative commercial. The second club was shown the program containing the noncomparative commercial. The third club, acting as a control group, viewed the program that did not have a commercial for the local retailer.

Results reported show no statistically significant differences between the responses obtained from subjects in the three experimental groups. These findings suggest that comparative television advertising for a local retailer is no more or no less effective than noncomparative television advertising.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The highly competitive field of advertising is marked by dynamic change and the use of bold new techniques. Advertising practitioners are constantly seeking new ideas and implementing new strategies to make their messages more effective. One strategy which has recently been the subject of much controversy from advertising professionals and the public in general is that of comparative advertising. The dramatic increase of advertisements during the last few years where competitors are openly mentioned has brought the comparative strategy to the forefront of awareness and controversy. Advertisers using this strategy have been praised by some and criticized by others. The increased popularity of the strategy has led researchers to ask many important questions about its overall effectiveness.

Purpose and Significance

There has not been a great deal of research on comparative advertising so many empirical questions about the effects comparative advertising messages have on consumers remain unanswered (Belch, 1981; Goodwin & Etgar, 1980; Swinyard, 1981). The few research studies on the effectiveness of comparative advertising which have been published have produced widely conflicting results. Some of these studies have found that comparative advertising messages are more effective than traditional, noncomparative advertising messages. Other studies have suggested that comparative messages are no more or no less effective than noncomparative messages. Still other studies have found comparative advertising messages to be significantly less effective than

noncomparative advertising messages. Even though these research efforts have failed to produce a body of evidence to support the practice of comparative advertising, we are beginning to see more and more advertisements in which competing firms, products, and/or services are openly mentioned and often compared (Belch, 1981; Chevins, 1975; Etgar & Goodwin, 1979; Golden, 1979).

This trend toward more comparative advertising may present some important problems that are exclusively related to television. First, television commercials incorporating comparative messages seem to be increasing more rapidly than comparative advertising appearing in other media (Brown & Jackson, 1977; Haight, 1976). Yet, only a few major studies have been published on the effects of television comparative advertising.

Secondly, most comparative television commercials seen today are for national firms and their products and are usually network or national-spot commercials (Brown & Jackson, 1977; "Comparative Ads," 1976). A potential problem stems from the tendency for local advertisers to use advertising techniques they see at the national level for their own local commercials. This practice is found in television advertising more than in other media. In short, it is common for a local retailer to adopt what seems to be a successful television technique used at the national level without regard to the technique's success or potential negative effects (Haight, 1976). This can be a dangerous practice for the local retailer because the industry is not sure what negative effects are produced by national comparative ads and even less is known about the effects of local comparative commercials.

It is the many potential hazards related to the unknown effects of this type of television advertising that provides the stimuli for this study. Such hazards include confusion, misidentification of the sponsor, disbelief of claims, and lack of impact. If there are problems with this type of advertising at the national level with some campaigns being very successful and other campaigns producing negative results then comparative campaigns for local retailers may also produce varying degrees of both positive and negative results. There may be significant hazards related to the local retailer using comparative television commercials and these hazards should be investigated in the proper context.

Comparative Advertising Defined

In reality, the comparative advertising strategy is not really new. The practice of comparing an advertiser's products or services to those of his competitors has been used in the American mass media for more than 50 years (Wright, Warner, Winter, & Zeigler, 1977). However, the tone and nature of these advertising comparisons have taken many different forms. Most of the early comparative advertisements used a very subtle approach to the identification of competing brands. Competitors were almost never mentioned by name and direct, point-by-point comparisons were even more scarce.

The primary reason why the comparative advertising strategy seems new today is because the techniques used to make the comparisons have drastically changed in the last few years. In the comparative ads we see today, competing brands are explicitly identified and

obvious, detailed comparisons are deliberately made. The use of these new, more direct techniques have made comparative advertising the subject of many articles in both professional and academic publications. The strategy has now been defined in very specific terms reflecting the newer approach of direct comparisons. Barry and Tremblay (1975) defined comparative advertising as:

> A creative strategy where the advertised brand is explicitly compared with one or more competing brands and the comparison is obvious to the audience. (p. 15)

Wilkie and Farris (1975) wrote a more precise definition by noting that comparative advertising is:

> advertising that compares two or more specifically named or recognizably presented brands of the same generic product or service class and makes such a comparison in terms of one or more specific product or service attributes (p. 7).

The Development of Comparative Advertising

In tracing the development of comparative advertising with these two definitions in mind, one finds that most of the early comparative advertisements were related to the "Brand X" format. In these ads the competitor was usually identified with a phrase that was closely associated with that brand (Wilkie & Farris, 1975). In the early 1930s Plymouth shocked the advertising industry by boldly asking the public to "look at all three" before buying a new car (Jackson, Brown & Harmon, 1979). After the success of the Plymouth campaign other advertisers began to adopt the format. The most popular form of comparative advertising turned out to be the "Brand X" comparison. Scores of advertisers compared their products to mystery brands in both print and

broadcast advertisements. One reason that advertisers used the "Brand X" approach was because the three major television networks had advertising codes which would not let them accept commercials containing direct references to competing brands.

As more comparative campaigns were developed the comparisons and references to specific competitors became more obvious. A good example is the Avis campaign that was directed against Hertz in the early 1960s. The Avis advertisements stated "we try harder" and Hertz was thinly disguised as "Number 1" (Wilkie & Farris, 1975).

NBC stimulated comparative advertising in 1965 when the network dropped its ban on comparative commercials (Chevins, 1975). Industry reaction to NBC's move toward comparative commercials was harsh. The Better Business Bureau sharply denounced comparative advertising noting that the use of the strategy would undermine all public confidence in the institution of advertising. The American Association of Advertising Agencies created a code which condemned the comparative strategy (Wilkie & Farris, 1975). ABC and CBS said they would still not accept comparative commercials. The fact that only one network would air comparative TV commercials kept advertisers from using the technique to any large extent.

The naming of competitors in advertisements began in earnest in the early 1970s when American Motors launched a massive print and broadcast campaign aimed directly at General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, and several imports (Jackson et al., 1979). Several other major advertisers including American Home Products, Schick, Remington, and Bristol-Myers immediately launched similar comparative campaigns ("Be Hard On," 1973).

The comparative advertising strategy gained new credibility when it was endorsed by the Federal Trade Commission. In a series of speeches and letters by FTC officials in 1972, the commission called for advertisers to explicitly name competing brands rather than use the "Brand X" approach (Wilkie & Farris, 1975). The FTC wrote official letters to CBS and ABC suggesting that they drop their bans on comparative commercials. The FTC noted that the "Brand X" strategy was too ambiguous to consumers and often created the false impression that the advertised brand was better than all brands (Barry & Tremblay, 1975). The commission also noted that comparative advertisements would provide the consumer with high levels of valuable information that they would not get from more traditional, noncomparative advertisements. Shortly after the FTC made public its position on comparative advertising ABC and CBS dropped their bans and start accepting comparative commercials (Wilkie & Farris, 1975). The growth in the popularity of comparative advertising since FTC's actions in 1972 is perhaps best illustrated by the steady increase in the number of comparative commercials appearing on network television. In the 1973-1974 television season only one out of 30 commercials had a comparative message. By the 1975-1976 season about one out of 12 commercials was comparative (Tannenbaum & Kershaw, 1976). In 1977 almost one out of five commercials had some type of comparative message structure (Brown & Jackson, 1977).

This increased frequency of comparative advertising brought about a number of changes in the codes of several professional and industry organizations related to advertising. As noted earlier, the AAAA first officially condemned comparative advertising in 1962. The

association released other statements condemning the strategy in 1966 and 1969 (Chevins, 1975). Then in 1974, two years after the FTC urged advertisers to engage in comparative advertising, the AAAA did a total about-face on the issue. The association noted that the comparative advertising message was acceptable and published a set of guidelines for those using comparative advertising to follow ("Four A's does," 1974). Also in 1974, NBC, ABC, and the National Association of Broadcasters published official guidelines relating to the production and acceptance of comparative advertising (Chevins, 1975). These actions seemed to underscore the fact that the comparative advertising strategy was here to stay.

Statement of the Problem

Retail or local advertising differs from national advertising in many ways and these differences may cause television viewers to perceive and react to local commercials differently than they would to national commercials. Wright, Warner, Winter, and Ziegler (1977) note that these differences range from the territory covered to the message structure used in the ad itself. The national advertiser usually seeks the largest possible audience while the local advertiser seeks a smaller, well-defined audience. The national advertiser seldom has a close relationship with the customer while the local retailer enjoys this close, personal relationship. Other differences include target-audience interest, the expected response, and the use of price in the message.

Generally speaking, the national advertisers and their products are often perceived as highly institutionalized by the audience. There is no local store image associated with a nationally distributed product and no interpersonal relationship between the sponsor and the consumer. The local retailer works in a more restricted geographic market than does the national advertiser. This proximity to the market means that the retailer's message can be closer to the preferences, prejudices, and shopping habits of the local audience. The effects of comparative advertising messages may be influenced by these differences in physical and psychological proximity between the advertiser and the consumer.

Research Questions

With the above discussion in mind, this study attempts to answer the following research questions related to the effectiveness of televised comparative advertising for a local retailer:

1. Are comparative television commercials for local retailers more effective than noncomparative television commercials?
(more specifically),

2. Do comparative television commercials for local retailers produce higher levels of sponsor identification by viewers than noncomparative television commercials?

3. Do comparative television commercials for local retailers produce higher recall of copy claims by viewers than noncomparative television commercials?

4. Are comparative television commercials for local retailers remembered more favorably by viewers than noncomparative television commercials?

5. Are comparative television commercials for local retailers more believable than noncomparative television commercials?

6. Are comparative television commercials for local retailers more interesting than noncomparative television commercials?

7. Do comparative television commercials for local retailers stimulate higher purchase intentions among viewers than noncomparative television commercials?

Limitations

The limitations of this research are, to a large degree, linked to both the subjects used in this study and the study's research design. An experimental design was selected for this investigation because it provides the following conditions which allow the researcher to identify causal relationships between the variables of this study. First, the experiment utilizes more than one group of subjects to demonstrate that the observed effect occurred only among subjects receiving a particular treatment. Secondly, it allows the researcher to show that the independent variable preceded the dependent variable in time. And third, the experimental design allows the researcher to control other variables which could plausibly account for the observed effects (Black & Champion, 1976).

The experimental design does not meet all of these conditions without qualification. Several limitations are related to the highly-structured, nonnatural environment of the experimental setting itself. Typically, effects observed in a laboratory experiment are different than they would be if they were observed in a more natural setting.

Haskins (1968) cited several reasons for these atypical responses: (1) the message reception surroundings are unnatural; (2) the lack of competing stimuli which would be present in a natural setting; (3) the prohibition of normal social interaction between treatment and measurement; (4) forced exposure to treatments; (5) heightened subject awareness of treatments and measures; (6) short time span between exposure and measurement. All of these factors were present to some degree in this experiment and may have influenced the subjects' responses.

Other limitations of this study are related to the choice of subjects used in this study. Because all subjects were male adults living in East Tennessee, the data should not be generalized to other elements of the population. Because the subjects were not randomly selected from the overall population and were members of men's civic clubs one cannot say that the consumers in the experiment were representative of the general population.

These limitations severely limit the generalizability of the data produced by this study. Great care should be taken in applying the results of this study to actual advertising campaigns utilizing broadcast television or any other media. Any significant relationships identified in this experiment could become the basis for future controlled field experiments which would not lack external validity.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Emphasis in this literature review is placed on both the areas of communication theory related to the topic and the relevant studies on the effectiveness of comparative advertising messages. The theoretical base of the comparative advertising message comes from the concept of a two-sided persuasive message. Other areas of communication theory closely linked to comparative advertising are the theory of cognitive dissonance and attribution theory.

The Two-Sided Persuasive Message

The question of whether to use a one-sided or a two-sided message in a persuasive effort has been studied for a long time. McGuire (1969) wrote that in a one-sided message the opposition is ignored and in a two-sided message the opposition is mentioned and often refuted. In a general sense, this describes the difference between noncomparative and comparative advertising messages. In the more traditional, noncomparative advertisement the message focuses totally on the sponsor's product(s) or service(s) and competitors or competing brands are not mentioned. In the comparative advertisement the sponsor's competitors or competing brands are openly identified and often specific comparisons are made to show the advantages of the sponsor's product(s) or service(s) over those of the cited competitors.

The merits of using a two-sided message were originally examined as part of the communication research program of Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield (1949). Even though this early research indicated no

overall differences in the effectiveness of one- and two-sided messages, it defined the area for further study, raised a number of significant questions, and stimulated further research on the topic. Many of the subsequent studies showed that there were differences in the effects of one- and two-sided persuasive messages. Most of these studies suggested that a two-sided message was most effective when the audience was educated on the subject and a one-sided message was most effective when the audience was not educated on the subject (Cohen, 1964; Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953).

More recent studies have shown the issue to be more complex and the state of opinion on the subject differs widely from expert to expert. McGuire (1973) wrote that neither a one-sided nor a two-sided message structure can be considered best under all conditions. He added that it is best to refute the opposition than ignore them when the audience is hostile to one's view.

Haskins (1970) noted a strength of the two-sided message structure citing that the audience is immunized against a later counter-attack. The technique works well because it tells the audience that the source has made an objective evaluation of both sides of the issue before coming to his present point of view. According to Haskins, the two-sided message is often more effective than the one-sided message.

Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1973) suggest that recent evidence documents that the two-sided message structure may have a positive effect on source credibility and therefore, enhance the effectiveness of the message. This would support the two-sided, comparative advertising message structure as would the Haskins' findings.

Hass and Linder (1972) found that two-sided persuasive messages led to greater acceptance of a communication than a one-sided message when counterarguments were available to the message recipients and less acceptance when counterarguments were not available. Also, they found that a two-sided message that does not adequately refute the message recipient's counterarguments may strengthen the cognitive defenses of the message recipient. This would actually reduce the persuasive power of the message.

Many other theorists and researchers support the validity of the two-sided persuasive message. Most note that a message structured in this way will bring about the best long-range results (Kelly, 1973; Klapper, 1960; McGuire, 1969, 1973; Settle & Golden, 1974).

The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1973) contend that there are two basic approaches to attitude change via marketing communications: the cognitive dissonance approach and the assimilation contrast approach. Comparative advertising seems to be related to the cognitive dissonance approach. The theory of cognitive dissonance is a psychological consistency theory which was first proposed by Leon Festinger (1957). In his theory, Festinger identifies four cognitive elements: (1) behavior, (2) knowledge, (3) attitudes, and (4) perceptions. Any two of these elements will produce one of three types of relationships. These relationships were termed: (1) irrelevant, (2) consonant, and (3) dissonant. The dissonant relationship occurs when there is a conflict between an individual's own point of view and some input of voluntarily

perceived information. This conflict produces the uncomfortable state of psychological dissonance.

Littlejohn (1978) notes there are two overriding premises in dissonance theory:

> The first is that the existence of dissonance produces a kind of tension or stress that pressures the individual to change so that dissonance is reduced. Second, when dissonance is present, the individual will not only attempt to reduce it but will avoid situations in which additional dissonance might be produced. These tendencies to reduce dissonance and to avoid dissonance-producing information are a great function of the magnitude of dissonance present in the system: the greater the dissonance the greater the need for change (pp. 181-182).

Festinger notes that dissonance is reduced by the individual in a number of ways. One of the most obvious ways is for the individual to change his own position or attitude toward the issue at hand. Another way to reduce dissonance is to downgrade the credibility of the source of the dissonance-producing message. Another approach to reducing dissonance is through psychological selectivity processes. Once a person is motivated to reduce dissonance he often engages his selectivity processes. In an attempt to maintain consonance he may tend to ignore the communication (selective exposure) or misinterpret the information so it is less threatening (selective perception) (McCombs & Becker, 1979; Murphey & Amundsen, 1981; Tan, 1981).

A number of authors have pointed out that the theory of cognitive dissonance seems to argue against the use of comparative advertising. What the comparative advertisement does is tell the user of the compared-to product that he has made the poor decision and is using the wrong brand. In this case the use of a comparison may actually hurt the sponsor. Rather than improving the position of the

sponsoring brand, the comparative advertisement focusing on cognitive dissonance could alienate the consumer (Barry & Tremblay, 1975; Murphey & Amundsen, 1981; Wright, Warner, Winter, & Zeigler, 1977).

Attribution Theory

Many researchers and theorists have related comparative advertising to attribution theory. The theory is based upon the writings of the famous Gestaltist Fritz Heider (1958). In short, the theory states that people develop an orderly view of their environment and in the process build up a psychology so they can understand the events they observe. Attribution is a rational process in which the individual examines various causal possibilities and generalizes on the basis of the best data available to him.

Perhaps the most prominent current theory of the attribution process is that of Harold Kelly (1973). Kelly's theory is based on two postulates: covariation and discounting. The covariation principle applies when a person has received information from more than one observation and he decides which effects are associated (covary) with which causes. The discounting principle applies in the case of single observations when the role of a cause in producing an effect is discounted if other possible causes exist. In this instance the person will likely weigh possible causes in relation to one another.

Recently, attribution theory has been applied to marketing communications. The theory states that an individual will attribute observable events to their underlying causes on the basis of covariation of cause and effect. Therefore, attribution theory would suggest that if consumers attribute advertising claims to the characteristics

of the products themselves the probability of purchase would be higher than if they attribute the claims to the advertiser's desire to sell their products. Settle and Golden (1974) applied the theory to advertising credibility and found that believability of product claims and source credibility might be increased by disclaiming product superiority on some product attributes. Their findings suggest that advertisements would be more effective if advertisers would make fewer claims of product superiority. These findings are not complimentary to the approach of comparative advertising because the majority of comparative advertisements are dedicated to showing product superiority over the competition.

Early Analyses of Comparative Advertising

The major issues surrounding the comparative advertising strategy were first conceptualized in two landmark articles by Wilkie and Farris (1975) and Barry and Tremblay (1975). Both of these articles were highly significant because they stimulated a great deal of research on comparative advertising messages.

Wilkie and Farris (1975) were the first to address the issue of communication effectiveness of comparative advertising. They surveyed the relevant literature and used several behavior concepts to generate hypotheses about the potential effectiveness of comparative messages. In general, Wilkie and Farris proposed that comparative advertising should be more effective than noncomparative advertising. They hypothesized that: (1) comparative advertising would receive more attention than noncomparative advertising, (2) consumer recall would be higher for comparative advertisements than for noncomparative

advertisements, (3) exposure to comparative advertisements would lead to a "cleaner brand image" than exposure to noncomparative advertisements, (4) claims made in a comparative advertisement were more likely to be accepted as "correct" than those in a noncomparative advertisement, (5) naming a competing brand would tend to increase support arguments by users of the sponsoring brand and counter-arguments by users of the competing brand, (6) comparative advertisements were more effective in improving consumer preference for sponsored branch than are noncomparative advertisements.

In the article by Barry & Tremblay (1975) the issues related to comparative advertising were classified into three broad categories: (1) strategy issues, (2) consumer issues, and (3) broad public policy issues. After a discussion of each of these issues the authors outlined specific areas that needed to be studied by drawing up an extensive list of questions that could be answered by empirical research. They ended their article by urging researchers to convert their list of questions into testable hypotheses and execute scientific studies in order to learn more about the comparative advertising strategy.

These two articles sparked a great deal of interest in researching the effectiveness of comparative advertising. Shortly after their publication, articles reporting comparative advertising research started appearing in a number of trade publications and academic journals. Since Wilkie and Farris and Barry and Tremblay called for research in 1975, more than 15 formal studies have been published.

Comparative Advertising Research

Most of the studies of comparative advertising can be categorized into two major types: (1) studies of the main effects differences between comparative and noncomparative advertising messages, and (2) studies of the impact of a number of variables on the comparative advertising message. It is interesting to note that the majority of studies of main effects indicated little or no difference in the overall effectiveness of comparative and noncomparative advertising messages. Whereas, many studies focusing on message variables have indicated that the impact of a comparative message may be moderated by variable manipulation.

The majority of these studies have investigated the comparative strategy in the context of print advertisements. Only a few studies have investigated comparative messages in the television format. There have been no studies of comparative advertising on radio.

Main effects studies. One of the earliest major studies of the main effects of comparative advertising was conducted by the advertising agency of Ogilvy & Mather (Levine, 1976). The experiment was designed to determine the effects differences between comparative and noncomparative television commercials. It was billed by the agency as the first significant study to focus totally on the effects of comparative advertising as compared to noncomparative advertising. The findings were published in the Journal of Advertising Research and created quite a stir in the advertising industry (Donath, 1975; "Study Finds," 1975).

Ogilvy and Mather's researchers designed a pre/post copy test to determine the different effects produced by three sets of eight television commercials. The first set consisted of seven comparative television commercials and one noncomparative commercial. The second set was a mixture of comparative and noncomparative commercials. The third set consisted of seven noncomparative commercials and one comparative commercial. Product categories for the test commercials were health and beauty aids and over-the-counter drugs. Product categories for the control commercials were beverages and household products. Dependent measures in the study were brand awareness, believability, persuasion, and attitudes toward advertising.

Each of the three sets of commercials were shown to separate samples of 150 female household heads in six cities scattered across the United States. Before the subjects viewed the commercials, each was asked about product usage for the test and control product categories. After exposure to the commercials, respondents were asked a series of questions to determine: (1) brands they would consider buying in future purchases; (2) brand recall for the test and control commercials; and, (3) believability of the advertising claims for both the test and control commercials.

Levine reported five major findings: (1) comparative television commercials for the health and beauty aids and the drug product categories were significantly more confusing and less believable than noncomparative commercials for the same product categories; (2) comparative commercials did not create higher brand awareness for the sponsoring brands; (3) comparative commercials generated greater sponsor

misidentification, with the named competitor benefiting; (4) comparative commercials created more skepticism toward commercial claims and more miscommunication; (5) comparative commercials were no more persuasive, in most cases, than noncomparative commercials.

Golden (1976) investigated the relative influence of comparative and noncomparative advertising upon purchase intentions in a laboratory experiment. In her study Golden considered the advertiser's competitive position, claim substantiation, and advertising theme, while brand loyalty was controlled. The study was based on a 2 x 3 x 2 x 3 factorial design which included two levels of copy type (comparative and noncomparative), three levels of competitive position (new brand, number one brand, and number three brand), two levels of claim substantiation (substantiated and unsubstantiated), and three levels of copy theme.

A total of 36 different treatment advertisments for a deodorant were prepared. In the first stage of the study 594 college students were questioned to determine brand loyalty toward a number of deodorants. In the second stage, each subject was shown only one of the 36 treatment advertisments. After exposure to the advertisements the subjects were asked how likely they would be to purchase the deodorant that was advertised. The last stage of the study consisted of a questionnaire designed to determine the subjects' perceptions of the advertised brand's performance characteristics.

Data from the first three stages were submitted to analysis of covariance. The degree of brand loyalty toward the advertised brand and the degree of brand loyalty toward the competing brand in the

comparative advertisement were the covariates. Therefore, the influence of brand loyalty upon purchase intention ratings was controlled. The product performance characteristic ratings were submitted to analysis of variance.

The overall results of Golden's study indicated that comparative advertisements were no more effective than noncomparative advertisements. The purchase intention ratings elicited by the comparative advertisements were not significantly different from those of the noncomparative advertisements. Also, there was no significant main effect of competitive position, claim substantiation or theme. Golden did find, however, that the interaction of copy type and advertisement theme was significant. Two of the three themes incorporated in the study produced higher purchase intentions with a comparative advertisement than with a noncomparative advertisement.

Golden summed up the results of the experiment by noting:

> When isolated from other variables, a comparative advertisement is no more effective an influence upon purchase intentions than is a noncomparative advertisement. . . . It appears that, given the conditions of this experiment, an advertiser is neither going to increase nor decrease purchase intentions relative to noncomparative advertisement by using a comparative advertisement.
>
> However, in conjunction with specific themes a comparative advertisement may have a relatively stronger influence upon purchase intentions than a noncomparative advertisement (pp. 66-67).

Wilson (1976) conducted an experiment to determine the overall effectiveness of comparative advertising compared to noncomparative advertising. Comparative and noncomparative print advertisements were produced for each of four different products. The four comparative

advertisements were evaluated by 40 student subjects. The four non-comparative advertisements were evaluated by 35 student subjects. A questionnaire was then administered to measure informativeness, believability, offensiveness, interestingness, sponsor trustworthiness, and perceptions of product quality.

The results of the study showed that subjects evaluated comparative advertising messages more negatively than noncomparative messages. Specifically, comparative advertisements were evaluated more negatively than noncomparative advertisements on believability and offensiveness.

A laboratory experiment by Jain and Hackleman (1978) focused on consumer recall. These researchers measured both immediate and delayed recall for newspaper and magazine comparative and noncomparative advertisements. They designed one comparative and one noncomparative print advertisement for each of 12 different products in three product categories. The advertisements were then shown to 89 adult male and female subjects. Each subject was exposed to one advertisement for each of the 12 different products. In order to stimulate the subjects' involvement with the advertisements, they were asked to rate the advertisements on three bi-polar adjective scales: pleasant-unpleasant, good-bad, and ambiguous-clear. After 12 advertisements were rated, the subjects were asked to write down the brand names they recalled. Then they were asked to specify whether the sponsored brand name they recalled appeared in an advertisement by itself or with another name. If the sponsored brand appeared with another brand name, the subjects were asked to write down the other brand names. After

these initial measurements, the recall questions were repeated after 24 hours.

The results from the experiment indicated that recall was higher for comparative advertisements than for noncomparative advertisements for eight out of the 12 products. There was no difference in recall between the comparative and noncomparative advertisements for three of the 12 products. The noncomparative message structure was more effective than the comparative message structure for only one of the 12 products. The researchers found only a slight difference between immediate and delayed recall. Jain and Hackleman concluded that comparative advertisements promote better consumer recall than noncomparative advertisements. However, they noted that the same findings applied to the brand that the sponsor's brand was compared to in the advertisement.

Murphy and Amundsen (1981) investigated how effective comparative advertising could be for new brands which are competing with a dominate competitor in their product category. They devised an experiment using magazine advertisements which would test the communications-effectiveness of three alternative advertising treatments most relevant to advertisers considering the use of a comparative message--a direct comparison with the dominant brand; a "brand X" type reference to the dominant brand; and a noncomparative or straight sell appeal. The study focused on the relationship between each of these three message treatments and immediate and delayed recall, subjects' perception of the competitive position of the sponsor, and the extent of claim decay over time.

Murphy and Amundsen measured seven dependent variables: (1) immediate brand recall; (2) delayed brand recall; (3) immediate claim recall; (4) delayed claim recall; (5) the extent of claim believability; (6) the extent of claim decay; and (7) the perceived position of the sponsoring brand. The research hypothesis with respect to each of these variables was one of no difference.

To investigate these hypotheses the researchers designed a three phase experiment. Three experimental treatment advertisements incorporating three message structures were constructed for a fictitious facial tissue. In the first phase of the study, 239 college students were questioned to determine their brand preference in 10 product categories. One of the categories measured was facial tissues. Three weeks later, in the second phase of the study, the subjects were randomly assigned to three experimental treatment groups. Subjects were asked to read one of three 12-page portfolios which contained magazine articles, national advertisements, and one of the three treatment advertisements for the facial tissue. After reading the portfolios respondents were asked to identify the brands promoted in each of the advertisements. Then, for each advertisement identified, respondents were asked to describe the major ad claim, evaluate the believability of the claims, and to estimate the competitiveness or sales position of the advertiser. The third phase was conducted one week after the experimental treatment sessions. Respondents were asked to recall the name of the brand of facial tissue which was seen the week before and indicate any claims made in the advertisement.

The results of the study supported the acceptance of the null hypotheses of no difference between the effects of the three message structures in terms of both immediate and delayed brand recall. Also, no significant relationship was found to exist between the advertising message treatment and the perceived competitive position of the sponsoring brand.

Results did indicate, however, that the noncomparative message structure was significantly more effective than the comparative message structure in terms of both immediate and delayed claim recall. The "brand X" appeal was the least effective in both types of claim recall.

In the area of claim believability, the noncomparative message structure was significantly more effective than both the "brand X" and comparative message structures. There was no significant difference between the "brand X" and the comparative advertisement in the area of claim believability.

The results also indicated there was no significant difference between the "brand X" and the comparative advertisements in terms of claim decay over time. The noncomparative advertisement, however, had less claim decay than the other two message treatments.

Wilson and Mudderrisoglu (1980) used cognitive response measures in examining the differential effects of comparative and noncomparative print advertisements. These researchers hypothesized that comparative print advertisements would generate more counterarguments, source derogation statements, and curiosity statements, but fewer support arguments, positive ad-related statements, and negative ad related statements than would the noncomparative advertisements.

Wilson and Mudderrisoglu devised an experiment where 44 student subjects would view nine comparative and three noncomparative advertisements for 12 different products which had actually run in national, general interest magazines. After viewing one of the advertisements for one minute, each subject was told to write down all of his thoughts which came to mind about that ad. This process was repeated for all 12 advertisements.

The results of the study supported all but one of the researchers' hypotheses. Wilson and Mudderrisoglu noted that comparative ads produced more counterarguments and source derogations and fewer support arguments and positive ad-related statements than did the noncomparative ads. Contrary to what the authors' hypothesized, the comparative ads generated more negative ad-related statements than did the noncomparative ads. No statistically significant effects were found for statements related to ad curiosity.

When the findings from all these general, main effects studies are combined, it is easy to see why there is a great deal of controversy over the relative effectiveness of comparative advertising. Some of the studies point out that comparative advertising is better than noncomparative advertising. Other studies note that there is no difference in overall effectiveness. Still other studies conclude that comparative advertising is not only less effective than noncomparative advertising but actually produces negative effects for the advertiser.

Message manipulation studies. The main effects studies discussed above were primarily concerned with assessing the relative

effectiveness of comparative and noncomparative messages. Many other studies have focused on how to make comparative advertisements more effective. In most of these studies the researchers have manipulated various internal characteristics or copy features of the experimental comparative advertisements to determine the formula for maximum results under a number of different conditions.

Lamb, Pride, and Pletcher (1978) proposed a taxonomy for comparative advertising research and conducted an experiment designed to identify the optimum message structure for comparative advertisements. Their taxonomy provided a conceptual framework for classifying and evaluating different comparative advertising formats. The taxonomy classified comparative advertising formats along two multi-level dimensions--directionality and intensity. Directionality reflects the degree to which statements in a comparative message stress similarities or differences between the sponsored brand and the competing brand(s). The authors note two types of directionality: associative and differentiative. An associative comparison advertisement is one in which most of the references to a competing brand point out the similarities between the sponsored brand and the competing brand(s). This type of directionality is usually adopted by the advertiser who is not in the number one market position in the minds of the consumers. The idea is to associate the sponsor's brand with a product of high public acceptance. A differentiative comparison ad is one in which most of the references to a competing brand point out the differences between the sponsored brand and the competing brand(s). This type of directionality is often adopted by the advertiser who considers his product to

be positioned high in the consumers' minds. The idea is to show how much better the sponsored product is than other competitive offerings.

The second aspect of their taxonomy is intensity. The authors define intensity as the specificity of comparison in the advertisement. Three levels of intensity are specified: low, moderate, and high. A low-intensity comparison does not identify the competing brand(s) by name but does refer to it in other ways ("leading brand," "top selling brand"). A moderate-intensity comparison identifies the competitor's product(s) by name but there is not a point-by-point comparison. A high-intensity comparison clearly identifies the competing brand(s) and goes on to make a point-by-point comparison of features and/or benefits. This typology is presented in Figure 1.

After developing this taxonomy Pride, Lamb, and Pletcher (1979) conducted an experiment to determine if comparative advertisements were more informative than noncomparative advertisements and to identify the best combination of directionality and intensity. These researchers proposed the following hypotheses:

> 1. There is no difference in one reader's perceived informativeness of a comparative advertisement and another reader's perceived informativeness of a noncomparative advertisement.
>
> 2. There is no difference in one reader's awareness of product features mentioned in a comparative advertisement and another reader's awareness of product features mentioned in a noncomparative advertisement.
>
> 3. There is no difference in one reader's perceived informativeness of an associative comparative advertisement and another reader's perceived informativeness of a differentiative comparative advertisement.
>
> 4. There is no difference in one reader's awareness of product features mentioned in an associative comparative advertisement and another reader's awareness of

Directionality	Intensity of Comparison: Low	Moderate	High
Associative	The ad does not identify the competing brand(s) by name, but it casually refers to it in other ways such as "the leading brand." The comparisons stress the similarities between the sponsored brand and the competing brand(s).	The name of the competing brand(s) is identified but is mentioned infrequently. The comparison does not occur on a point-by-point basis. The similarities between the sponsored brand and the competing brand(s) are emphasized.	The competing brand name(s) is identified and is mentioned frequently in a point-by-point comparison. The comparisons emphasize the similarities between the sponsored brand and the competing brand(s).
Differentiative	The ad does not identify the competing brand(s) by name, but it casually refers to it in other ways such as "the leading brand." The comparisons stress the differences between the sponsored brand and the competing brand(s).	The name of the competing brand(s) is identified but is mentioned infrequently. The comparison does not occur on a point-by-point basis. The differences between the sponsored brand and the competing brand(s) are emphasized.	The competing brand name(s) is identified and is mentioned frequently in a point-by-point comparison. The comparisons emphasize the differences between the sponsored brand and the competing brand(s).

FIGURE 1

A TAXONOMY FOR COMPARISON ADVERTISING RESEARCH

Source: Lamb, Charles W., Pride, William M., & Pletcher, Barbara A. "A taxonomy for comparative advertising research." Journal of Advertising, 1978, 7(1), 43-47.

product features mentioned in a differentiative comparative advertisement.

5. There is no difference in one reader's perceived informativeness of a comparative advertisement consisting of a certain level of intensity and another reader's perceived informativeness of a comparative advertisment consisting of a different level of intensity of comparison.

6. There is no difference in one reader's awareness of product features mentioned in a comparative advertisement consisting of a certain level of intensity and another reader's awareness of product features mentioned in a comparative advertisement consisting of a different level of intensity of comparison.

7. There is no interaction between directionality and intensity with respect to their effects upon perceived informativeness and product feature awareness (pp. 31-32).

Pride et al. used a 3 x 4 factorial design which incorporated six comparative print advertisements reflecting the six different combinations of directionality and intensity and one noncomparative advertisement. The advertisements were shown to 238 college students. Each subject was shown only one of the seven advertisements and was allowed one minute to look at it. After viewing the advertisement each respondent was asked to evaluate the ad's informativeness and recall as many product features as possible.

The results of the study showed that: (1) there was no significant difference between comparative and noncomparative advertisements in terms of perceived informativeness; (2) there was no significant difference between comparative and noncomparative advertisements on product feature awareness; (3) there was no indication that associative comparative messages were perceived to be more or less informative than differentiative comparative messages; (4) low-intensity messages were perceived as being more informative than high-intensity messages

but less informative than moderate-intensity messages; (5) moderate-intensity comparisons produced higher levels of product features awareness than did either low- or high-intensity comparative messages, and low-intensity comparisons produced higher levels of product feature awareness than high-intensity comparisons; (6) for low-intensity comparisons the differentiative messages were perceived as more informative than associative messages; and (7) for high-intensity comparisons associative messages were perceived as being more informative than differentiative messages.

Swinyard (1981) conducted a controlled field experiment to determine if differences in copy claim variation influenced the effectiveness of comparative print advertisements. The study was designed to compare the effectiveness of comparative and noncomparative advertising messages which included only positive statements about the advertiser (one-sided message) with comparative and noncomparative messages which included both positive and negative statements (two-sided message) about the advertiser. Swinyard hypothesized the following:

> 1. Comparative advertisements will evoke more counterarguing and be perceived as less credible than noncomparative advertisements.
>
> 2. Advertising containing one-sided (positive only) claims will evoke more counterarguing and be perceived as less credible than advertising containing two-sided (positive plus negative) claims.
>
> 3. Comparative advertising and one-sided claims will evoke lower acceptance of claims than noncomparative advertising and two-sided claims, respectively.
>
> 4. The comparative format and claim-type treatments will interact in their effect on acceptance of key claims (p. 177).

The hypotheses were tested by means of a full factorial design with independent variables of advertising type (comparative and non-comparative) and variation of claims (one-sided and two-sided). Four test advertisements were prepared for a local grocery store and were distributed to 1,000 homes in the form of a flier attached to the doorhandle. Dependent measures were counterarguing, advertising credibility, acceptance of key claims, purchase behavior, and overt behavior. These data were collected in two ways: (1) a measurement of the redemption of coupons which were part of the flier advertisement (overt behavior); and (2) through telephone interviews (other dependent measures).

Results of the experiment supported the hypothesis that comparative advertising claims evoke significantly more counterarguing than noncomparative advertising. Also, the results showed that comparative advertisements were perceived as less credible than noncomparative advertisements. Swinyard suggested that two-sided comparative messages should evoke fewer counterarguments than one-sided comparative messages but noted that the data supporting this observation did not reach significance. Swinyard did find, however, that compared to one-sided comparative claims, two-sided comparative claims were perceived as significantly more truthful. The most surprising finding of the study stems from the extremely high rate of coupon redemption for the non-comparative, one-sided claim advertisement. Swinyard concluded that the statistical significance of this last measure of overt behavior suggests that "over the short term, plain, simple, one-sided noncomparative ads might be the most effective" (p. 183).

Belch (1981) investigated the effects of both copy claim variation and message repetition using television commercials in a laboratory experiment. The study was designed to test three research hypotheses on the effects of a one- and two-sided comparative and noncomparative message over three levels of exposure. Belch hypothesized the following:

> 1. There is no significant difference between comparative and noncomparative messages in the favorability of the cognitive responses generated or in measures of attitude and purchase intention.
>
> 2. A two sided comparative message results in a more favorable composite of cognitive responses and more favorable attitudes and purchase intentions than does a one-sided comparative message, particulary for individuals with a prior preference for the brand disparaged in the advertisement. Moreover, the positive effects of a two-sided versus a one-sided comparative message increase as exposure to the message increases.
>
> 3. A two-sided noncomparative message results in a more favorable composite of cognitive responses and more favorable attitudes and purchase intentions than does a one-sided noncomparative message. The positive effects of a two-sided noncomparative message increase as exposure to the message increases.

To test these hypotheses Belch used a 2 x 2 x 3 between-subjects design where message structure (comparative and noncomparative), message sidedness (one- and two-sided), and repetition (one, three, and five exposures) were the factors. Commercials for a fictitious brand of toothpaste were shown to 260 adult subjects in the context of a television program. Dependent measures were message acceptance, intention to try the new brand, perception of advertiser objectivity and credibility, and recall of copy claims.

After the collected data were analyzed Belch concluded:

> The study results do not reveal any significant differences between comparative and noncomparative messages with

> respect to the outcome measures of communication effectiveness, attitudes, and purchase intentions. . . . However, there are significant differences in cognitive response activity for the two types of messages as comparative message recipients generated significantly more negative thoughts than did recipients of a noncomparative message. . . . The study results also do not show any advantages of a two-sided message over a one-sided appeal for either comparative or noncomparative messages (pp. 346-347).

The repetition variable did not interact significantly with the other variables so Belch could not make any observations concerning the effects repetition has on message effectiveness.

Belch attempted to explain the lack of statistically significant results in his study by noting that the use of television commercials as message stimuli, particularly in the context of a program, may have had a negative effect on the results. He added that the ability of television commercials to affect higher order responses such as attitudes and purchase intentions has been questioned in the past by numerous researchers.

Several studies have dealt with comparative advertising messages and some aspect of brand loyalty. Golden (1979) conducted an experiment to determine how the users of brands mentioned in comparative ads reacted to those ads. She hypothesized that there would be no significant differences between comparative and noncomparative advertisements on five dependent measures: purchase intention, claim believability, advertisement credibility, quality of information, and usefulness of information. After a sample of college students were exposed to either a comparative or noncomparative advertisement for an antiperspirant, measures of the five dependent variables were obtained.

Golden found that the degree of brand loyalty toward the advertised brand was related to purchase intention, claim believability,

and credibility, but the degree of brand loyalty toward the compared-to brand had no significant effect on overall effectiveness.

Prasad (1976) investigated how recall and perceived believability of comparative advertisements were influenced by consumer brand loyalty in a laboratory experiment. Prasad proposed the following hypotheses:

> 1. The aggregate levels of message recall of a comparative advertisement will be higher than those for a "brand X" advertisement.
>
> 2. The recall effectiveness of a comparative ad in relation to a "brand X" ad will depend upon consumers' prior preferences for the competitor brand which is explicitly named in the former.
>
> 3. Perceived credibility of the claims of a comparative ad will be lower among consumers who prefer the competitor's brand explicitly named in the ad than among others.
>
> 4. Consumers will perceive the competitive position of the sponsoring brand in its product class to be higher when exposed to a comparative ad than when exposed to a "brand X" ad (pp. 129-130).

Data were obtained in three phases from 202 student subjects. In the first phase, subjects were given a prequestionnaire to determine brand preferences. Two weeks later Prasad executed the second phase by giving each subject an experimental portfolio with either a comparative or a "brand X" advertisement for a movie camera. In the comparative advertisement a fictitious brand of camera was directly compared to Kodak. In the "brand X" advertisement the fictitious brand was compared to the "leading brand." After exposure to one of these ads each subject was asked to complete a questionnaire designed to measure brand recall, claim recall, claim believability, and perception of cognitive position. The third phase of the experiment took

place one week after the second phase. In this phase measures were repeated in order to determine the effect of time.

The results of the study indicated that there was no association between advertisement type and delayed or immediate brand recall. Also, there were no significant statistical associations between advertisement type and subjects' perception of competitive position of the sponsored brand. Prasad did find a claim recall difference between comparative and "brand X" advertisements but was not able to support his second hypothesis. The data indicated that claim recall was higher among subjects who saw comparative advertisements than among those exposed to "brand X" advertisements, regardless of their prior preferences for Kodak. Prasad's third hypothesis was supported by the data. Believability ratings given to the major claim of the comparative ad by the group who preferred the named competitor Kodak were significantly lower than those of the others who were exposed to the same ad.

Goodwin and Etgar (1980) conducted an experiment to determine what message appeals and information load were most effective in comparative advertisements. In a 2 x 3 x 3 factorial between-subjects design, the researchers tested the interaction of print advertising messages for two types of products (functionally and socially oriented), with three levels of number of attributes (two, five, and seven), and three message appeals (comparative, "brand X," and non-comparative).

Data were obtained from 180 student subjects which were divided into ten treatment groups. Each student viewed only one advertisement

and was then asked to fill out a questionnaire about the ad. The advertisements were imaginary brands of alcoholic beverages and headache remedies. A total of 16 dependent variables were measured. Six of these variables were product/brand-related and nine variables were ad-related.

A number of significant findings were produced by the study. First, for all six product/brand-related criterion measures the "brand X" treatment was marginally superior to the comparative or noncomparative treatments. There was no significant difference between the comparative and noncomparative treatments on these measures. Secondly, product class and the number of attributes cited in the advertisements did not affect the impact of the different type of message appeals. Third, the "brand X" appeal was superior to the comparative and noncomparative appeals in the cognitive, ad-related measures. These measures included understandability, impersonality, believability, and relevance of the advertisement. Fourth, the comparative message appeal was superior to the "brand X" and noncomparative appeals in the affective, ad-related measures. These measures were attractiveness, likability, and interestingness.

Goodwin and Etgar summed up the resulting of their study by noting:

> Overall, the study shows comparative advertising to be less effective than expected. Comparative advertising was only marginally advantageous in improving consumers' feelings toward the ad presented and it did not improve the respondent's attitudes toward the promoted brand itself. As advertisers are eventually more interested in the latter than the former, comparative advertising did not perform well. The study also indicates some evidence that advertisements using the "brand X" mode of message appeal may be more effective in generating positive feelings toward the promoted brand and in enhancing the ad-related cognitions

> than other advertising modes. Supportive (noncomparative) appeals did not emerge as superior in any case (p. 200).

Shimp and Dyer (1978) conducted a laboratory experiment to determine the effects of comparative advertising mediated by the market position of the sponsoring brand. They used magazine advertisements for both established and fictitious fast food restaurants in a 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial design incorporating 400 student subjects. Shimp and Dyer created four different magazine advertisements: (1) a noncomparative advertisement for Big Steer (fictitious restaurant); (2) a comparative advertisement for Big Steer compared with McDonalds; (3) a noncomparative advertisement for Burger King; and (4) a comparative advertisement for Burger King compared to McDonalds.

The researchers proposed hypotheses in three areas or levels. Under the "attention level" Shimp and Dyer hypothesized:

> 1. The proportion of subjects correctly identifying the advertising brand will significantly differ between comparative and noncomparative treatment groups for both established and new brands.
>
> 2. The amount of copy points recalled will differ significantly between the comparative and noncomparative groups and will be mediated by the market position of the advertised brand.

At the "perceptual level" the researchers identified and measured five components: informativeness, believability, convincingness, sponsor trutfulness, and interestingness. They hypothesized that these five measures would differ significantly between the comparative and noncomparative groups and that they would be mediated by the marketing position of the advertised brand.

Under the "attitudinal/predispositional-level" Shimp and Dyer attempted to measure the subjects' disposition toward the ad and the

ad format with attitudinal and intentional measures as surrogates. They hypothesized:

> 1. Preference ratings will differ significantly between the comparative and noncomparative groups and will be mediated by the market position of the advertised brand.
>
> 2. Patronizing intention ratings will differ significantly between the comparative and noncomparative groups and will be mediated by the market position of the advertised brand.

The results of their study indicated that: (1) comparative advertisements were more effective than noncomparative advertisements in sponsor identification; (2) comparative advertisements were seen as more interesting than noncomparative advertisements; (3) noncomparative advertisements produced greater recall of copy points than comparative advertisements; (4) noncomparative advertisements were more believable than comparative advertisements; (5) noncomparative advertisements were seen as more truthful than comparative advertisements; (6) comparative advertisements were more effective in stimulating purchase intentions for nonestablished brands than noncomparative advertisements; and (7) noncomparative advertisements were more effective in stimulating purchase intentions for established brands than comparative advertisements.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

Definition of Terms: General

Some terminology and variables used in this study need specific definition or explanation; therefore, a glossary is given.

Comparative television commercial. Several different definitions of comparative advertising have appeared in the literature in recent years. Two of these definitions were cited in Section 1 including the one by Wilkie and Farris (1975) which is cited most frequently in the research literature:

> Comparative advertising is advertising that compares two or more specifically named or recognizably presented brands of the same generic product or service class and makes such a comparison in terms of one or more specific product attributes (p. 7).

Golden (1976) defined comparative advertising as:

> any form of paid promotion which: (1) compares the advertised brand to one or more specifically named or recognizably referred to brands within its generic product class; (2) with respect to one or more specific and/or over-all product characteristics.

These commonly cited definitions fall short of providing a comprehensive definition of comparative advertising for the purposes of this study. Because this study focuses on advertising for local retailers and not on a product or brand, the definition must be expanded to include retail stores in general. Also, the definition must reflect the specific format of television advertising.

In this study, therefore, the term "comparative television advertising" refers to a television commercial that: (1) mentions the name of a competing retail firm; and (2) makes a direct comparison

between the sponsor's firm, products, or services and the competitor's firm, products, or services.

Noncomparative television commercial. The term "noncomparative television commercial" refers to a television advertisement promoting a sponsor's firm, products, or services in which there is no mention of a competing firm or a competing firm's products or services.

Local retailer. The term "local retailer" refers to a business operating within a community, selling products and/or services at the retail level. The business may or may not be part of a multi-store chain of retailers. However, the store must be perceived by the local residents to be a local business and not a national product or brand or a store which is part of a national chain.

Mayo Garden Center. This terms refers to a locally owned chain of four retail stores located in the Knoxville, Tennessee area which specialize in selling lawn and garden supplies, plants, and patio furniture at the retail level.

Sponsor identification. This term refers to the ability of a viewer of a television advertisement to recall the sponsor of that advertisement.

Recall. The term "recall" refers to the amount of information which was presented in an advertisement that the viewer can remember after seeing the advertisement.

Message believability. "Message believability" is the degree to which the viewer of an advertisement perceives the message to be accurate and correct.

Interestingness. The term "interestingness" refers to how interesting the viewer thinks an advertisement is.

Patronage. "Patronage" refers to the degree to which a viewer of an advertisement intends to visit or purchase products from the store which sponsored the advertisement.

Approval. The term "approval" is the overall feeling of favor or disfavor the viewer of an advertisement has toward that advertisement.

Definition of Terms: Operational

The purpose of this study was to measure several effects local comparative television advertising has on local consumers. Therefore, a number of operational definitions of variables and measurements are needed.

The major independent variable manipulated in the experiment was the use of comparative and noncomparative advertising message structures in television commercials. Operational definitions of these two variables are as follows.

Comparative television commercial. A commercial sponsored by Mayo Garden Centers which identified K-Mart's garden centers as a competitor and made direct comparisons between the products and services offered by Mayo Garden Centers with those offered by K-Mart.

Noncomparative television commercial. A commercial sponsored by Mayo Garden Centers which promoted only their products and services and made no mention of K-Mart's garden centers or the products and services offered by K-Mart.

A total of six dependent variables were measured in this experiment. These variables were given the following operational definitions.

Sponsor identification. Whether the subjects could remember who sponsored the commercials included in a short television program. This variable was measured by asking the subjects to name the commercial sponsors of the program they viewed.

Recall. The amount of information about the major copy claims presented in the commercials for Mayo Garden Centers that the subjects could remember measured by asking the subjects to list the major copy points that were included in the commercials for Mayo Garden Center.

Approval. The overall feeling of favor or disfavor subjects felt toward the commercials for Mayo Garden Centers measured by having the subjects respond to a five-point Likert-type scale.

Interestingness. Interestingness was a measure of how interesting the commercials for Mayo Garden Centers were perceived to be by the subjects. This variable was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale.

Believability. The extent to which subjects perceived the information presented in the commercials for Mayo Garden Centers to be true as measured on a five-point Likert-type scale.

Patronage. The subjects' professed intent to visit or purchase products from one of the Mayo Garden Center stores. This variable was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale.

Research Hypotheses

H_1--Comparative television commercials for a local retailer will produce a higher level of sponsor identification by viewers than noncomparative television commercials.

H_2--Comparative television commercials for a local retailer will produce greater recall of commercial claims than noncomparative television commercials.

H_3--Comparative television commercials for a local retailer will be remembered more positively by viewers than noncomparative television commercials.

H_4--Comparative television commercials for a local retailer are perceived by viewers as being more believable than noncomparative television commercials.

H_5--Comparative television commercials for a local retailer are perceived by viewers as being more interesting than noncomparative television commercials.

H_6--Comparative television commercials for a local retailer will produce greater intentions to visit or buy from the sponsor than noncomparative commercials.

Research Design

The research design selected for this investigation is a controlled laboratory experiment. Even though the use of a laboratory experiment severely limits the external validity of the findings, the experimental design has many advantages in terms of internal validity. Also, the laboratory experimental design allowed the investigation to be conducted within the necessary financial and time limitations of the study. Haskins (1968) identified 12 advantages of using the laboratory experiment in communication research:

1. The experimental design allows the researcher to demonstrate cause-and-effect relationships.

2. The communication treatment is usually under the control of and manipulated by the researcher.

3. Random assignment and distribution of treatments to randomized groups of subjects is usually possible.

4. Control or comparison groups identical to treatment groups (within sampling limits) except for the experimental treatment is usually possible.

5. "History" effects can usually be deleted from the total effects.

6. Measurement of a presumed effect can usually be accomplished.

7. It is possible to measure "behavior" as a dependent variable.

8. Experimental studies can produce descriptive and correlational data.

9. Near 100 percent response rate from the sample can usually be obtained.

10. Can be done inexpensively.

11. Minimal time investment is required.

12. Accurate execution of communication plan is possible (pp. 48-51).

The research design for this study is given in Figure 2 using the notational system developed by Jack B. Haskins (1968; 1977).

Subjects

Because this experiment investigated the effects of comparative television advertising for local retailers, it was necessary to secure adults residing in the Knoxville metro area as subjects. Mayo Garden Centers were selected as the sponsor of the treatment commercials because they were well known among Knoxville residents, were locally owned, and have been in business for 35 years. At the time of this experiment there were four Mayo Garden Centers scattered across the Knoxville metro area. Because the majority of Mayo Garden Centers' customers were men, it was important to secure adult males as subjects.

A total of 88 adult male subjects took part in the experiment. All subjects were members of one of three Knoxville-area Optimist

	t_0	t_1	t_2	t_3
P1		--	T1(fx)	M 1-7
P2		--	T2(fx)	M 1-7
P3		--	TP(fx)	M 1, 3-7

P1-3 = Groups of adult males attending Knoxville area Optimist clubs.

t_1 = Immediately before treatment in t_2.

t_2 = Time of treatment.

t_3 = Immediately after treatment.

T1(fx) = Forced exposure to television program with two 30-second comparative commercials for the sponsoring store.

T2(fx) = Forced exposure to television program with two 30-second noncomparative commercials for the sponsoring store.

TP(fx) = Forced exposure to television program without commercials for the sponsoring store.

M1 = Sponsor identification measured by asking subjects to list the commercial sponsors of the program.

M2 = Recall of commercial copy points measured by subjects listing the major copy points.

M3 = Approval of commercial measured by a five-point Likert-type scale.

FIGURE 2

RESEARCH DESIGN FOR EXPERIMENT

M4 = Interestingness of commercials measured by a five-point Likert-type scale.

M5 = Believability of commercials measured by a five-point Likert-type scale.

M6 = Patronage (intention to shop at the store) measured by a five-point Likert-type scale.

M7 = Demographic measures of age, education, term of residence in Knoxville area, occupation, and recent gardening experience.

FIGURE 2 (continued)

clubs: the Downtown Knoxville Optimist Club, the South Knoxville Optimist Club, and the Cedar Bluff-Faragut Optimist Club. Subjects ranged in age from the early 20s to middle 70s and had widely varied levels of education and occupations. Because these three clubs held their regularly scheduled meetings at different times in different locations, it was not possible to randomly assign the subjects to the different experimental treatments. Instead, the experimental treatments were randomly assigned to the groups.

Instrumentation

Selection of competitor. Because the experimental television commercials for the Mayo Garden Centers were to be shown to Knoxville residents in the context of a real television program, and because the subjects were to believe that these commercials were real television commercials actually used by the Mayo Garden Centers, the selection of the firm for comparisons was critical. The K-Mart garden centers were selected as the cited competitor for three reasons: (1) the owners of Mayo Garden Centers cited K-Mart's garden centers as their number one competitor in the Knoxville area retail market; (2) while these two retailers sell similar product lines, there were numerous apparent differences between them in terms of size of facilities, product selection, range of product prices, and services offered; and (3) K-Mart was a well-known retail firm with five locations scattered across the Knoxville metro area.

Selection of central theme. Most effective television commercials are usually built around one central theme or central selling

idea with all of the commercial elements supporting that theme (Roman & Maas, 1976; Zeigler & Howard, 1978). The overall theme selected for both the comparative and noncomparative commercials was that the Mayo Garden Centers were the best places to shop in the Knoxville area for lawn and garden supplies. All copy claims and production elements in both commercials supported this central selling idea.

In the noncomparative commercial the on-camera announcer stated that Mayo Garden Centers were the best places to shop for lawn and garden supplies and listed three copy claims or major selling points to support the statement. In the comparative commercial the announcer stated that the Mayo Garden Centers were better places to shop than K-Mart's garden centers. This statement was supported by listing the same three major copy claims that were used in the noncomparative commercial but in each case a distinction was made between the two companies.

Selection of major copy claims. Because both the comparative and noncomparative commercials for the Mayo Garden Centers were 30-seconds in length, the number of major copy claims was limited to three. This is usually considered to be the maximum number of major selling points that can be effectively used in the 30-second television commercial format (Orlik, 1978). The three copy claims incorporated in the commercials were determined in two ways. First, the researcher visited the four Knoxville-area Mayo Garden Centers and two Knoxville K-Mart stores to observe the facilities, product selection, price, and store personnel. Second, the owners of the Mayo Garden Centers

were questioned to determine what they considered to be the strongest selling points for their retail stores and what they perceived were the greatest differences between their stores and the K-Mart stores.

The three major copy claims selected were: (1) large selection of products; (2) high quality products; and (3) highly trained, helpful employees. Although price was considered to be another major difference between the two companies, it was not used as a copy claim because prices at the Mayo Garden Centers were generally higher than prices at K-Mart.

In the comparative commercials the announcer stated that the Mayo Garden Centers had a larger selection of products than K-Mart's garden centers, sold products of higher quality than K-Mart's garden centers, and employed more highly trained, helpful sales people who gave better service than the employees at K-Mart. In the comparative commercial the same three major copy claims were used but K-Mart was not mentioned and no comparisons were made.

Selection of commercial structure. In order to make the commercials for Mayo Garden Centers appear typical of local television commercials, and to facilitate a small production budget, two commercials using the spokesperson format were designed to be produced in a studio. Each commercial was produced in the same manner using the same professional announcer acting as the on-camera spokesperson. All production elements of the commercials including lighting, camera angles, camera movements, graphics, and the talent's clothing were the same for both the comparative and noncomparative versions.

The only major difference in the audio portion of the commercials was the mention of K-Mart's garden centers in the comparative version. The only major difference in the video portion of the commercials was the use of different "supers" which repeated the three major copy claims as they were stated by the announcer. In the noncomparative commercial the "supers" read: "large selection," "high quality products," and "excellent service." In the comparative version the "supers" read: "larger selection," "higher quality products," and "better service." Table 1 illustrates these major copy claims as they were incorporated in the commercials.

Production. Video segments for the experimental commercials were produced on video tape at the Knoxville advertising agency of Davis-Newman-Payne under the direction of the agency's studio production director. The tapes were then taken to The University of Tennessee's Television Services studios for the first stage of post-production editing. In this stage the "supers" and an ending graphic of the Mayo Garden Centers' logo was added to both commercials. The final scripts for both experimental commercials can be found in Appendix A. Storyboards are presented in Appendix B.

After the production of the commercials was complete a specially prepared version of a PM Magazine television program was produced. Programming material for the PM Magazine portion of the program was obtained from WATE-TV, Knoxville. This raw programming was then taken to the College of Communications' Department of Broadcasting editing laboratory for editing. The material was edited so

TABLE 1

WORDING OF "SUPERS" UNDERSCORING MAJOR COPY CLAIMS FOR COMPARATIVE AND NONCOMPARATIVE TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

Copy Claim	Wording	
	Noncomparative	Comparative
Large Product Selection	"Large selection"	"Larger selection"
High Quality Products	"High quality products"	"Higher quality products"
Highly Trained Employees	"Excellent service"	"Better service

that the program had its normal opening and closing segments but contained only one major story segment.

The final post-production editing was done at the McAmis Agency, a Knoxville advertising agency. In this stage the PM Magazine program and the completed commercials were reproduced and edited to make three programs reflecting the different experimental treatments. The first version contained the comparative commercial for Mayo Garden Centers along with two other local commercials. The second version used the noncomparative commercial for Mayo Garden Centers and the same two other local commercials. In the third version no commercial for Mayo Garden Centers appeared and another local commercial was inserted in its place. All three versions of the program were approximately 10 minutes in length and were identical in every aspect other than the commercials. Table 2 indicates the exact ordering of the program elements for the three versions of the program.

Measuring Instruments

Two different questionnaires were used for data collection in this experiment. The first questionnaire was administered to the two treatment groups who viewed experimental television commercials for Mayo Garden Centers. The second questionnaire was administered to the control group.

Treatment questionnaire. The first page of this questionnaire was dedicated to measuring sponsor identification. Subjects were asked to write down the names of the three businesses which sponsored

TABLE 2

ORDERING OF PROGRAM ELEMENTS FOR THE THREE EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENTS

TREATMENT ONE (Comparative)	TREATMENT TWO (Noncomparative)	TREATMENT THREE (Control)
1. PM Magazine Program Introduction	1. PM Magazine Program Introduction	1. PM Magazine Program Introduction
2. Commercial Break-	2. Commercial Break-	2. Commercial Break-
a. Mayo Garden Centers	a. Mayo Garden Centers	a. East Tennessee Chevy Dealers
b. East Tennessee Chevy Dealers	b. East Tennessee Chevy Dealers	3. Program Segment
3. Program Segment	3. Program Segment	4. Commercial Break-
4. Commercial Break-	4. Commercial Break-	a. Miller's Department Store
a. Miller's Department Store	a. Miller's Department Store	b. Long John Silver's Sea Food Shoppes
b. Mayo Garden Centers	b. Mayo Garden Centers	5. PM Magazine Program Conclusion and Credits
5. PM Magazine Program Conclusion and Credits	5. PM Magazine Program Conclusion and Credits	

the commercials in the PM Magazine program that they just viewed. No other questions appeared on this page because subsequent questions mentioned the Mayo Garden Centers' commercial and at this point, subjects were not to receive any reminder of the program's sponsors. Subjects were instructed to answer all questions on a given page before turning to the next page. They were also told that once they had turned a page they were not allowed to turn back to an earlier page to fill out any answers.

The second page of the questionnaire was devoted to measuring recall of copy claims, approval, interestingness, believability, and patronage. Recall of copy claims was measured by asking the subjects to write down the three major selling points or reasons why they should shop at the Mayo Garden Centers that were given by the on-camera announcer.

A series of five-interval Likert-type scales were used to measure approval, interestingness, believability, and patronage. Subjects were asked to respond to a positive statement made about each of these four variables.

The third page of the questionnaire allowed measurement of five demographic variables. Forced-choice questions were used to measure: (1) the length of time they had lived in the Knoxville area; (2) if they had owned a garden in the previous 12 months; (3) approximate age; and (4) level of education. An open-ended question was used for the last measure. Subjects were asked to write down their occupation. These answers were later categorized into standard United States Census Bureau occupational categories.

Control questionnaire. The first and third page of the control questionnaire was identical to those of the treatment questionnaire because sponsor identification and demographic measures were the same for all three experimental groups. The control questionnaire differed from the treatment questionnaire on most measurements taken on the second page. Since subjects in the control group did not see a commercial for Mayo Garden Centers it was not appropriate to ask questions about copy claims or attitudes toward the commercials. Only one question on the second page of the treatment questionnaire was used in the control questionnaire. This was the question measuring patronage toward the Mayo Garden Centers. In order to acclimate the subjects to responding to questions on Likert-type scales, and to make the question seem reasonable, subjects were asked to respond to three favorable patronage statements for three Knoxville retail businesses. The last of the three questions measured patronage toward the Mayo Garden Centers.

Pretests. Three pretests were conducted to evaluate the questionnaires and the television programs. In the first pretest student subjects viewed the program containing the comparative commercial and filled out the treatment questionnaire. In the second pretest student subjects viewed the program containing the noncomparative commercial and completed the treatment questionnaire. The third pretest consisted of students viewing the control program and completing the control questionnaire. After the pretests results were tabulated minor changes in the format of the two questionnaires were made.

After these changes were made in the questionnaires the programs were shown to a number of faculty members in the College of Communications at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville and the questionnaires were reviewed and evaluated.

Reproduction. Typesetting for the final versions of the questionnaires used in this study was done by ProGraphics of Knoxville, Tennessee. The questionnaires were offset printed by J & R Quick Print, Knoxville, Tennessee. Examples of these two questionnaires can be found in Appendix C.

The Experiment

The television programs were shown and data were collected at regularly scheduled club meetings for the three Knoxville-area Optimist clubs selected for the study. All experimental sessions were conducted within a two-and-one-half week period beginning January 22, 1982. The dates and locations of the sessions are given in Table 3.

The number of subjects in each experimental group and the treatments they received are given in Table 4.

In each of the three experimental sessions the subjects were told that the entertainment portion of their meeting would be a presentation by a professor from The University of Tennessee's College of Communications. For all three sessions the title of the program was introduced as "Current Developments in Television Programming." The researcher was introduced as a teacher of broadcasting and advertising who also worked as an independent consultant to broadcasting stations and advertising agencies.

TABLE 3

DATES AND LOCATIONS OF EXPERIMENTAL SESSIONS

Group	Club Name	Date	Location
P1	Downtown Optimist Club	1/22/82	Graystone Presbyterian Church, 139 Woodland Pike, Knoxville
P2	South Knoxville Optimist Club	1/25/82	South Knoxville Optimist Club Building, 6101 Moore SW, Knoxville
P3	Cedar Bluff-Farragut Optimist Club	2/9/82	Western Sizzlin Steak House, 9340 Park West Blvd., Knoxville

Note: Data collection was originally scheduled within an eight-day period but an ice storm on January 18, 1982 caused one club to cancel their meeting and the presentation to be moved to a later date.

TABLE 4

SIZE OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS AND TREATMENTS ADMINISTERED

Group	Club Name	Number of Subjects	Treatment
P1	Downtown Optimist Club	40	T1--Comparative
P2	South Knoxville Optimist Club	26	T2--Noncomparative
P3	Cedar Bluff-Farragut Optimist Club	22	T3--Control

At the beginning of each program the researcher made opening comments of thanks and made a few remarks concerning the use of research for television programs and commercials. Then the club members were informed that as part of the program they would actually take part in a research project dealing with television programming. Subjects were told that they would be asked to watch a special television program that had not yet been broadcast by any of the three Knoxville television stations. They were told that after the program was viewed they would be asked to fill out a brief questionnaire about the program they saw. Subjects were not told that the questionnaire dealt with only the commercials. Strict instructions were given concerning the procedures the subjects were to follow in viewing the program and filling out the questionnaires.

The researcher used a single typed script for all of the opening comments and instructions given to each group of subjects. This insured that all subjects received the same information previous to the viewing of the taped programs. This script is presented in Appendix D.

Immediately before the taped program was shown, an informed consent statement previously approved by The University of Tennessee's Office of the Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies and Research was read aloud. The text of this informed consent statement is found in Appendix E.

After one of the three treatment programs was viewed over color television monitors in each session, questionnaires and pencils were distributed to each subject. Subjects were reminded not to converse with each other until after all of the questionnaires had been

collected. The response rate for all three groups was 100 percent.

After the questionnaires were collected in each session, the researcher explained the experiment to the subjects and made several comments about comparative advertising on television. Each session ended with a brief question-and-answer session.

Data Analysis

After the 88 completed questionnaires were examined and checked for completeness and mechanical errors, each response was coded for keypunching. Computer cards were then punched for each questionnaire to facilitate computer analysis.

Various SAS programs were used to tabulate frequencies and test for significant differences. Specifically, the Z test for differences between proportions and the median test were utilized.

IV. RESULTS

Sponsor Identification

The comparative television commercial for the Mayo Garden Centers was hypothesized to create a higher level of sponsor identification among viewers than the noncomparative television commercial. Tabulation of subjects' responses revealed that all subjects (100.00 percent) in both treatment groups were able to identify the Mayo Garden Centers as a commercial sponsor. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is not testable.

Lower levels of sponsor identification were associated with the other two local sponsors. Miller's was identified as a commercial sponsor by 75.00 percent of those in Treatment Group 1 and by 76.92 percent of those in Treatment Group 2. The East Tennessee Chevy Dealers' commercial produced the lowest level of sponsor identification with 67.5 percent of the subjects in Treatment Group 1 and 57.69 percent of the subjects in Treatment Group 2 making a correct identification. The responses for these two treatment groups are presented in Table 5.

The percentage of subjects in all three experimental groups who correctly identified the commercial sponsors is given in Table 6. This data perhaps illustrates the influence that repetition and placement may have had on sponsor identification. In the programs shown to the two treatment groups the commercials for the Mayo Garden Centers were seen twice and were positioned in the first and last commercial slots. The other two television commercials were shown only once. In the

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE OF SUBJECTS IN TREATMENT GROUPS IDENTIFYING COMMERCIAL SPONSORS

Sponsor	Treatment Group 1 (N=40)	Treatment Group 2 (N=26)
Mayo Garden Centers	100.00	100.00
Miller's	75.00	76.92
East Tennessee Chevy Dealers	67.50	57.69

TABLE 6

PERCENTAGE OF SUBJECTS IN ALL EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS IDENTIFYING COMMERCIAL SPONSORS

Sponsor	Treatment Group 1 (N=40)	Treatment Group 2 (N=26)	Control Group (N=22)
Mayo Garden Centers	100.00	100.00	--[1]
Long John Silver's	--[2]	--[2]	86.36
Miller's	75.00	76.92	86.36
East TN Chevy Dealers	67.50	57.69	54.55

[1]Commercials for Mayo Garden Centers were not shown to Control Group.

[2]Commercial for Long John Silver's was not shown to the two Treatment Groups.

program viewed by the Control Group each of the three television commercials was seen only once. The level of sponsor identification for the commercials which were seen twice in a given program was somewhat higher than for those seen once. The level of sponsor identification for all the commercials which were seen only once was similar in all three groups.

Sponsor Misidentification

Even though 100 percent of the subjects who saw one of the treatment commercials for Mayo Garden Centers correctly identified Mayo Garden Centers as a commercial sponsor, it seems that the comparative commercial that was shown to Treatment Group 1 stimulated some confusion about who sponsored commercials. In responding to the first question on the treatment questionnaire, five of the 40 subjects who saw the comparative television commercial for Mayo Garden Centers indicated they also saw a commercial for K-Mart. No subjects in the other treatment group or the control group identified K-Mart as a commercial sponsor for the program.

Recall of Copy Claims

The comparative television commercial for the Mayo Garden Centers was hypothesized to produce a greater recall of copy claims than the noncomparative television commercial. The Z test for differences between proportions was used four times to test for significant differences at two different levels (Champion, 1981, p. 227).

First, the total number of correctly recalled copy claims for the subjects in the two treatment groups were compared. Subjects in

Treatment Group 1 correctly recalled 69.16 percent of the commercial copy claims presented compared to 56.41 percent for those in Treatment Group 2. Table 7 shows that the results of the Z test for differences between proportions indicated there was no significant difference between the two groups. On the basis of these data hypothesis 2 is rejected.

The Z test for differences between proportions was also used to test for statistically significant differences in recall for each individual copy claim presented in the two treatment commercials. The only statistically significant difference found was on the copy claim which was presented last in the two commercials. Here, the levels of recall for the copy claim of "helpful employees" was significantly higher for the comparative commercial than for the noncomparative commercial. No statistically significant differences were found for the "selection" and quality products" copy claims. The results of these three statistical tests are presented in Table 8.

Approval, Believability, and Interestingness

The median test was used to test for statistically significant differences between the two treatment groups on the measures of approval, interestingness, and believability (Champion, 1981, p. 280). It has been hypothesized that the comparative television commercial would be: (1) remembered more positively by the viewers than the noncomparative commercial; (2) perceived by viewers as being more believable than the noncomparative commercial; and (3) be thought of as being more interesting than the noncomparative commercial.

TABLE 7

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL MAJOR COPY CLAIMS RECALLED BY SUBJECTS IN BOTH TREATMENT GROUPS

	Treatment Group 1 (N=40)	Treatment Group 2 (N=26)
Percent Correct	69.16	56.41

Z = 1.049 p.>.05

TABLE 8

Z TEST FOR PERCENTAGE OF SUBJECTS IN TREATMENT GROUPS RECALLING INDIVIDUAL COPY CLAIMS

Copy Claim	Treatment Group 1 (N=40)	Treatment Group 2 (N=26)	Z	Probability
Selection	67.50	65.39	0.1780	p>.05
Quality Products	70.00	57.69	1.025	p>.05
Helpful Employees	70.00	46.15	1.96	p<.05

Measures were taken for these three variables in questions 3, 4, and 5 of the treatment questionnaire. Results of the median tests on these data indicate that there is no significant difference between the responses of those in Treatment Group 1 and those in Treatment Group 2 for these three measures. The results of these three tests are given in Table 9.

These data suggest that hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 be rejected as there were no significant differences between the subjects in the two treatment groups on the measures of approval, believability, and interestingness.

Patronage

For the patronage measure all three groups were included in the statistical analysis since subjects in the Control Group were also measured on this variable. Table 10 shows the results of the median tests between all three groups on the patronage measure.

There was no significant difference found between Treatment Group 1 and Treatment Group 2 on the patronage measure. Likewise, no significant difference was indicated between Treatment Group 2 and the Control Group. However, the difference between Treatment Group 1 and the Control Group almost reached significance at the .05 level. On the basis of these data, hypothesis 6, which stated that the comparative television commercial would produce greater intentions to visit or buy from the sponsor than the noncomparative television commercial, must be rejected.

TABLE 9

MEDIAN TEST FOR SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TREATMENT GROUP 1 AND TREATMENT GROUP 2 ON MEASURES OF APPROVAL, INTERESTINGNESS, AND BELIEVABILITY

Measure	X^2	DF	Probability
Approval	1.797	1	p = .180
Believability	0.481	1	p = .488
Interestingness	0.039	1	p = .843

TABLE 10

MEDIAN TEST FOR SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ALL EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS ON PATRONAGE MEASURE

Groups Compared	X^2	DF	Probability
Treatment Group 1 and Treatment Group 2	1.035	1	p = .389
Treatment Group 1 and Control Group	3.546	1	p = .059
Treatment Group 2 and Control Group	0.700	1	p = .4027

Negative Argumentation

Even though no hypothesis related to comparative advertising and negative argumentation by viewers was set forth at the first of this study, some of the data collected in this experiment seemed to support the idea that comparative advertising stimulates negative cognitive activity. In Section 2 it was noted that Wilson and Mudderrisoglu (1980) and Swinyard (1980) had studied negative statements related to comparative advertising. Wilson and Midderrisoglu found that comparative magazine advertisements stimulated more counterarguing and more negative ad-related statements than noncomparative advertisements. Swinyard found that comparative newspaper advertisements produced higher levels of respondent counterarguing than did noncomparative advertisements.

One unexpected finding of this experiment relates to these other two studies which measured negative cognitive activity. Even though there was no place on the treatment or control questionnaires for subjects to write their own comments or opinions, a number of subjects wrote down unsolicited statements.

None of the subjects in the treatment group that viewed the noncomparative television commercial for the Mayo Garden Centers or in the Control Group wrote unsolicited statements. However, nine of the 40 subjects in the treatment group that viewed the comparative commercial for the Mayo Garden Centers wrote personal comments somewhere on the questionnaire. Seven of these nine written comments were negative in that they either expressed disgust or disappointment in the Mayo Garden Centers for using a comparative message, or they related some negative opinion toward the chain of retail stores.

These statements seem to indicate that the comparative television commercial for the Mayo Garden Centers stimulated negative cognitive activity which the subjects felt should be communicated. The test of these nine statements is presented in Appendix F.

Demographic Characteristics

Because the subjects in this experiment were not randomly selected from a larger population and were not randomly assigned to the three experimental conditions, it is important to examine some demographic characteristics of the subjects in these three groups. If valid comparisons between the three groups of subjects are to be made, it is essential that the groups are highly similar. Measurements were taken of the subjects' approximate age, level of education, occupation, the years they had lived in the Knoxville area, and if they had owned a garden in the 12 months before the experiment.

The majority of the subjects in all three experimental groups were middle-aged males who had lived in the Knoxville area for at least 10 years. Approximately 70 percent of those in Treatment Group 1 and Treatment Group 2 were in their 40s, 50s, and 60s. The control subjects were slightly younger with only approximately 60 percent in their 40s, 50s, and 60s. An exact breakdown of subjects by age categories is given in Table 11.

The majority of subjects in the three groups could be considered long-time residents of the Knoxville area. In all three groups, more than 80 percent of the subjects had lived in the Knoxville area 10 years or longer. Subjects in Treatment Group 2 differed from the

TABLE 11

AGE OF SUBJECTS BY CATEGORY

Age	Treatment Group 1		Treatment Group 2		Control Group	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
20's	1	2.50	1	3.85	2	9.09
30's	9	22.50	3	11.54	7	31.82
40's	3	7.50	3	11.54	7	31.82
50's	15	37.50	9	34.61	5	22.73
60's	9	22.50	6	23.08	1	4.54
70+	3	7.50	4	15.38		
Totals	40	100.00	26	100.00	22	100.00

subjects in the other two groups in that 100 percent had lived in the Knoxville area 10 or more years. Table 12 presents a breakdown of the three groups by the length of time they had resided in the Knoxville area.

The three groups were similar in the levels of education achieved by the subjects. More than 90 percent of the subjects in all three groups had either attended or graduated from a college or technical school. It should be noted that Treatment Group 1 had a somewhat higher percentage of subjects with college and graduate school degree than the other two groups. The educational level of all subjects is presented in Table 13.

The subjects in all three experimental groups had similar occupations. For all three groups more than half of the subjects had occupations falling into the professional/technical and management/administrative categories. The only significant difference between the three groups was that the Control Group had no subjects who listed their occupation as "retired." A breakdown of subjects' occupations by categories for the three experimental groups is presented in Table 14.

The final demographic measure to establish similarity between the groups was a measure of the subjects' recent ownership of a garden. Treatment Group 1 had the highest percentage (65.0 percent) of subjects who said they had owned a garden in the past 12 months. Treatment Group 2 had the next highest percentage with 53.8 percent indicating recent garden ownership. Those in the Control Group were

TABLE 12

NUMBER OF YEARS SUBJECTS HAD LIVED
IN THE KNOXVILLE AREA

Number of Years	Treatment Group 1		Treatment Group 2		Control Group	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1-3 Years	3	7.50	--	--	1	4.55
4-6 Years	3	7.50	--	--	1	4.55
7-9 Years	1	2.50	--	--	2	9.09
10+ Years	33	82.50	26	100.00	18	81.81
Totals	40	100.00	26	100.00	22	100.00

TABLE 13

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF SUBJECTS

Level of Education	Treatment Group 1		Treatment Group 2		Control Group	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
High School Diploma	1	2.50	2	7.69	2	9.09
Attended College	6	15.00	12	46.15	6	27.27
College Degree	18	45.00	9	34.62	9	40.91
Graduate School Degree	14	35.00	2	7.69	5	23.73
Technical School Degree	1	2.50	1	3.85	--	--
Totals	40	100.00	26	100.00	22	100.00

TABLE 14

OCCUPATION OF SUBJECTS BY CATEGORY

Occupational Category	Treatment Group 1		Treatment Group 2		Control Group	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Professional/ Technical	14	35.00	5	19.23	8	36.36
Management/ Administrative	12	30.00	9	34.62	7	31.82
Sales	6	15.00	7	26.92	5	22.72
Craftsmen	1	2.50	--	--	1	4.55
Service	2	5.00	1	3.85	1	4.55
Retired	5	12.50	4	15.38	--	--
Totals	40	100.00	26	100.00	22	100.00

evenly divided with 50 percent saying they had and 50 percent saying they had not owned a garden in the past 12 months. These breakdowns are presented in Table 15.

TABLE 15

PERCENTAGE OF SUBJECTS WHO HAD A GARDEN
IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

Owned Garden in Past 12 Months	Treatment Group 1		Treatment Group 2		Control Group	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	26	65.00	14	53.85	11	50.00
No	14	35.00	12	46.15	11	50.00
Totals	40	100.00	26	100.00	22	100.00

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The primary objective of this experimental study was to determine the effects that comparative television advertisements for a local retailer would have on local consumers. Specifically, this research effort was designed to determine if local comparative television commercials were more or less effective than local noncomparative television commercials in the areas of: (1) sponsor identification; (2) recall of copy claims; (3) consumer approval; (4) believability; (5) interestingness; and (6) store patronage.

A comparative and a noncomparative television commercial which contained the same copy claim themes and utilized identical production techniques were produced for a chain of retail stores operating in the Knoxville metro area. The only difference between the two commercials was that one commercial used a comparative message structure while the other incorporated the more traditional, noncomparative message structure. Three television programs were produced which were identical in every way except for the commercials they contained. The two treatment commercials were then edited into the programs so that one program contained the comparative commercial and the other contained the noncomparative commercial. The third program was produced without either of the treatment commercials and served as a control treatment.

The members of three Knoxville-area men's civic clubs were used as experimental subjects. One club viewed the program containing the comparative commercial for the local sponsor. The members of the second club viewed the program containing the noncomparative television commercial. The third club, serving as the control group, viewed the program which did not have a commercial for the experimental sponsor.

In all three experimental sessions, after the programs had been viewed, the subjects were asked to fill out one of two questionnaires. Members of the two treatment groups who saw either the comparative or the noncomparative commercial for the experimental sponsor were measured to determine: (1) recall of the programs commercial sponsors; (2) recall of the major copy claims used in the treatment commercial; (3) their overall reaction to the treatment commercial; (4) their perception of the commercial's believability and interestingness; and (5) their likelihood of shopping at one of the sponsor's stores. Members of the control groups filled out a different questionnaire which measured: (1) recall of the program's commercial sponsors; and (2) their likelihood of shopping at the sponsor's stores.

The responses of the subjects in all three groups were coded, tabulated, and subjected to statistical analysis. The results indicated that, in general, there were no statistically significant differences between the responses of the three groups of subjects on the six variables measured.

Conclusions

From this study, it appears that comparative television commercials for a local retailer are no more or no less effective than noncomparative television commercials for a local retailer for these subjects. The data gathered in this experiment suggest that comparative television commercials for a local retailer are just as effective as noncomparative commercials in generating sponsor identification and recall of persuasive copy appeals among local consumers. The data also suggest that comparative commercials are perceived by local consumers as being no more or no less believable or interesting than noncomparative commercials. In addition, the results of this study indicate that local comparative commercials are no more or no less effective than local noncomparative commercials in stimulating favorable evaluations of the commercial itself and in persuading consumers to shop at one of the sponsoring retail stores.

While these findings of "no major differences" between comparative and noncomparative television commercials for local retailers may seem insignificant at first glance, they are actually important findings which are significantly different from findings produced by other research on the effects of comparative television advertising. Only two other studies investigating the effects of comparative television commercials had been published at the time of this experiment. Both of these studies focused on comparative commercials for nationally distributed retail products. The results of one study, conducted by Ogilvy and Mather, suggested that comparative television commericals were not nearly as effective as noncomparative television commercials.

Ogilvy and Mather's researchers concluded that comparative commercials were more confusing and less believable than noncomparative commercials and were only beneficial to the cited competitor ("Comparative ads ineffective," 1975; Levine, 1976). Belch (1981) studied the effects of comparative and noncomparative television commercials for a national retail product. While this research found no significant differences between comparative and noncomparative commercials in overall communication effectiveness, he concluded that comparative television commercials generated significantly more negative thoughts among consumers than noncomparative commercials.

The results of this experiment are significant in three important ways. First, the findings reported here are significantly different from the findings of the Ogilvy and Mather study. The data collected in this investigation do not indicate that comparative television commercials are less effective than noncomparative commercials. Secondly, the findings of this experiment lend more support to Belch's findings of no significant differences between the communication effectiveness of comparative and noncomparative television advertising. Third, even though the results of this experiment are in agreement with some of Belch's findings, we now know more about comparative advertising because of this study's focus on local retailers.

These results should not be interpreted to suggest that there are no absolute differences between comparative and noncomparative television advertisements for local retailers. The lack of significant results does not mean that the comparative commercial used in this experiment was just as effective in every way as the noncomparative commercial. Total effectiveness of an advertising message is

impossible to measure. It is important to remember that only a handful of variables were measured in this experiment. Significant effects differences between comparative and noncomparative commercials might have been discovered if measurements of other variables had been taken.

The potential user of the comparative advertising strategy should carefully consider all of the data gathered in this experiment. While the major finding of this study is that there are no significant effects differences between comparative and noncomparative television advertising, some of the information gathered indicate that the use of the comparative message may be indeed a dangerous practice. One should not ignore the fact that some of the subjects who saw the comparative television commercial wrote negative comments concerning the commercial and its sponsor. Also, one should note that a few of the subjects who viewed the comparative television commercial thought they had also seen a commercial for the sponsor's competitor.

Implications for Future Research

The numerous conflicting findings of the many studies investigating the communication effectiveness of comparative advertising should serve as a warning to advertising practitioners and scholars not to jump to any conclusions about comparative advertising. While this study has added somewhat to the body of knowledge about the comparative advertising strategy, it applies to only a few aspects of comparative advertising messages in a very limited context. This study has not answered all the relevant questions concerning the strategy. The findings of this experiment are severely limited by a number of factors including the research method employed, the limited

number of variables measured, the type of advertiser selected as the commercial sponsor, and the make-up of the experimental subjects. More empirical research on comparative advertising must be conducted before we really know the true effects of comparative advertising.

Thus far, the studies which have been published on comparative advertising have measured only short-term effects. Since advertisers are concerned with both short-term and long-term effects of their advertisements, there is a real need for research that would measure the ultimate impact comparative advertising messages have on consumers over an extended period of time.

The vast majority of studies investigating comparative advertising have focused on nationally distributed retail products. Only one earlier study was found which studied comparative advertisements for a business and that was actually a study of price comparisons and two-sided messages for a supermarket. If local advertisers are able to make intelligent decisions concerning the use of comparative advertising, more research needs to be done using several different types of firms.

Almost all of the research on comparative advertising has taken place in the laboratory setting. Haskins (1968) has noted that because of the non-naturalistic communication conditions associated with laboratory experiments the generalizability of the findings is severely limited. There is a real need for research on the effectiveness of comparative advertising conducted in natural settings. Such studies would not only allow the researcher to measure cause and effect, but would also have external validity. Therefore, the communication

effectiveness of comparative advertising messages must be studied using the controlled field experiment research design. Only after a number of controlled field experiments have been conducted, using advertising messages for several different types of advertisers, transmitted through a variety of media, over both long and short time periods, will we truly know how comparative advertisements affects consumers.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

TWO COMMERCIALS

MAYO GARDEN CENTERS

:30 Noncomparative Commercial

VIDEO	AUDIO
MED. SHOT OF TALENT SITTING ON STOOL (CAMEO LIGHTING)	MALE TALENT: At Mayo Garden Centers we're proud of what we do. We're a hometown business that offers you everything you'd expect from a great garden center.
ZOOM IN TO MED. CLOSE UP	
SUPER "LARGE SELECTION"	At Mayo, our selection of merchandise is huge. We have it all . . . from tractors to seeds.
SUPER "HIGH QUALITY MERCHANDISE"	At Mayo, we sell only the highest quality products. Products you can count on.
SUPER "EXCELLENT SERVICE"	And at Mayo, you get excellent service. Our employees are trained to help you buy the right products so you get the right results.
ZOOM BACK TO MED. SHOT	
	At Mayo Garden Centers . . .
DISS. TO LOGO (2 SEC)	We really are proud of what we do!
FADE TO BLACK	

MAYO GARDEN CENTERS

:30 Comparative Commercial

VIDEO	AUDIO
MED. SHOT OF TALENT SITTING ON STOOL. (CAMEO LIGHTING)	MALE TALENT: At Mayo Garden Centers we realize you can buy lawn and garden supplies from a hometown business . . . or a big chain store . . . like K-Mart.
ZOOM IN TO MED. CLOSE UP	Don't be fooled by size. K-Mart may have big impressive stores . . . but their garden centers just don't compare.
SUPER "LARGER SELECTION"	At Mayo, our selection of merchandise is larger than K-Mart's.
SUPER "HIGHER QUALITY MERCHANDISE"	At Mayo, we sell only the highest quality products.
SUPER "BETTER SERVICE"	And at Mayo, you get better service. Our employees aren't just department store workers. They're trained to help you buy the right products so you get the right results.
ZOOM BACK TO MED. SHOT	K-Mart may look big . . . but the Mayo Garden Centers are not only bigger . . . they're better.
DISS. TO LOGO (2 SEC.)	
FADE TO BLACK	

APPENDIX B

TWO STORYBOARDS

Mayo Garden Centers: Comparative



ANNCR: At Mayo Garden Centers we realize you can buy lawn and garden supplies from a hometown business or a big chain store like K-Mart.

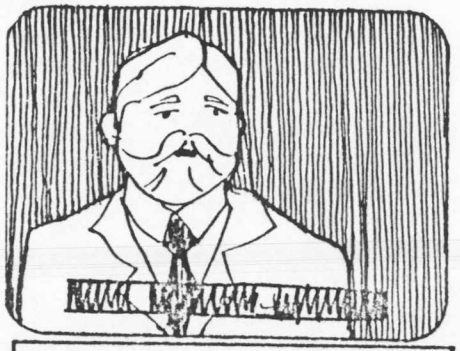


Don't be fooled by size. K-Mart may have big impressive stores, but their garden centers just don't compare.



At Mayo, our selection of merchandise is larger than K-Mart's.

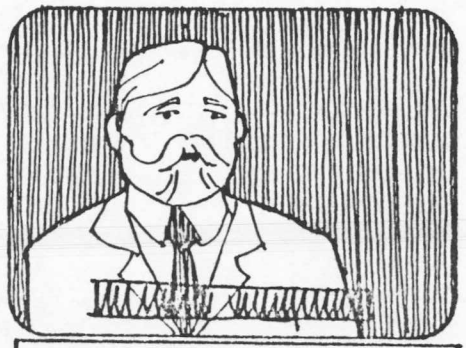
SUPER:
"LARGER SELECTION"



At Mayo, we sell only the highest quality products.

And at Mayo,

SUPER:
"HIGHER QUALITY PRODUCTS"



you get better service. Our employees aren't just department store workers. They're trained to help you buy the right products so you get the right results.

SUPER:
"BETTER SERVICE"



K-Mart may look big, but the Mayo Garden Centers are not only bigger . . . they're better.

Mayo Garden Centers: Noncomparative



ANNCR: At Mayo Garden Centers we're proud of what we do.



We're a hometown business that offers you everything you'd expect from a great garden center.



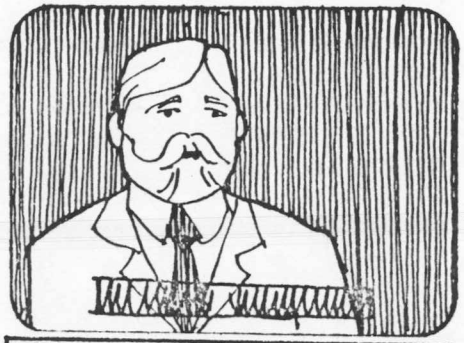
At Mayo, our selection of merchandise is huge. We have it all . . . from tractors to seeds.

SUPER:
"LARGE SELECTION"



At Mayo, we sell only the highest quality products. Products you can count on. And at

SUPER:
"HIGH QUALITY PRODUCTS"



And at Mayo, you get excellent service. Our employees are trained to help you buy the right products so you get the right results.

SUPER:
"EXCELLENT SERVICE"



At Mayo Garden Centers . . . we really are proud of what we do.

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRES

Treatment Questionnaire

IMPORTANT

As part of this program we are asking you to answer a few questions about the video tape you just viewed.

In order for our results to be valid, it is extremely important that you follow these few rules:

a. Please answer the questions thoughtfully and carefully. It will only take a few minutes.

b. Please don't talk with anyone about your answers until the questionnaires have been collected.

c. Be sure to answer all the questions on a page before turning to the next page.

Filling out this questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate in this experiment.

1. The program you just viewed included three television commercials for three different Knoxville businesses.

   We want to know how many of these commercial sponsors you remember.

   Would you please list the three businesses which sponsored the commercials?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

(When you are through with this question turn to the next page. Do not turn back to this page.)

2. One of the commercials you viewed was for Mayo Garden Center. In that commercial the announcer stressed three selling points or reasons why you should shop at their stores.

   Would you please list as many of these three reasons as you can remember?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

Please respond to the following statement on a scale indicating whether or not you **strongly agree, agree,** are **undecided, disagree,** or **strongly disagree.**

EXAMPLE: Overall, the television program was fun to watch.

strongly agree___ agree___ undecided✓ disagree___ strongly disagree___

These statements pertain to the commercial you saw for Mayo Garden Centers. Respond with your first impressions.

3. Overall, my reaction to the commercial for Mayo Garden Center is favorable.

   strongly agree___ agree___ undecided___ disagree___ strongly disagree___

4. Some commercials are more interesting than others. By interesting we mean stimulating, provocative, exciting, exceptional, or amusing. Now, please react to this statement:

   The commercial for Mayo Garden Center was interesting.

   strongly agree___ agree___ undecided___ disagree___ strongly disagree___

5. Some commercials are more believable than others. By believable we mean truthful, credible, realistic, or accurate. Now, please react to this statement:

   The information in the commercial for Mayo Garden Center was believable.

   strongly agree___ agree___ undecided___ disagree___ strongly disagree___

6. The next time I need garden supplies I will probably go to Mayo Garden Center to buy them.

   strongly agree___ agree___ undecided___ disagree___ strongly disagree___

Your answers to the following questions will help us to analyze our data collected in this experiment.

7. Approximately how many years have you lived in the Knoxville area?

   1-3 years ___ 4-6 years ___ 7-9 years ___ 10 years or longer ___

8. Have you had a garden in the past 12 months?

   yes ___ no ___

9. In which of the following age groups are you?

   20's ___ 30's ___ 40's ___ 50's ___ 60's ___ 70's or older ___

10. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

    ___ did not finish high school
    ___ high school diploma
    ___ attended college but did not graduate
    ___ college degree
    ___ graduate school degree
    ___ technical school degree

11. What is your occupation? _____

Thank you for your time.
Please do not discuss these questions until the program is over.

Control Questionnaire

IMPORTANT

As part of this program we are asking you to answer a few questions about the video tape you just viewed.

In order for our results to be valid, it is extremely important that you follow these few rules:

a. Please answer the questions thoughtfully and carefully. It will only take a few minutes.

b. Please don't talk with anyone about your answers until the questionnaires have been collected.

c. Be sure to answer all the questions on a page before turning to the next page.

Filling out this questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate in this experiment.

1. The program you just viewed included three television commercials for three different Knoxville businesses.

   We want to know how many of these commercial sponsors you remember.

   Would you please list the three businesses which sponsored the commercials?

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

(When you are through with this question turn to the next page. Do not turn back to this page.)

The following questions are related to your personal shopping habits and are designed to measure your feelings towards a number of businesses in the Knoxville area.

Please respond to the following statements on a scale indicating whether or not you **strongly agree, agree,** are **undecided, disagree,** or **strongly disagree.**

EXAMPLE: The next time I need a men's suit I will probably go to Hall-Brown clothiers to buy it.

strongly agree___ agree✓ undecided___ disagree___ strongly disagree___

2. The next time I need a new car I will probably go to Reeder Chevrolet to buy it.

strongly agree___ agree___ undecided___ disagree___ strongly disagree___

3. The next time I need a new auto muffler I will probably to to Midas Mufflers to buy it.

strongly agree___ agree___ undecided___ disagree___ strongly disagree___

4. The next time I need garden supplies I will probably go to Mayo Garden Center to buy them.

strongly agree___ agree___ undecided___ disagree___ strongly disagree___

Your answers to the following questions will help us to analyze our data collected in this experiment.

7. Approximately how many years have you lived in the Knoxville area?

   1-3 years ___ 4-6 years ___ 7-9 years ___ 10 years or longer ___

8. Have you had a garden in the past 12 months?

   yes ___ no ___

9. In which of the following age groups are you?

   20's ___ 30's ___ 40's ___ 50's ___ 60's ___ 70's or older ___

10. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

    ___ did not finish high school
    ___ high school diploma
    ___ attended college but did not graduate
    ___ college degree
    ___ graduate school degree
    ___ technical school degree

11. What is your occupation? _____

Thank you for your time.
Please do not discuss these questions until the program is over.

APPENDIX D

OUTLINE USED FOR OPENING REMARKS AND EXPERIMENT INSTRUCTIONS AT ALL THREE EXPERIMENTAL SESSIONS

1. Thank you very much for letting me be here today.
   a. I think you will find today's program different from those usually given at civic clubs.
   b. You should find it both entertaining and informative.
2. This program is designed to do two things. First, it should inform you and entertain you because we are going to be talking about some new developments in television programming that affects each of you. Secondly, you are going to actually take part in an experiment involving television research . . . something I'm sure most of you have never done.
3. What we are going to talk about today and what we are going to do is relevant to all of you. It's about television . . . something that has a profound effect on all of us.
4. I'm sure everyone has noticed the television monitors that are set up. As part of our program today you are going to get to view a special TV show that hasn't been seen in Knoxville yet. This is part of the research.
5. Americans consume vast amounts of television programming every day. And all this programming is very expensive to produce.
   a. The average network TV program today costs somewhere around $100,000 to produce.

b. Some of the commercials you see cost even more than the shows themselves. Just this week I read that one commercial for a General Motors automobile, running on network TV, cost over $250,000 to make.

6. Now if the programming and the commercials for television cost that much to make, you can be sure that there is a great deal of research done before you ever see the show.

a. Almost every aspect of any television program or commercial is researched . . . the characters, the sets, plots. Even the music that you hear is tested to make sure it is effective.

b. Most of that research is done in New York or Los Angeles. But here at The University of Tennessee we are doing some of this research too.

7. That brings me to the purpose of this program. We are conducting an experiment on television programming and would like you to participate. Here's what I need you to do.

a. First, you are asked to view the television program that will be shown in a few minutes.

b. After the program we will pass out a short questionnaire that I would like you to fill out.

c. Then after you have completed the questionnaires, I will tell you all about the research we are doing, and talk about the techniques that we are studying.

8. Keep in mind that this is a very important experiment.

a. I strongly urge you to take this research very seriously.

b. It is important that you follow these simple instructions.

1. When the program is being shown you are asked <u>not</u> to talk to anyone. Pay attention to every aspect of the program.

2. When the program is over <u>do not</u> discuss the program with anyone while we are passing out the questionnaires.

3. Then, when you get the questionnaire, read all the instructions carefully before you begin filling it out. This is very important. You <u>must</u> follow the instructions exactly.

4. You can discuss the program with others <u>only</u> after the questionnaires have been collected.

9. The program will take only about 10 minutes to show. And it will take only four or five minutes to fill out the questionnaire.
10. Now, before we start the program I need to inform you of some things that relate to the nature of the experimentation process. (Read "informed consent statement" here.)

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

1. Before you participate in this experiment you must indicate that you have willingly consented to take part.
2. I must tell you that your participation in this experiment is purely voluntary. There is absolutely no penalty should you refuse to participate.
3. Participation in this experiment involves no risk of physical or psychological harm.
4. All of your answers will remain strictly confidential. In fact, I am not requesting that you give your name so your answers are anonymous.
5. After the program has been viewed and the questionnaires have been filled out, I will be glad to answer any questions you might have concerning the experiment.
6. If you have any other questions about the nature of this experiment, you may call the Dean of the College of Communications at UT. I will be glad to give you the telephone number at the end of the program.
7. Filling out of the questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate in this experiment.

Note: This statement was presented verbally in each of the experimental sessions immediately before the program was played.

APPENDIX F

UNSOLICITED COMMENTS WRITTEN BY SUBJECTS IN TREATMENT GROUP 1

1. I don't like it when K-Mart is put down but believe that Mayo is right.
2. I don't have a favorable reaction to Mayo comparing themselves to K-Mart but I think the commercial is very effective.
3. I did not like the commercial putting down K-Mart and the department store clerks.
4. I really don't like to hear one product downgraded in an effort to sell another.
5. Why does Mayo feel they have to compare themselves to K-Mart?
6. K-Mart is good too. Mayo has high prices.
7. I don't like to hear who is better in commercials.
8. I guess Mayo is better than K-Mart.
9. Mayo Garden Center really is a good place to shop.

VITA

Hollis Jefferson Warr, Jr. was born in Amarillo, Texas on October 16, 1949. He attended elementary and junior high schools in that city and graduated from Tascosa High School in May of 1968. The following September he enrolled in Abilene Christian University and in 1972 received a Bachelor of Arts degree in mass communication. In the fall of 1972 he began graduate study toward the Master of Arts degree at Abilene Christian University. This degree was awarded in May of 1974.

From 1974 to 1976 he taught advertising and broadcasting at Abilene Christian University as an Instructor in the Department of Communication. Then, in the fall of 1976, he began Ph. D. studies and taught as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, College of Communications. After completing the course work for the Ph. D. degree he moved back to Abilene, Texas to rejoin the Abilene Christian University faculty as an Assistant Professor of Communication. In 1981 he returned to The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, to complete the requirements for the Ph. D. degree and teach as a part-time Instructor in the College of Communications. He received the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in communications in June of 1982.

The author is a member of Kappa Tau Alpha and Phi Kappa Phi. Mr. Warr will be employed as an Associate Professor of Communciations at Pepperdine University, Malibu, California after graduation.