



## The Nature of Schadenfreude in Consumption Contexts: A Systematic Literature Review



### Tüketim Bağlamında Schadenfreude: Bir Sistemik Literatür Taraması

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#### Abstract

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*This study aims to present a holistic perspective on schadenfreude in the context of consumption and to provide a framework that theoretically explains the social-psychological mechanisms behind consumers' schadenfreude. For this purpose, a systematic literature review integrating studies on schadenfreude in the context of consumption has been conducted in our current study. A systematic literature review that integrates studies on schadenfreude in consumption contexts is employed. Drawing on appraisal theory and social comparison framework, a general overarching framework explaining the market and consumption-related mechanisms that elicit schadenfreude and its consumer and brand-related outcomes is suggested. We argue that the elicitation of consumer schadenfreude is dependent on the appraisal of social comparisons. In this framework, the roles of the market and consumption-related factors behind the schadenfreude elicitation, uncovering the general appraisal structure behind this emotion are explained. By doing this, implications for the firms on how to manage this emotion in the marketplace and the potential consequences of schadenfreude emotion on different types of brand-related outcomes are provided.*

**Keywords:** schadenfreude, intergroup theories, appraisal theory, social comparison theory, consumption context.

#### Öz

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*Bu çalışmada tüketim bağlamında schadenfreude duygusuna ilişkin bütüncül bir bakış açısı ortaya koymak ve tüketicilerin schadenfreude duygularının ardındaki sosyal-psikolojik mekanizmaları teorik olarak açıklayan bir çerçeve sunmak amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaçla mevcut çalışmamızda tüketim bağlamında schadenfreude duygusu üzerine yapılan çalışmaları bütünlükten sistemik bir literatür taraması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Yapılan sistemik literatür taraması kapsamında, değerlendirme ve sosyal karşılaştırma teorilerine dayanarak schadenfreude duygusunu tetikleyen piyasa ve tüketimle ilgili mekanizmaları ve bu mekanizmaların tüketici ve firmalarla ilgili sonuçlarını açıklayan genel bir çerçeve önerilmiştir. Tüketicinin schadenfreude duygusunun ortaya çıkmasının sosyal karşılaştırmaların değerlendirilmesine bağlı olduğunu savunduğumuz bu çerçevede, schadenfreude duygusunun ardındaki genel değerlendirme yapısını ortaya koyarak bu duygunun ortaya çıkmasında rolü olan piyasa ve tüketimle ilgili faktörler anlatılmıştır. Bu sayede, hem firmalara bu duyguyu yönetme konusunda yol gösterilmiş hem de schadenfreude duygusunun markayla ilgili farklı potansiyel sonuçları ortaya koyulmuştur.*

**Anahtar kelimeler:** schadenfreude, gruplar arası teoriler, değerlendirme teorisi, sosyal karşılaştırma teorisi, tüketim bağlamı.

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## 1. Introduction

While walking around, watching the news on the television, or spending time on social media, we consistently come across other people's misfortunes (Cikara and Fiske, 2013). These misfortunes also occur in consumption contexts. For example, we witness servers reprimanded by restaurant customers, passengers who missed their planes at airports, or players who broke their legs in sports. Driven by our empathic tendencies, people generally are sympathetic toward these individuals, feel sorry for them, and try to help them if possible (Smith et al., 2009). However, although these actions are prerequisites for reciprocity, people's empathic capabilities are limited (Bloom, 2017), and sometimes they fail to behave generously towards unfortunate others (Leach et al., 2003). They can be not only insensitive and relentless but also pleased and joyful when they observe painful others, which indicates a discrete emotion, *schadenfreude*. *Schadenfreude* refers to a feeling of pleasure and/or joy when someone suffers misfortune or failure (van Dijk and Ouwerkerk, 2014). Today, *schadenfreude* is a frequently experienced powerful emotion in different contexts due to its functions that regulate interpersonal and intergroup relations when social comparison is critical. Social life has become more conflictual in response to increasing polarization in social media (Terizi et al., 2021) and society. It can be argued that this trend leads to frequent expression of this so-called malicious emotion in online and offline consumption contexts, where social comparisons and rivalry are critical, such as sports forums, product reviews, and brand communities. Therefore, *schadenfreude* has become important for marketing and consumer research disciplines.

Consumers may be pleased by the failures and misfortunes of hated market actors (e.g., firms and their brands, their customers, or brand communities), increasing their dysfunctional behaviors towards these actors, such as spreading negative content of consumers' hated brands on social media (Sundie et al., 2010). Relatedly, in recent years, several marketing studies have investigated the appraisal and elicitation of *schadenfreude* emotion during consumption experiences and its consequences on consumer behaviors and brand-related outcomes (e.g., Moisieiev et al., 2020; Sundie et al., 2009; Tyler et al., 2021). On the other hand, findings on *schadenfreude* in the consumption contexts are too fragmented. For instance, while most studies focus on intergroup rivalry (e.g., sports audiences' reactions to rival teams' sponsor brands, Angell et al., 2016), few studies investigate interpersonal motivations behind *schadenfreude* (Pancer et al., 2017). Moreover, some studies view *schadenfreude* as a malicious emotion elicited by our dark motivations and has negative consequences on brands and other consumers (e.g., Allen et al., 2022).

On the contrary, some other studies evaluate it as a benign emotional reaction towards unfortunate consumers who violate social norms, such as counterfeit product users (Khan et al., 2022). However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no review paper that systematically integrates these fragmented findings to provide a framework and future research agenda for marketing and consumer research. Therefore, we aim to employ a systematic literature review that systematically integrates findings on *schadenfreude* in consumption contexts and suggests a general theoretical model that explains the market and consumption-related mechanisms that elicit *schadenfreude* and its consumer and brand-related outcomes.

By conducting this systematic review, we contribute to the literature in three ways. First, to the best of our knowledge, this study is the first study that systematically integrates the market and consumption-related factors behind the *schadenfreude* elicitation process, uncovering the general appraisal structure behind this emotion. By doing this, we provide a general agenda to the firms on managing this emotion in the marketplace. Second, we provide potential consequences of *schadenfreude* emotion on various brand-related outcomes. Last but not least, we provide a theoretical framework for consumer psychologists that explains this discrete emotion in the consumption context.

## 2. Schadenfreude: A malicious pleasure

Schadenfreude, directly borrowed from the German language, was first coined by Heider (1958) to conceptualize the only positive emotion with malicious motives in social relationships. It refers to observable pleasure or joy at others' failures or misfortunes (Leach et al., 2003). Although schadenfreude has a positive valence, it is clearly distinct from other positive emotions. The elicitation of these malicious and even insidious feelings of pleasure at others' misfortunes conflicts with social norms because these incidents are expected to elicit empathic feelings (Wills, 1981; Smith et al., 2009). However, in some conditions, others' misfortunes become a malicious joy for the observer. According to Cikara and Fiske (2013), the conditions that predict schadenfreude can be classified into three categories. People feel schadenfreude (1) if the observer benefits from the misfortune event (Heider, 1958), (2) if the victim is envied by the observer (Takahashi et al., 2009), or (3) if they think the victim deserves it (van Dijk et al., 2005). Therefore, it can be understood that although schadenfreude is viewed as a malicious or insidious emotion, the conditions that elicit these emotions are not necessarily malevolent. Sometimes, it reflects the observers' sense of justice or their success expectations from their ingroups.

Today, schadenfreude is viewed as a powerful emotion in the literature. Its effects and predictive role are investigated by various applied disciplines, including political psychology (Combs et al., 2009), management and organizational behavior (Li et al., 2019), media studies (van Dijk et al., 2012), and sports psychology (McNamee, 2003). It is also an important emotional construct for marketing and consumer behavior (Poynor, 2010), where social comparisons are critical psychological mechanisms (Argo et al., 2006). The growing number of research conducted within the context of consumption over the past two decades also supports its importance.

In the consumption context, consumer-object relationships are rarely just about an individual and an object. Instead, they typically involve a dynamic interplay between a person, a thing, and other individuals (Belk, 1988). Whether directly or indirectly, our consumption choices are influenced by the desires and responses of other people. The car we drive, the clothes we wear, the way we furnish our house, and the destination we choose for a holiday are all decisions influenced by our beliefs that these choices serve as visible indicators of our identity seen by others (Belk, 2011). Individuals may attempt to position themselves, determine their self-worth, express their distinctiveness with their consumption choices, and also measure the accuracy of their decisions as a result of social comparisons. Since social comparisons are inevitably intertwined parts of the consumption context, all three underlying mechanisms of schadenfreude (personal gain, envy, deservingness) can be investigated. By integrating the schadenfreude studies conducted in the consumption context, we can gather a more holistic perspective of the existing literature.

## 3. Method

As stated earlier, this study aims to conduct a systematic literature review to integrate the findings on schadenfreude in consumption contexts. Contrary to the selective nature of traditional literature reviews, systematic literature reviews answer research questions with a systematic and structured methodology that enables the collection and synthesis of relevant literature in a comprehensive, organized, impartial, transparent, and reproducible manner (Palmatier et al., 2018). In this study, we followed the systematic literature review procedure suggested by Siddaway and colleagues (2018), which includes scoping, screening, eligibility, and study quality evaluation stages. In the scoping stage, we investigated the seminal articles of the field (e.g., Smith et al., 1996; Leach et al., 2003) and previous literature reviews (e.g., Cikara and Fiske, 2013; Wang et al., 2019) in detail and the possible keywords that can be used in the literature search were extracted. Drawing on this investigation, we determined the possible inclusion and exclusion criteria for article selection (Jesson et al., 2011).

We used the Web of Science (WOS) database in the literature search. WOS provides a unified database for this systematic review of literature, as it significantly eliminates low-impact publications

that do not meet scientific standards and contains scientific articles that have an impact on literature and meet the standards of the peer-review process (Blaurock et al., 2022; Martin-Martin et al., 2018). We determined five inclusion criteria. First, we included peer-reviewed journal articles written in English. Second, we only included articles investigating schadenfreude as a behavioral or psychological phenomenon and excluded articles that did not use human subjects as a research unit (e.g., Du et al., 2018). Third, we only included studies investigating schadenfreude in business, applied psychology, and consumption contexts. Non-applied clinical, social, and cognitive psychology studies were excluded (e.g., van Dijk et al., 2011). During the scoping stage, we found no other term used as a synonym for schadenfreude. So, we only search the Schadenfreude\* term in English articles in the WOS database. WOS extracted 411 articles on the 1st of May 2022.

Second, in the screening stage, each author independently checked the articles' titles, keywords, and abstracts to determine whether the articles met the inclusion criteria or not. At this stage, we tested the intercoder reliability between coders, and the results were satisfactory (Rust and Cooil, 1994). The studies that did not match among the coders and that the coders were not sure about were evaluated jointly by all authors. By doing this, we decided whether to include related records for the next stage. Then, we decided to evaluate the full texts of 111 studies that potentially meet our inclusion criteria. At the eligibility stage, authors checked and reevaluated the full texts of the articles. At this stage, we also coded the research context (e.g., social media, TV, brand communities), research unit (e.g., general consumers, employees, sports fans and audiences, social media users), and the related discipline of the articles (e.g., consumer behavior, sports marketing, media studies, political communication, management). We decided to exclude 51 articles that are not directly or indirectly related to marketing and consumption contexts. Finally, we searched the literature on the 1st of May 2023 again to update the data and followed the same screening procedure. We included three more articles in the dataset. As a result, the sample of this systematic review included 63 articles. The screening and coding process is summarized in Figure 1 below.

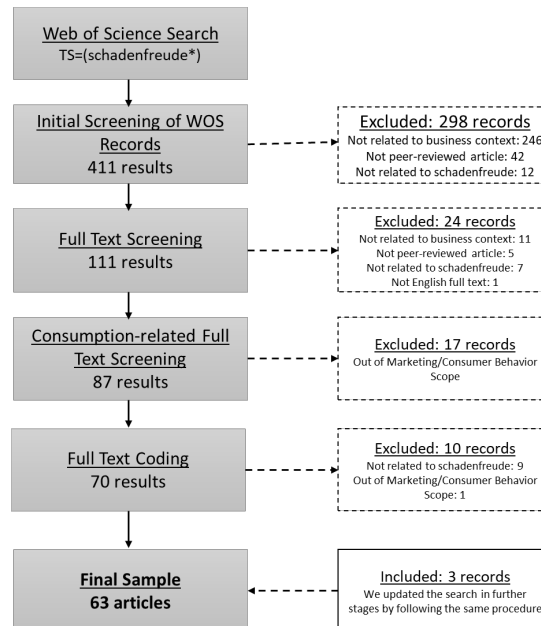


Figure 1. Systematic Research Process

While coding and organizing data, we followed the Theories, Constructs, Characteristics, and Methods (TCCM) approach (Paul et al., 2021). We coded the content of each article and extracted the information about (1) emotions related to Schadenfreude, (2) antecedents of Schadenfreude, (3) brand and consumption-related outcomes of Schadenfreude, (4) data collection time and (5) country, (6) methodological approach (qualitative vs. quantitative), (7) specific method, and (8) theoretical background.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Descriptive Analyses

Aiming to respond to our research questions, we provide the existing state of schadenfreude research in marketing and consumer contexts. In line with Tranfield et al. (2003), we present descriptive analyses of the research with charts and tables. Our descriptive analyses include (1) developments in article publications featuring schadenfreude studies in consumer and marketing-related contexts over the years, (2) the research domains, (3) the methods applied, and (4) the frequently used constructs.

#### 4.1.1. Development of Schadenfreude Research in Consumption Contexts

Along with the exploding trend of negativity in society, the investigation of schadenfreude and other social emotions in consumption contexts has increased in the past decade. According to the existing literature, there has been an increasing growth of research on consumer schadenfreude in the last decade. In psychology, the term was coined as a psychological construct almost 70 years ago by Heider (1958), but systematic empirical studies first appeared in the late '90s (e.g., Smith et al., 1996; Brigham et al., 1997) and at the beginning of the 21st century (e.g., Feather and Sherman, 2002; Leach et al., 2003). One of these studies examines its arguments in consumption-related contexts. Leach et al. (2003) is one of the seminal articles on Schadenfreude, and it is the first study in our dataset because it tested their arguments in the sports context. However, it can be traceable in the articles of our dataset that consumer research has started to investigate schadenfreude as a consumption phenomenon in the 2010s comprehensively. According to the studies cited by articles in our dataset, Hickman and Ward's (2007) and Sundie et al.'s (2009) works are the early schadenfreude studies published in consumer research outlets. We believe that the Special session on social comparison emotions at the 2010 Association for Consumer Research Conference drew consumer researchers' attention to the importance of schadenfreude in consumption-related contexts. In the 2010s, studies on consumer schadenfreude started to increase, and the uptrend continues today. We believe that recent trends in society called researchers' attention to schadenfreude. Increasing polarization and negativity in society with recent political and social events such as Brexit and the 2016 US Presidential Elections (Maher et al., 2018) has reflected in consumption scapes and has made schadenfreude more visible in daily life, especially in social media. Therefore, consumer researchers have become more interested in the role of schadenfreude in consumption contexts, and it can be argued that the uptrend will continue in further years.

#### 4.1.2. Domains

This literature review reveals four major distinct study domains in which schadenfreude is studied: consumer behavior (29.6%), sports marketing (28.1%), media studies (21.8%), and political communication (12.5%). In addition, four studies related to multiple contexts (gaming and management). Most consumer behavior studies employed intergroup theories (social identity theory, social comparison theory) to investigate consumer responses.

Similarly, the majority of the studies conducted in the sports marketing context utilized intergroup theories and evaluated sports audience reactions in the subform of rivalry. Emotion, intergroup, and personality theories were applied to understand the audiences' responses, and many of the studies investigated aggression and justice as the subforms of schadenfreude. Political communication studies mainly utilized intergroup and communication theories to understand citizens' responses. Rivalry is the main subform of schadenfreude examined in political communication studies. The other five studies mainly adopted justice, personality, and learning theories.

### 4.1.3. Research Design

Most of the consumer schadenfreude studies are empirical papers (95%) that adopt quantitative methods (76.2%), which include cross-sectional survey studies (35.1%) and experiments (54.4%). There are also a considerable amount of qualitative studies (14.3%), few conceptual papers (4.8%), and studies that use mixed methods (4.8%). Studies extensively adopt a confirmatory approach (82%). Therefore, according to these results, the field of consumer schadenfreude is dominated by positivist/falsificationist approaches that focus on hypothesis testing. When we delve into the studies in our dataset, studies are mostly designed to examine the test hypothesis developed in core psychological areas.

### 4.1.4. Frequently Used Constructs

The literature suggests five broad categories of schadenfreude antecedents: the content of misfortune, environmental effects, victim characteristics, incident characteristics, and consumer precondition. Furthermore, the relationship between these predictors and schadenfreude can be mediated by consumer attitudes, cognitive appraisals, emotional reactions, and behavioral reactions and moderated by environmental effects, victim characteristics, incident characteristics, and consumer preconditions. Finally, the systematic review results reveal four broad categories of schadenfreude outcomes: consumer attitude change, cognitive outcomes, emotional reactions, and behavioral reactions.

**Table 1.** Frequently Used Constructs in the Schadenfreude Literature

		Indicators (from the original study)
<b>ANTECEDENTS</b>	<b>Content of Misfortune</b>	Negative Messages, schadenfreude Priming, Gaffe, Rival Team Failure (vs. Success), Media Violence, Valence of the Post, Perceived Unfairness
	<b>Environmental Effects</b>	Self-Threat, Self-Evaluation Threat, Acute Threat of Inferiority, Chronic Threat of Inferiority, Unequal Distribution of Resources, Competition Level, Favorite Team Failure (vs. Success), Geography, Aggressiveness of Sport, Luxury Context
	<b>Victim Characteristics</b>	Similarity with the Victim, Advantageousness of Target Brand, Ingroup vs. Outgroup Brand, Perceived Greed on the Company, Nationality of the Team, Product Acquisition Type, Archrival Performance, Competitor Type (Lower vs. Higher Quality), Perceived Competitiveness, Brand Originality (Copycat vs. Differentiated), Cultural Differences, Frequency of Interaction, Domain (Status vs. Appearance), Gender Match
	<b>Incident Characteristics</b>	Publicness, Criticality of the Incident, Product Status, Injury Pain,
	<b>Consumer Precondition</b>	Prosociality, Brand Attachment, Fan Identification, Community Engagement, Team Identification, Aggressiveness, Trait Anger, Affiliation, Trait Schadenfreude, Consumer Competitiveness, Hostility Towards the Outgroup, Brand Disidentification, Party Affiliation, Positive and Negative Parasocial Relationship with the Media Figure, Political Ideology, Ingroup Identification, Decisional Self-Esteem, Attitude Towards Achievement, Social Value Orientation, Physical and Verbal Sadism, Political Affiliation, Partisanship, Narcissism, Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, Spitefulness, Direct and Vicarious Sadism, and Schadenfreude, Dark Triad Personality, Antisocial Motives, Insecurity Motives, Sociable Motives, Inspirational Motives
<b>MODERATORS</b>	<b>Environmental Effects</b>	Self-Evaluation, Competition Relevance, Presence of Reassurance, Consumption Context (Public vs. Private), Observer Product Status, Observer Product Acquisition Input, Rivalness,
	<b>Victim Characteristics</b>	Competitive Status, Team Involvement with Cause, Deservingness, Commercial Entity Status, Product Quality of the Brand, Interpersonal Preferences (Liked Target or Unliked Target), Brand Localness (Local vs. Global)
	<b>Incident Characteristics</b>	Injury Severity, Source Salience of Schadenfreude, Social Comparison, Misfortune Message Content (Policy Focus vs. Person Focus), Timing of Schadenfreude
	<b>Consumer Precondition</b>	Attachment Style, Trait Schadenfreude, Moral Identity, Need for Uniqueness, Brand Identification, Ingroup Identification, Soccer Interest, Reluctance to Tempt Fate, Gender Match, Debiasing, Consumer Ethnocentrism

**Table 1 (Cont.).** Frequently Used Constructs in the Schadenfreude Literature

<b>MEDIATORS</b>	<b>Consumer Attitudes</b>	Brand Attachment, Team Identification, Hostility, Generational Identification, Generational Norms, Moral Disengagement, Outspokenness
	<b>Cognitive Appraisals</b>	Perceived Deservingness, Perceived Sincerity, Threat Appraisals, Argument Strength, Product Deservingness, Message Perception (Amusingness), Perceived Importance of Winning, Ingroup Gain, Acceptability, Prestige, Dominance
	<b>Emotional Reaction</b>	Hostile Emotions (Anger, Contempt, Disgust), Malicious Envy, Benign Envy, Product Envy, Anxiety, Sympathy, Gluckschmerz, Pain Empathy
	<b>Behavioral Reaction</b>	Spiteful Behavior
<b>OUTCOMES</b>	<b>Consumer Attitude Change</b>	Implicit Self-Esteem, Brand Loyalty, Favorability, Ingroup Positivity, Outgroup Negativity, Disengagement Coping, Attitudinal Loyalty, Brand Attitude, Attitude Toward the Ad, Attitude Toward the Sponsoring Brand, Brand Commitment, Brand Attitude, Target Evaluation, Attitudes Towards the Advertised Brand, Video Evaluation
	<b>Cognitive Outcomes</b>	Cognitive Empathy, Associative Empathy, Implicit Self-Esteem, Interest, Choice Satisfaction, Finding Humor in Media Violence, Disidentification, Prejudice
	<b>Emotional Reactions</b>	Sympathy, Negative Affect, Positive Affect, Empathy, Affective Empathy, Emotion-Focused Coping, Gluckschmerz, Perceived Suffering of Outgroup Individuals, National Pride, Pleasure, Anger, Pain
	<b>Behavioral Reaction</b>	Spiteful Behavior, Trash Talking, Anti-Brand Actions, Response to Sponsorship, Product Use, Willingness to Pay Price Premium, Oppositional Referrals, Blasting, Support for a Cause, Behavioral Loyalty, Gloating, Brand Opposition, Purchase Intention Towards the Preferred Brand, Intention to Spread Rumor, Acrimony Toward Rivals (Prejudice, Relationship Discrimination and Schadenfreude), Counterfeit Purchase Intention, Information Seeking, Interpersonal Communication, Behavioral Intentions, Welfare Loss, Choice, Willingness to Support Individuals, Elicited Interest in a Debrief Page (Behavioral Indices: Clicks, Time Spent), Empathy Response, Playing Violent Video Games, Spreading News of Political Failure (Both Intent and Behavioral Measure), Willingness to Read a News Story, Impressions and Clicks, Purchase Intention, Trolling, Gossip Intention, Friending, Discrimination

### 5. Synthesis: Social Comparison-based Appraisal Model of Consumer Schadenfreude

According to the results of our review, consumer research needs an overarching integrative framework that guides future conceptual and empirical work on consumer schadenfreude. Drawing on the systematic literature review data analysis, we suggest an integrative conceptual framework that explains the mechanisms behind consumer schadenfreude. We propose a social comparison-based appraisal model of consumer schadenfreude. We believe that the integration of social comparison (Boecker et al., 2022) and motivational frameworks (Wang et al., 2019) to the appraisal theory of emotions (Li et al., 2019) provide a well-fitted understanding of the elicitation of consumer schadenfreude and their Schadenfreude-related outcomes. According to Appraisal Theory, emotions are not only states but also continuous and recursive processes that include the detection and assessment of environments and actions of others (Moors et al., 2013). Each discrete emotion has distinctive appraisal patterns. Roseman and Steele (2018) argue that schadenfreude may not be regarded as a discrete emotion because its appraisal pattern is based on motive consistency and is not distinctive. However, Li et al. (2019) provide an appraisal mechanism for employee schadenfreude based on a distinctive cognitive appraisal pattern in organizational contexts, including goal relevance and deservingness. According to our data analysis and synthesis, we also argue that schadenfreude has a distinctive appraisal pattern in consumption contexts that is based on social comparisons. Besides, in our framework, the suggested appraisal framework makes an interconnection between the cognitive background of intergroup schadenfreude and interpersonal Schadenfreude, which are mostly studied as distinct phenomena (Cikara, 2015).

According to our framework, the distinctive appraisal pattern of consumer schadenfreude is based on consumers' social comparisons with other consumers. Several studies show that structural and situational inequality in society disturbs people, and they demand and strive for a just world (Fehr and Schmidt, 1999; Shaw et al., 2016). According to the social comparison framework (Boecker et al., 2022), misfortunes and failures of others are appraised as a reduction of status differences if they

have a superior position than observer consumers. By doing this, misfortunes of superior others elicit schadenfreude emotions of inferior self by decreasing the inequity and satisfying comparative concerns. Therefore, the elicitation of schadenfreude is a type of acknowledgment of a superior's misfortune and has the potential to produce antisocial behaviors towards the superior.

Figure 2 illustrates the social comparison-based appraisal process of consumer schadenfreude. We propose observing the misfortune of brands, consumption-related outgroups, and other consumers to start appraisal of schadenfreude if these events activate their comparative concerns. Specifically, whereas rival brand/outgroup brand failure may trigger intergroup Schadenfreude, other consumers' misfortune may cause interpersonal schadenfreude. Moreover, the relationships between them are mediated by different kinds of appraisals of misfortune. First, the mechanism between rival/outgroup brand failure and intergroup schadenfreude occurs through outgroup bias (Smith et al., 2009) and ingroup gain (Brewer, 1999). In other words, group identification and the tendency to favor ingroup members over outgroup representatives (i.e., intergroup bias) may result in intergroup schadenfreude (Hewstone et al., 2002; Li et al., 2019). Especially if gains in ingroup outcomes are based on the failures of rival outgroups, intergroup schadenfreude will be more likely to occur (Smith et al., 2009). The second mediating mechanism is between other consumers' misfortune and interpersonal schadenfreude that occurs through three conditions: observers gain from the misfortune, another's misfortune is deserved, and misfortune befalls an envied person (Smith et al., 2009). Cikara and Fiske (2013) also collect the conditions that predict schadenfreude under three similar headings.

People feel schadenfreude (1) if the observer benefits from the misfortune event (Heider, 1958), (2) if they think the victim deserves it (van Dijk et al. 2005), or (3) if the victim is envied by the observer (Takahashi et al., 2009). Therefore, it can be understood that although schadenfreude is viewed as a malicious or insidious emotion, the conditions that elicit these emotions are not necessarily malevolent. Sometimes, it reflects the observers' sense of justice or their success expectations from their ingroups. At the final stage, we expect that whereas intergroup schadenfreude ends up with specific reactions to rival/outgroup brands and the attached brand, interpersonal schadenfreude may cause other-targeted dysfunctional behaviors and personal behavior change at the ultimate level.

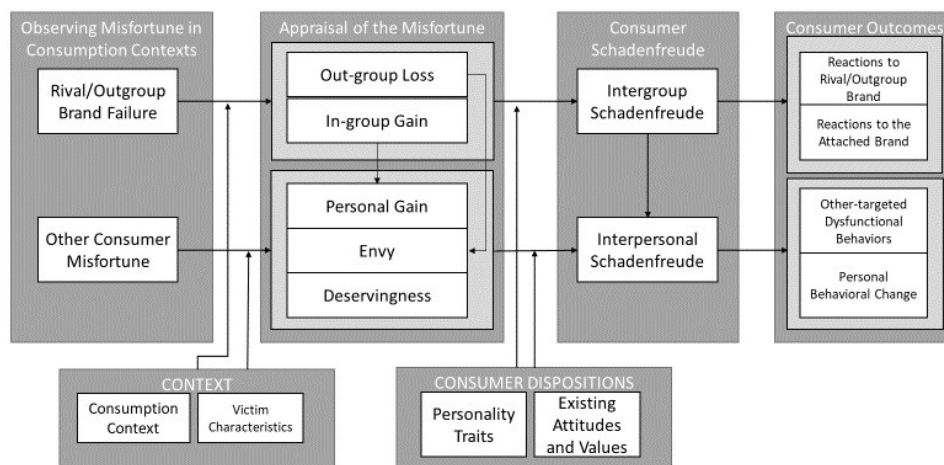


Figure 2. Integrated Conceptual Framework



## **5.1. Consumption-related Triggers of Schadenfreude**

In social contexts, consumers are expected to focus on incidents and situations relevant to their concerns. Therefore, we argue that the elicitation of consumer schadenfreude with misfortune or failure highly depends on consumers' comparative concerns. In consumption contexts, we determined two types of social entities whose misfortune or failure elicit inferior others' schadenfreude emotions: brands and other consumers.

### **5.1.1 Rival/Outgroup Brand Failure**

First, some consumers may feel fun and pleasure when specific brands fail. Several studies in our dataset support our social comparison framework. For instance, luxury brands are representative examples of social comparisons. According to the study by Khan et al. (2022), public university students' schadenfreude emotions related to luxury brands are one of the main predictors of their usage of these brands' counterfeit products. Therefore, it can be argued that luxury brands are representatives of superior groups, and these brands' failures can be viewed as a decrease in the inequity perceptions of public university students and satisfy their comparative concerns.

On the other hand, Shimul et al. (2021) find no relationship between schadenfreude response to a luxury brand's (Godiva) failure and rival luxury brand identification (Lindt). In this context, both are luxury brands and represent similar social statuses. Because misfortunate events (in this case, brand failure) do not satisfy comparative concerns and elicit schadenfreude in lateral social comparisons when self and failed rival brands represent the same social status (Boecker et al., 2022). Competition between brands is also a fruitful condition that activates consumers' comparative concerns. For instance, competitive consumers elicit more schadenfreude when a superior brand user has a misfortune because of the superior brand's failure, compared to an inferior brand's failure (Yucel-Aybat and Kramer, 2018). Drawing on social comparison theory, the failure of superior brands decreases the inequity between brands, especially for competitive consumers, who are expected to have more comparative concerns.

### **5.1.2 Other Consumer Misfortunes**

Second, according to our synthesis, consumers also may feel fun and pleasure when other consumers or public figures have misfortunes if consumers assign unequal or unfair superiority to these consumers or figures. For instance, according to Cross and Little (2010), consumers' schadenfreude responses to celebrities' downfall or loss of fame can be viewed as a counter-normative expression of irritation to economic inequality. In line with Yucel-Aybat and Kramer's (2018) findings, a recent study in our dataset shows that, in a gambling context, competitive consumers elicit schadenfreude when other consumers lose in a game (Qi et al., 2020).

Therefore, in our framework, we argue that brand failures, outgroup misfortunes, misfortunes of other consumers, and public figures activate the appraisal process and elicit schadenfreude if these incidents satisfy consumers' social comparative concerns.

## **5.2. Appraisal Processes**

In our integrated framework, we also explain the appraisal patterns include social comparison mechanisms that decrease envied, undeserved, or unequal superior positions.

### ***5.2.1 Personal Gain Appraisals: Satisfying Comparative Concerns Through Gaining Personal Advantages***

The first group of theoretical perspectives that explains the mechanism behind schadenfreude is related to competition at person and group levels. Many real-life situations have competitive elements (Smith et al., 2009). As pure examples of competition, zero-sum competition occurs if a person or a group gains resources or advantages at the expense of another person or group's corresponding losses and disadvantages (Meegan, 2010). Zero-sum competitions are more widespread in real life than it seems (Smith and van Dijk, 2018), and people may have biased beliefs that view real-life situations as zero-sum games (Rózycka-Tran et al., 2015). According to this perspective, schadenfreude is a natural psychological result of the perception of gaining an advantage from a situation, even if it is bad for other individuals and groups. We feel joy and pleasure if we appraise others' misfortune as good for us and/or our in-groups (Smith and van Dijk, 2018). Personal and group gains that elicit schadenfreude can be not only actual (i.e., gaining resources from the losses of others) but also be symbolic (i.e., protecting and enhancing positive self-view through the failures of others) or illusionary (i.e., others' losses do not change person's condition) (Ben-Ze'ev, 2014; van Dijk and Ouwerkerk, 2014). Symbolic and illusionary schadenfreude are more salient in intergroup schadenfreude. Symbolically, the superiority of other people and groups may be perceived as a threat to an individual's personal and group status inferiority. According to social identity theory, threats to ingroup status may cause malicious responses to outgroups that directly threaten the status (Leach et al., 2003). On the other hand, as a manifest of illusionary Schadenfreude, inferiority threats may also elicit malicious feelings toward unrelated outgroups (Leach et al., 2003). As suggested by self-affirmation theory, individuals cope with inferiority and other types of self-threats through responses that support their self-integrity, even if these responses have no potential to resolve the threatening situation (van Dijk et al., 2011).

According to our systematic investigation, competition-related situations are one of the main reasons that elicit schadenfreude in consumption contexts. 57% (n = 37) of studies in our data investigate consumer schadenfreude as the result of situations that produce actual, symbolic, or illusionary personal/group gain. Especially political communication and sports marketing domains are mostly dependent on artificial systems that produce zero-sum competitions. Besides, sports teams, political parties, and other brands can arouse great passion (Leach et al., 2003). They can be strong parts of consumers' social identities that continue their existence by competing with others. Relatedly, identification with teams, parties, and other brands is positively associated with schadenfreude reactions to the loss of rival teams, parties, and other brands (e.g., Dalakas and Phillips Melancon, 2012). Especially, long-standing rivals are viewed as threats to the consumer identity (Berendt and Urich, 2016; Harker and Jensen, 2020). Therefore, sports games and politics are fertile environments for consumer schadenfreude.

In sports contexts, we identified 15 studies investigating consumers' schadenfreude reactions to the losses of rival teams. In line with the suggestions of social identity theory, studies in this context consistently show that sports consumers with team identification elicit schadenfreude as a response to the failure of rival teams. For instance, fMRI studies that measure the neural responses of consumers show that consumers' pleasure responses increased not only when the rival team failed against the favored team but also against a neutral team (e.g., Cikara et al., 2011). According to the findings of Leach and colleagues (2003), Dutch soccer audiences' schadenfreude reactions to the loss of the German national football team are higher if there is a salient inferiority threat to the Netherlands football team. Studies also show that there can be inter-regional and intercultural differences in schadenfreude reactions to the loss of rivals. For instance, Canadian sports fans report less schadenfreude to the loss of their rivals compared to the fans from some regions of the United States (Cobbs et al., 2019). Studies also found that competitive situations also have spillover schadenfreude effects. For instance, consumers feel more pleasure and joy when all targets associated with rival teams (e.g., sponsoring brands) fail (Dalakas and Melankon, 2012).

In political contexts, several conditional factors make consumers' schadenfreude responses severely. Especially, political polarization boosts consumers' schadenfreude responses (e.g., celebration) to opponents' failures and misfortunes (Au and Ho, 2022). Moreover, several studies show that consumers elicit schadenfreude when the representatives of the outgroup (i.e., public figures, supporters, or candidates of the opposing party) experience misfortune (Ouwerkerk et al., 2018; Ozkara, 2021), even if it is a tragic incident like mass killing (Combs et al., 2009). Besides, consumers also actively seek embarrassing information about the opposing side that possibly makes them pleased and joyful (Ryan and Brader, 2017). Interestingly, in some political contexts, ingroup and outgroup members react similarly to the misfortune of the political figure. For instance, Myrick and Chen (2022) find that liberals' and conservatives' schadenfreude responses to the illnesses of conservative public and political figures are not significantly different. According to them, if the misfortune of the figure is associated with their previous actions, other mechanisms (e.g., deservingness) become more critical than group membership and rivalry. Relatedly, a recent study shows that deservingness perceptions mainly drive liberals' schadenfreude reactions to the Covid-19 diagnosis of President Trump.

Finally, there are also other competitive contexts that contain strong brand identification and repulsion of consumers with commercial brands. For instance, Apple is not only known for its fans and brand communities but also for its haters and anti-brand communities (Dessart and Cova, 2021). For instance, a study shows that Blackberry users with high brand identification elicit more schadenfreude to the failure of Apple than other Blackberry users (Ouwerkerk et al., 2018). In addition, apple consumers also elicit schadenfreude when they read news about Microsoft users' computer virus problems (Hickman and Ward, 2007; Yucel-Aybat and Kramer, 2017). Similarly, a recent study confirms the schadenfreude reactions of consumers with high brand identification to the failures of rival brands in sportswear (Nike fans to Adidas failure), smartphone (Xiaomi brand community members to Oppo failure), and online shopping (Taobao users to Pinduoduo failure) contexts (Liao et al., 2023).

### ***5.2.2. Envy Appraisals: Satisfying Comparative Concerns Through the Failures of Envied Others***

The personal gain argument of schadenfreude is likely to tell only part of the story. There are other descriptions to clarify this malicious flavor. One such explanation dates back to over two thousand years ago "Did we not say that pleasure in the misfortune of friends was caused by envy?" (Plato, 427–348 BC/1925: 339, as cited in Smith et al., 1996: 158) and relates schadenfreude to envy. Since social comparison lies at the heart of both envy and schadenfreude (Wang, 2019), individuals experience these feelings while searching for self-worth.

To evaluate the self positively is one of the essential drives that help individuals create a sense of self-worth (van Dijk et al., 2015). Due to the individual's need for self-evaluation and self-affirmation, social comparisons are considered natural daily processes (Festinger, 1954; Kelley, 1967). However, due to recurring social comparisons, an individual may focus too much on what he/she does not have or is lacking and evaluate others' positions compared to his/her own as superior (Suls and Wheeler, 2000). According to social comparison and social identity theories, engaging with unfavorable upward comparisons can damage individuals' self-evaluation and social identity (Festinger, 1954; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Moreover, this negative self-evaluation causes an emotional imbalance and internal dissatisfaction, eliciting envy (Smith and Kim, 2007; Tesser, 1988).

Envy is defined as the "feeling of pain a person experiences when he or she perceives that another individual possesses some object, quality, or status that he or she desires but does not possess" (Schimmel, 2008: 18). When the envious individual cannot possess the desired advantage (degree, valued object, quality, or status), he/she would prefer that no one has it if they will not (Smith and Kim, 2007). Since another person experiences the desired situation (envied one), the envious person feels hostility, dislike, and eventually ill will towards the envied person. Furthermore, the envious

person usually hopes the envied person will lose the desired thing or position (Belk, 2011). In line with this hope, when a misfortune befalls the envied person, this pleases the envious one, and here schadenfreude comes. According to the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), the envious person feels pleasure for the misfortune of others (Schadenfreude) because this circumstance presents an opportunity to fix the damaged self-evaluations. Individuals feel more schadenfreude when their self-evaluation is in danger because, in this situation, their motivation to self-enhance is stronger (van Dijk and Ouwerkerk, 2014).

As Belk (1988) stated, consumer-product relationships are not only about a person and object but also person-thing-person relationships. Consumers usually buy things by considering other people's desires and reactions. The interest in social status and comparisons derives from the concern to be loved and respected by those who are important to us (de Botton, 2004). Social comparison-related concepts such as the need for uniqueness (Kernis, 1984), status-seeking (Packard, 1959), status symbols (Levy, 1959), and status anxiety (de Botton, 2004) are encountered in consumption research to understand consumer behavior. Accordingly, Shimul et al. (2021) investigated the impact of envy on schadenfreude in the luxury brand context in which luxury brand attachment causes envy due to inter-group rivalry. The authors concluded that consumers with luxury brand attachment cluster into groups and adopt brand identity through the social identification process (Tajfel, 1982). Moreover, they identify other brands' consumers as members of the outgroup (Sundie et al., 2009) and feel envy and demonstrate hostile actions toward competitors (van de Ven et al., 2015). Hence, due to the ingroup feelings, they experience malicious joy from the downfall of the competing brands, schadenfreude.

Since envy is an unpleasant and painful emotion described by feelings of inferiority, hostility, and dislike (Parrott and Smith, 1993), these combined features make envy challenging and discomforting. However, from the perspective of appraisal theory, an envied person's misfortune is pleasing because envy is a malicious feeling, and learning about misfortune eliminates the basis for the painful burden of envy. The reduction or removal of the sources of envy, therefore, constitutes a relief, which is a pleasant feeling (Schadenfreude) (Scherer, 1999).

Sundie et al. (2009) also employed envy to extend the work on schadenfreude to consumer domains. They attempted to investigate the emotional antecedents of schadenfreude in a status consumption context in which envy of the status afforded by others' prestige products causes hostility and dislike. In three studies, authors examined how the public failure of a status-relevant product affects the prestige afforded to the owner of the status symbol and how other consumers react to their downfall. Results revealed that status-related product failure reduces the owners' position in previous (pre-failure) social comparisons and takes the product owner down in the eyes of the less-status product owners (observer). After the failure, due to the removal of the threatening comparison, less-status product owners feel equal or superior to the failed product owners. Consequently, they evaluate their less status possession as gratifying and elicit schadenfreude. The authors also concluded that hostility mediates the relationship between envy and Schadenfreude, and schadenfreude prompts the desire to share negative word-of-mouth.

Even though envy has a key role in social comparison processes, limited research encountered envy as an underlying mechanism of schadenfreude in consumer research. Whereas personal gain was investigated as a fundamental process predicting schadenfreude in almost half of the studies in this literature review, only one-tenth of the articles considered envy an antecedent of this concept.

### ***5.2.3 Injustice Appraisals: Satisfying Comparative Concerns by Reducing Unfairness***

The judgment of deservingness is often influenced by a just-world belief where it is perceived that good individuals merit positive outcomes while bad individuals deserve misfortune (Feather, 1993; Lerner, 1980). Based on Heider's (1958) balance theory and Feather's deservingness theory (Feather, 2006; Feather et al., 2013), schadenfreude may arise when individuals evaluate an outcome as

deserved (Boecker, 2021). When individuals believe their disadvantaged status is unjust and not their fault, those who are disadvantaged and in inferior positions may feel privately envious of others and get angry with those who hold advantageous positions (Feather and Nairn, 2005).

Deservingness theory proposes that positive actions end up with good outcomes and negative actions end up with bad outcomes; both are well-deserved. When these relationships get reversed, input-output becomes inconsistent, and outcomes are seen as undeserved. In line with Heider's (1958) principle of balanced and unbalanced relationships, the consistency or inconsistency between the positive or negative valence of an outcome and the positive or negative valence of the activity sets the ground for the deservingness model that affects whether an outcome is judged to be deserved or undeserved, just or unjust.

When people consider the subsequent negative outcome a deserved and reasonable punishment for prior unfair behavior (Feather, 2015; Wang, Lilienfeld, and Rochat, 2019), they will more likely experience *schadenfreude* (Boecker et al., 2022). *Schadenfreude* literature (e.g., Brambilla and Riva, 2017; Feather et al., 2013; van Dijk et al., 2005) have used and supported the deservingness theory by demonstrating that deserved misfortunes arouse stronger *schadenfreude* than undeserved ones. Accordingly, deservingness is important when individuals have some degree of responsibility for their actions (Feather et al., 2013).

According to our systematic investigation, a limited number of papers (n=8; 12% of studies) related to justice and deservingness have agreed on the idea that the perception of misfortunes being deserved is positively associated with the experience of *schadenfreude* (Feather, 2008; van Dijk et al., 2005). From a communication perspective, *schadenfreude* feelings play a crucial role in mediating the relationship between perceived deservingness and malicious communication aimed at damaging someone's reputation. *Schadenfreude* is a strong motivator for gloating behavior, particularly in the form of negative word-of-mouth dissemination concerning commercial setbacks, especially when they involve high achievers and individuals perceived as deserving of such misfortunes (Hornik et al., 2019). This also includes instances where companies engage in deceptive corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication practices. When a company implements discriminatory CSR policies, it engages in morally hypocritical behavior, which can generate a perception that the company deserves any catastrophic failure it faces (Polman and Ruttan, 2012).

Furthermore, even if a company is highly successful, if it attains this success undeservedly, the *schadenfreude* experienced by observers will be more intense (van Dijk et al., 2006). Consequently, consumers may perceive the company's failure as well-deserved, despite its CSR activities, due to the perception of greed (Lim, 2020). The perception of deservingness of success and failure varies among in-groups and outgroups, depending on the group's social identity within the human relationship (Feather et al., 2013). The influence of ingroup and outgroup variations is particularly pronounced in social media contexts. Research on social media reveals that compared to private messages, public messages have a detrimental effect on the liking of message receivers towards the sender. Public messages also tend to trigger the unleashing of *schadenfreude* and lead to a stronger perception that the misfortune experienced is well-deserved. In the context of social media, studies examining the impact of similarity cues on cognitive and emotional outcomes demonstrate that when individuals seek support through negative self-disclosure from someone less similar to them, it results in higher perceived deservingness, reduced affective empathy, and diminished cognitive empathy, in comparison to seeking support from someone more similar. Furthermore, the effects of similarity on positive affect, perception of *Schadenfreude*, and empathy are mediated by the perception of deservingness (Wei and Liu, 2020).

Overall, our findings highlight the significance of the relationship between perceived deservingness, *Schadenfreude*, and consumer behaviors. In addition, they provide valuable insights into how individuals and groups evaluate misfortunes and successes and how *schadenfreude* shapes attitudes and behaviors in various contexts.

### 5.3. Boundary Conditions

According to our framework, factors related to consumption context and consumer characteristics are critical because, as stated earlier, consumers only focus on misfailure events and situations that have the potential to meet their social comparison concerns (Li et al., 2019). Contextual factors and dispositional characteristics of consumers may enhance the effect of misfortunate incidents on consumer schadenfreude through appraisal patterns. For instance, characteristics of misfortunate social actors (e.g., superiority, prior behaviors, attachment to outgroup) are critical for activating the appraisal process. These characteristics determine the standards for comparative concerns (Boecker et al., 2022). For instance, according to a study, failures of other consumers’ products elicit more consumer schadenfreude if the product has a higher social status than consumers’ own products’ social status (Pancer et al., 2017). Drawing on a motivational approach, consumers’ personality characteristics are also critical for eliciting schadenfreude. Recent studies show that social value orientation (Yanyan et al., 2020), trait competitiveness (Yucel-Aybat and Kramer, 2017), and Dark Triad personality traits (Brubaker et al., 2021) predict schadenfreude elicitation of consumers in different contexts, including exposure to comparative ads and social media interactions.

### 5.4. Outcomes of Schadenfreude

Finally, in line with appraisal theory and social comparison framework, elicited schadenfreude may produce antisocial consumer behaviors directed towards brands and other consumers. In Table 2, we listed the potential behavioral outcomes of consumer schadenfreude. Schadenfreude causes not only antisocial behaviors towards others but also produces positive outcomes for consumers’ ingroup and themselves.

## 6. Research Gaps and Future Research Directions

With its multifaceted nature, schadenfreude is a widely studied but poorly understood emotion that emerges in interpersonal and intergroup interactions. In many fields, researchers are confronted with difficulties in understanding the formation and interrelatedness of these multiple facets of schadenfreude. In this review, we attempted to overcome the first challenge by integrating consumption context to elucidate the development of this phenomenon. Since the interactive structure of the consumption context constitutes a solid ground for Schadenfreude, it should be considered for future studies. We addressed the second challenge by offering an integrative framework that explains the mechanisms behind consumer schadenfreude. The framework that embraces the social comparison-based appraisal model of consumer schadenfreude will be helpful for future studies to examine schadenfreude and its Schadenfreude-related outcomes. We hope that utilizing this framework and related theories may guide future conceptual and empirical work on consumer schadenfreude and offer valuable insights into redefining how researchers perceive schadenfreude.

**Table 2.** Potential Behavioral Outcomes of Consumer Schadenfreude

Reactions to the Own Brand/Team/Party	Behavior:	Willingness to pay, Behavioral Loyalty, Purchase Intent
	Attitude Change:	Loyalty, Commitment Favorability, Brand Attitude, Ad Attitude
	Cognitive:	Choice satisfaction, Finding Humor
Reactions to the Rival Brand/Team/Party	Behavior:	Trash-talking, Anti-brand actions, Product use, Negative WOM, Blasting, Decreased Support, Gloating, Discrimination, Information Seeking
	Attitude Change:	Disengagement Coping, Brand Attitude, Disidentification, Prejudice
	Cognitive:	Cognitive Empathy, Evaluation
Interpersonal and Personal Reactions	Interpersonal Behavioral Reactions:	Spiteful behavior, communication, choice, trolling, gossiping, friending
	Personal Behavioral Reactions:	Interest in violent content, emotion-focused coping

In this literature review, we identified personal gain, envy, and deservingness as the three main theoretical mechanisms behind consumers' *schadenfreude*. Even though consumption context offers a proper ground for social comparisons stemming from envy, such as concern for social status, need for uniqueness, status anxiety, personal gain, and deservingness were the most common mechanisms observed in our review. For future research, researchers may focus more on envy since it has received limited attention within all contexts and mainly in consumer research, where it seems to be among the most essential variables influencing consumption processes.

In the existing literature, envy-related emotions, such as hatred and dislike, also gathered scant attention in the consumption domain. Although several studies acknowledge the roles of dislike (Hareli and Weiner, 2002) and hatred (Leach and Spears, 2008) in the formation of *schadenfreude* through envy, very few articles in general (17%) and only two articles on the consumption domain employed dislike as a variable predicting *schadenfreude*. None of the examined in this literature review utilized hatred as a construct determining *schadenfreude*. Therefore, for future research, investigating these two constructs might help to open fruitful new directions for understanding this intriguing and important emotion.

Despite the rapid adoption of online service applications in recent years, it was surprising that only one study had been conducted in an online context (understanding *schadenfreude* among online community members). For further research, online service settings such as online shopping, online banking, and mobile commerce might be promising for investigating the formation and interrelations of diverse aspects of *schadenfreude*.

## 7. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Understanding the mechanisms behind *schadenfreude* in the consumption setting, we aimed to have a holistic view by conducting a systematic review of *schadenfreude* literature. Based on the synthesis of results and theoretical background of the *schadenfreude* emotion, we propose to provide a theoretical framework for consumer psychologists that explains this discrete emotion in the consumption context. It explains the market and consumption-related mechanisms that elicit *schadenfreude* and its consumer and brand-related outcomes. This study will be one of the first studies that systematically integrate the market and consumption-related factors behind the *schadenfreude* elicitation process. More specifically, results suggest that the complexity of the *schadenfreude* emotion is best accounted for when uncovering the general appraisal structure behind this emotion. We hope that future research empirically tests our model.

This systematic review also provides a practical contribution to marketers in different fields, such as service, marketing communication, and brand management. For example, understanding *schadenfreude* can help especially service marketers anticipate and manage potential crises. In addition, marketers can develop proactive strategies to protect and enhance brand reputation during challenging situations by examining the model we proposed. *Schadenfreude* often arises in situations where individuals perceive misfortunes befalling others, notably competitors, as deserved. By fully comprehending our proposed framework, marketers can leverage this knowledge by carefully analyzing their strengths and competitors' weaknesses and strategically using comparative advertising that highlights their own strengths and the misfortunes of competitors. *Schadenfreude* can influence customer satisfaction and service recovery processes. Understanding how *schadenfreude* impacts customers' reactions to service failures and recoveries can help service providers design effective service recovery strategies that minimize negative emotions and maximize customer satisfaction and loyalty. With the proliferation of social media, *schadenfreude* can quickly spread and impact a brand's online reputation. Marketers need to monitor social media channels, detect instances of *Schadenfreude*, and effectively respond to mitigate its negative effects. Engaging with customers, addressing their concerns, and demonstrating empathy can help alleviate *Schadenfreude*-related negativity and protect the brand's reputation.

The implications of our systematic literature on schadenfreude in a marketing context involve leveraging insights on schadenfreude triggers, managing brand reputation, utilizing comparative advertising, designing effective service recovery strategies, and managing online reputation. By incorporating these implications into marketing strategies, marketers can better understand and respond to the complex dynamics of Schadenfreude, leading to improved customer satisfaction, loyalty, and brand performance.

## 8. Conclusion

This research effort has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the systematic literature review utilized specific inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting academic literature. Only studies that focused on schadenfreude as a behavioral or psychological phenomenon and employed human subjects as research participants were considered. Studies from non-applied clinical, social, and cognitive psychology were excluded, with a focus on schadenfreude in business, applied psychology, and consumption contexts. Furthermore, only empirical studies meeting the defined inclusion criteria were included, and conference proceedings were not considered due to the overwhelming volume of studies they would have generated. However, they could have identified newer research trends.

Consequently, the analysis and results of this review are limited to articles that meet the specified criteria, and generalizing the findings to the entire volume of schadenfreude research should be done with caution. Additionally, the review was limited to papers written in the English language, excluding studies conducted in other languages. Another limitation is the rapidly growing literature on schadenfreude, and while efforts were made to include as much published work as possible by May 2023, new research continues to emerge. Lastly, this study primarily focuses on consumer behavior and does not include organizational behavior, which presents a potential area of research for marketers to explore the motivations and consequences of schadenfreude in organizational settings. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this review.

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to systematically review the schadenfreude literature, identify gaps and opportunities, and propose future research directions in this domain. The first objective was to synthesize the existing literature on schadenfreude and propose a model specifically in the context of consumer behavior. This synthesis involved examining theories, contexts, constructs, and methods employed in schadenfreude research. The second objective was to develop a conceptual framework based on the synthesized literature, highlighting common antecedents, outcomes, moderators, and mediators in the field. Finally, the third objective aimed to provide avenues for future research on schadenfreude. In line with this objective, insightful directions were proposed, utilizing the justice, envy, and personal gain mechanisms. These proposed directions offer clear pathways for advancing schadenfreude research in terms of theories, contexts, characteristics, and methods. By addressing these limitations and pursuing the suggested research directions, scholars can contribute to a deeper understanding of schadenfreude and its implications.



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