

Advertising? Yes Please, But Only When It's My Choice

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ABSTRACT This article examines the Swedish population's perceptions of advertising in a media context. Preliminary findings show a complex picture of the relationship with advertising. A person is more positive to advertising, when the ad is consumed as a personal choice, rather than perceived as forced upon her. The media context and how the advertising is distributed play a role in how it is perceived. The result of this paper is based on a representative sample of 1,700 persons (age 15-85) who answered a national survey in Sweden during November–December 2005.

KEY WORDS: audiences, advertising, media context

Do you feel like wherever you look, there's advertising? Well, your reaction might not be unfounded. The figures provided by advertising statistics differ, but it is realistic to assume that we are exposed to approximately 3,000 advertising messages per day.¹ On average this means that the normal citizen is exposed to 200 advertising messages per hour. I don't think anyone will dispute that advertising today can be described as well spread. In spite of this, or perhaps because of this, the role of advertising can be described as a question of conflict. For example a recent survey of politicians in the Swedish parliament shows a growing resistance towards advertising, and it also indicates support for different types of advertising restrictions (Dagens Media 9/8-2006). Few debates and discussions are based on "positive effects", even though international research shows that the public's relationship towards advertising can be described as mixed (for research overviews see; Shavitt, Lowrey & Haefner 1998; Mittal 1994; Pollay & Mittal 1993; O'Donohoe 1985; Zanut 1981, 1984).

¹ In the literature there is a variation of 500–5,000 advertising messages. It is reasonable to assume that the public is exposed to approximately 3,000 messages per day (see for example Elliot & Speck 1998; Richards & Curran, 2002:63).

Even if there are different opinions about advertising, it is well documented that advertising creates debates as well as stimulates people to form opinions about it. Today a majority of the advertising is distributed by media (Trotzig 2004). As a consequence this means that advertising, as well as media, has a self evident place in our everyday. Since media use is one of our most common practices (Mediebarometern 2005) this means that the every day exposure to advertising increases. In spite of the increased exposure to advertising in everyday life there have been few studies that focus on advertising in a media context. The aim of this article is therefore to examine the public's opinion on advertising in a media context.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONSUMER AND ADVERTISING

The public's perception of advertising has been in the eyes of advertising research for more than half a century (see for example; Shavitt, Lowrey & Haefner 1998; Alwitt & Prabhaker 1992; Bauer & Greyser 1968). Over time perception of advertising has changed and research shows that the opinion on advertising is mixed.² According to previous research the relationship between advertising and the consumer can be described as complex and ambivalent (O'Donohoe 2001; Scipione 1997). In many ways the relationship can be described in terms of a "love-hate relationship".

The complexity of the relationship has many explanations. One is that advertising these days comes in many different shapes. For example, advertising can be seen as a social institution, as a

² The research that has been made varies a lot both in case of selection and method. Because of this it is hard to draw over all conclusions. But since the results mainly points in the same directions, central tendencies of the different studies can be made (se for example; Mittal, 1994; Andrews, 1989; Reid & Soley, 1982; Bauer & Greyser, 1968). The main results from the early studies in the 1950's and 1960's show that advertising was perceived as being informative, but at the same time, despite the fact that the consumer preferred to buy advertised goods, they felt that advertising increased the price of selected merchandise (Zanot 1981, 1984). Bauer & Greyser's (1968) today classic study: Advertising in America: The Consumer view showed that the perceptions of advertising in general were more positive than negative. But even though the result was in favor for a positive opinion—there were also some ambivalence. In spite of the fact that advertising were considered to be indispensable, it was also perceived to be misguiding and increasing the price of selected merchandise. Then during the 1970's, the perceptions of advertising were getting more negative. For example advertising was viewed as misguiding, and claims for stricter advertising regulations were raised (Zanot 1981,1984). This negative trend kept going on during the 1980–90's and was deepened with a general disbelief toward advertising (Andrews, 1989). Advertising was perceived to glorify products that in return did not live up to the consumers expectations (Alwitt & Prabhaker 1992). As a result, advertising was seen as neither honest nor trustworthy. Sometimes advertising was even considered to be offensive (Andrew, 1989; Mittal 1994). But once again there was ambivalence toward advertising, this time from an opposite disposition than earlier. Even though the relationship on the whole could be described as negative, there were circumstances that made quite a difference. Alwitt & Prabhaker (1992) showed that advertising was sometimes considered to be both fun and witty. And nearly half of the respondents in Mittal's (1994) study agreed on that TV-commercials could sometimes be more entertaining than the media programs itself.

phenomenon, as a product, as media content, as well as the tool for the salesman to get the customers attention etc. In addition, advertising also provides the customer with different experiences; which can be positive—as well as negative. During the last decades the advertising market has grown rapidly. As one of many consequences for this, we have developed personal relationships with advertising. Some of the advertising content and forms we like and some of them we dislike. Because of this the relationship, in many ways, can be described as ambivalent. The ambivalent feeling also becomes more central if it is connected to a complex object (e.g. O'Donohoe 2001:91ff).

The ambivalence towards advertising may be related to when our cultural values collide with other loyalties. Our expectation of advertising depends on from what perspective we look at it. As parents you have certain norms of what is considered acceptable. Teenagers may, when it comes to advertising, be more open-minded. And if you are a feminist you may apply different norms etc. Another reason for this love-hate relationship may be connected to the friction between the *perceived* feeling of an advertised product and the *actual* experience. One reason that advertising works, over and over again, is because it is built on a form of "reality". The focus is usually not on the product or service that actually is promoted, instead emphasis is on hopes and feelings that the future consumer will connect to the product/service. Even the fact that there seems to be an endless amount of advertised products can result in an ambivalent feeling.

The View on Advertising

Today we know that the consumer connects advertising with several characteristic. Just like media itself, advertising is perceived to have information value, can provide pleasure and enjoyment. But even if advertising may bring pleasure and enjoyment it can also result in conflicting feelings—for example in form of irritation (Coulter et al. 2001; Shavitt, Lowery & Haefner 1998; Calfee & Ringold 1994; Pollay & Mittal 1993). From an information perspective advertising can be seen as a source for available products (e.g. yellow pages, TV and radio commercials etc.) but it can also provide inspiration for how to develop social roles and lifestyles in everyday life. Advertising offers information about local sales as well as provides knowledge about specific brands. A difference between national and local advertising is that local advertising (e.g. newspaper ads and direct mail) tends to be easier for consumer to relate to (Elfving 2005).

In addition to these visible characteristics advertising may also provide the consumer with invisible values. These invisible values can be exemplified by car and house advertisement. We know that more people than those who actually buy a car or a house read these specific types of ads (SOM 2000). The reading is done without any purpose of buying and can be described as a form of environmental scanning. In this case the ad

does not only give information about how much a new car or a new house/apartment costs—it also provides the consumer with the knowledge of the daily value of these objects. This form of information can then be used as basic data for future decision-making as well as knowledge of how much neighbours and friends have invested in different belongings and personal effects.

Aspects of pleasure and enjoyment (forms of entertainment) are both an important part of advertising, as well as a way for advertisers to reach the consumer. Today one of the criteria to attract consumers is the use of humour, entertainment and creativity. When asked about advertising respondents usually say that they like it, but at the same time find it boring and irritating. In many ways the feeling of pleasure and enjoyment can be seen as a form of repayment, since advertising most of the time can be seen as an uninvited guest in our homes—as well in our minds. The fact that advertising can be described as an uninvited guest brings attention to the question of how we choose our media content.

Even though there are occasions in the everyday where the media exposure is not a personal choice, in the shop (music/radio), at your friends house (music/tv/radio/dvd/vhs) or even in your own home (choice of television program, newspaper subscription etc.) it can be assumed that the consumer most of the times makes the media decision by him or her self.³ But when it comes to advertising these premises do not always work. Normally advertising comes along with the media choice, either you want or do not want to take part of it. So even if the medium is chosen by oneself, all parts of the content might not be of taste. For example in a newspaper some prefer the sports or domestic news, some favour the foreign or cultural news. Still we know from readership studies that advertising in press has a high reading value (Strid 2005). If we look at television you choose certain programs and the TV-advertising comes along with the content as intermission or in between programs. Since advertising is not usually the primary focus of media use, it is better to talk about interests when it comes to advertising. Interest, of course, differs a lot between consumers. When it comes to advertising interests can be described as a form of susceptibility and involvement for advertising. Since interests vary between individuals we have different predisposition for what types of advertising we prefer.

Based on previous research we know that perceptions of advertising vary in different countries and by demographic variables. Research also shows that different aspects of how advertising is perceived, as an institution or as an instrument, play a vital role on the perceptions of advertising. In spite of the symbiotic relationship between advertising and media, media influence the characteristics of advertising, *and* in return advertising influences the development of media. There are few

³ For a discussion active-passive audiences, see Rubin, 1994a/1983/1981 and Rubin and Perse 1987.

studies that combine perceptions of advertising in a media context. In advertising studies media is generally viewed as a context. In media studies there are few studies that have examined advertising as part of media content. However, research shows that generally advertising in press is perceived as being more informative, while advertising in magazines and television is considered to be more of an entertainment (see O'Donohoe 1995 for an overview).

A SWEDISH CONTEXT

In Sweden the increasing amount of media advertising can be credited to the expansion of commercialized media. In the late 1980's only a small amount of radio advertising existed, there was almost no TV-advertising and hardly anyone knew about Internet. During the past decades advertising in media has practically doubled (Gustafsson 2005). These days, radio, TV and Internet reach a large audience on a daily basis and they are looked upon as well-known media carriers (Grusell 2005). For that reason, the advertising market in Sweden can be characterized as having experienced dramatic changes in a short time. From a historic perspective the over all advertising tradition can be described as one-sided.⁴ Traditionally, advertising has mainly been distributed by press, and it is only during the past two decades that a change has occurred in the advertising market. However, it has been a major change. Today a majority of the advertising exposure is distributed by mass media (Trotzig 2004), and the advertising market has several new operators/mediums: TV, radio, Internet, direct mail etc. The advertising market with the most economical growth right now is Internet advertising.

METHOD

The conclusions presented in this paper are based on the preliminary findings of a dissertation project focusing on public perceptions of advertising in media. The project's aim is to describe and explain how people perceive advertising in a media context. The empirical foundation of the project is based on a representative sample of 1,700 persons (age 15–85) who answered a national survey in Sweden during November–December 2004/2005. The survey is conducted by the SOM Institute, an academic research organization studying Society, Opinion and Media (S.O.M.) at the Göteborg University. The survey is carried out annually since 1986, it's nationwide and people are asked questions about politics, society, and their use of media, public service, the environment, risks, new media technology and their leisure-time activities. The survey is

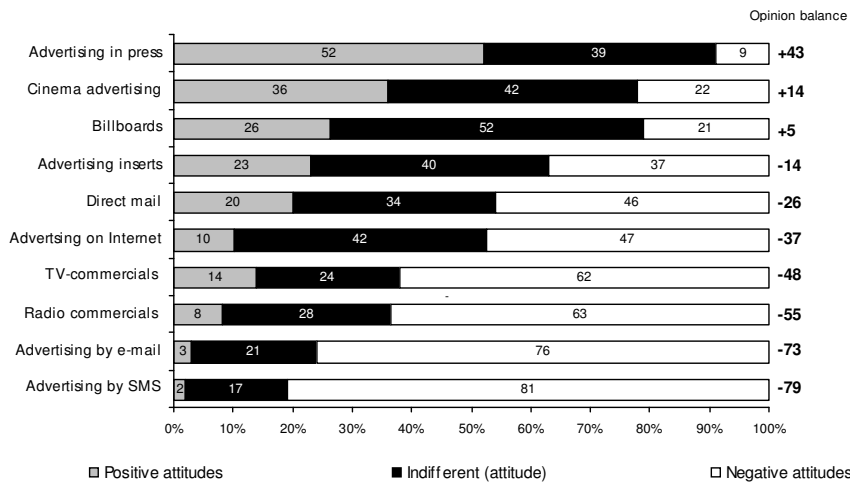
⁴ See Heyder et al. (1992) for examples of how other European advertising markets are structured.

mailed to 3,000 randomly selected individuals between the ages of 15 and 85.

PERCEPTIONS OF ADVERTISING IN A MEDIA CONTEXT

When examining the perceptions of advertising in a media context the first conclusion is that the results for the examined advertising types differ a lot depending on the carrier medium (Figure 1). Advertising in morning press, cinema and billboards (out-of-home campaigns) are more liked and get the top rankings, while advertising received by e-mail and by phone text messages (SMS) rank the lowest. Under the circumstances the difference in perceptions must be considered large; between the ten examined advertising forms there is a 50 percent difference between the top and bottom rankings. Nearly every second respondent could be described as having a positive attitude about advertising in press. At the same time the opposite result can be said about advertising sent by e-mail and SMS—hardly anyone is positive.

Figure 1: Perceptions of Advertising in Percent (Percent)



Source: The RIKS-SOM survey 2005. Respondents ages 15-85. Balance is the difference between positive and negative attitudes

Advertising inserts is a new type of advertising, delivered by morning press. As we have just noticed there is a positive attitude towards advertising in morning press. Could the same be said for advertising inserts? Well, the over all result is not as strong as for advertising in press. But two out of ten respondents are positive, which is in the same range as direct mail. This result can be seen as inconsistent compared to the outcome for press advertising. The strong result for press advertising, nearly every second respondent has a positive perception,

could indicate an over all positive tendency for advertising in paper design. But we can conclude that this is not the case.

The variation between TV- and radio commercials and Internet advertising can be described as small, looking at respondents considering themselves as having a positive attitude. The distinction between the three categories is found in the respondents with a negative attitude. The negative group is significantly bigger for TV- and radio advertising than for the Internet. Furthermore Internet advertising has a larger group of respondents who have no specific attitudes and therefore put themselves in the middle—indifferent—category, between positive and negative attitudes.

As we can tell, advertising opinions vary greatly depending on the advertisement's media carrier. From this, a second conclusion can be drawn: there seems to be a strong polarization in the perceptions of advertising. On some level, this result could be considered to be the expected one. Advertising, and similar fields like PR, are usually connected with negative opinions (Larsson 2004:83ff; cf. Larsson 2005:110ff) which can be explained by the fact that these forms of communication are generally perceived as means of influence, and therefore looked upon with skepticism.

The results also reveal that many individuals do not seem to have an opinion about advertising. The *indifferent* category has a range of 17—52 percent. There could be many reasons for this gap. Firstly, there could be a general resentment of expressing an opinion about advertising. Advertising is more often than not perceived as something “bad” and there are also tendencies of advertising being easier connected with negative attributes than positive ones (Nordström 2000; Sternvik 2003).

An alternative interpretation is that people are actually able to be neutral towards advertising. In other words: they do not really have an opinion. However, that is hard to believe, as today it is almost impossible to avoid advertising in one's everyday life. Because of this, the middle category has been assessed as people to some extent *have* formed an opinion about advertising. Looking at the middle category, low percentages are interpreted as having a strong opinion. Accordingly, the high percentages are considered to have a more generous attitude toward advertising.

Two examples: the first concerns advertising by e-mail and SMS. These advertising forms have the smallest group of indifferent respondents, 21 and 17 percent respectively. These figures, in combination with the high values for the negative category, result in a distinctly negative opinion about these advertisings forms. In the second example we find the advertising forms with the biggest groups of indifferent respondents: billboards (52 percent), cinema and Internet advertising (42 percent), advertising inserts distributed by morning press and advertising in morning press (40 and 39 percent respectively). These high results can be interpreted as a basic acceptance of advertising in these mediums. Furthermore, when combining the indifferent and

positive categories, the majority of the respondents can be categorized as generally having a more positive than negative attitude.

The Opinion Balance Groups

If we extend our analysis one step further and examine the opinion balance, the advertising types form three rather separate groups (at the right in figure 1). Group one is the only one with a positive opinion balance and consists of advertising in morning press, cinema advertising and billboards. Morning press gets the top rank, which is consistent with earlier studies (Elfving 2005; Sternvik 2003). At a first glance, these three advertising forms are very different. But looking more closely, a main element combines them. The common denominator being that the advertising forms give the recipient the possibility of a personal choice. When reading the morning press the individual decides what to look at. The same principle goes for the billboard ads—the eye browses. And at the cinema, the individual chooses to be on time for the commercials or not - it's a personal choice! Furthermore, in combination with the choice factor, these advertising forms are likely viewed upon as a natural part of the everyday life *by tradition and by habit*. Therefore they are given a high acceptance level as being part of the general advertising range.

The second and middle opinion balance group includes advertising inserts distributed by morning press, direct mail and advertising on the Internet, as well as TV- and radio commercials. The opinion balance for this group can be described as relatively negative. Nevertheless, the group also has one main element in common: many of the respondents have chosen the indifferent category. As seen earlier, this can be interpreted as a basic acceptance for these advertising forms. But there are variations within the group. Internets advertising as well as TV- and radio commercials have a somewhat more negative opinion balance than the others. A possible reason for this could be that these advertising forms can be described as interruptions in the media consumption. Advertising inserts distributed by morning press and direct mail leave more room for a personal choice, which also reflects in a more positive opinion balance than for the above mentioned.

The third and bottom group consists of advertising by e-mail and SMS. As we have seen earlier these two advertising forms have the highest negative percentages (-73 and -79). If the advertising context has an impact on how the advertising is perceived, a reasonable explanation for the results is that the individual has no possibility to control the advertising's content or timing. The intrusion could be considered as bigger. The loss of control leads to a feeling of being pressured. The individual cannot escape it and thus the advertising forms are more likely to irritate than do anything else. Another way of putting it is that new techniques can be perceived as more intrusive when it comes to advertising in ones personal sphere.

Opinions by Gender, Age and Political Ideology

The results strongly indicate that the advertising context has initial importance. Therefore, a question to be asked is: *Do* perceptions vary between different groups and, if so, what differences are there? Earlier research shows that the publics' perceptions of advertising are influenced by many factors, one being the demographic variables. In my opinion the explaining factors can be summarized under three themes; social habits, life styles and social attitudes. In the following, perceptions of advertising in a media context based on gender, age and political ideology will be examined (see Table 1).

Gender and Age First of all it seems that gender is insignificant in the opinion of advertising. In spite of this general assumption, some gender differences can be noticed. For example it seems that women are somewhat more positive to cinema advertising than men, while men are slightly more positive to billboards. Both genders have negative opinions of direct mail, advertising by e-mail and SMS, but results show that men are slightly more negative than women. For direct mail one possible explanation is that women generally read more news connected to the home situation (Hadenius & Weibull 2003:411).

While the gender differences could be considered small, age differences appear to be more significant to the opinion formed about advertising. For example, elderly people hold a much more positive attitude to press advertising than younger ones, while the young have a much more positive perception of cinema advertising and billboards than the older. However, it's important to notice, when the young do their top-three rankings, billboards only makes it to third, after cinema advertising closely followed by press advertising. For the elderly group press advertising is unthreatened, it's the only advertising form with a positive opinion balance. Additionally, all the age groups have a negative opinion on advertising in TV, radio and Internet. But it is worth noticing that young people are somewhat more positive to these advertising forms than the older. The differences between older and younger also reflect their media habits and can be matched to the different groups' media consumption, as well as their consumption of advertising in media. (Mediebarometern 2004).

In combination with gender and age, education also carries some importance about how advertising is perceived. While this paper does not focus on this factor, some tendencies are worth noticing. Generally, the group with the highest education has the most negative opinions on advertising in a media context. The advertising forms this education group dislikes most of all are: advertising by SMS and e-mail, radio commercials, advertising on the Internet as well as direct mail.

Table 1: Perceptions of Advertising in Media Content by Group (Percent)

	Total	Gender		Age				Education			
		Women	Men	15-29	30-49	50-64	65-85	low	Medium	Med. High	High
Newspaper Advertising											
Positive	52	52	52	38	53	58	58	53	50	47	60
Indifferent	39	39	39	53	40	33	32	37	39	47	34
Negative	9	8	9	10	7	9	10	10	10	6	6
Balance	43	44	43	28	46	49	48	43	40	41	54
Newspaper Ad Inserts											
Positive	23	24	23	20	26	25	20	24	25	24	19
Indifferent	40	39	41	48	40	38	34	42	41	39	37
Negative	37	37	36	32	34	37	45	34	34	37	44
Balance	-14	-13	-13	-12	-8	-12	-25	-10	-9	-13	-25
TV Ads											
Positive	14	14	14	14	20	12	6	11	16	13	13
Indifferent	24	23	25	26	27	22	21	26	22	25	25
Negative	62	64	61	60	53	66	73	64	61	62	61
Balance	-48	-50	-47	-46	-33	-54	-67	-53	-45	-49	-48
Radio Ads											
Positive	8	8	9	9	12	5	5	8	10	7	7
Indifferent	28	28	28	28	31	28	24	31	29	27	24
Negative	63	64	63	63	57	67	71	60	61	66	69
Balance	-55	-56	-54	-54	-45	-62	-66	-52	-51	-59	-62
Direct Marketing											
Positive	20	22	18	13	24	20	20	23	22	19	15
Indifferent	34	35	34	40	34	32	34	34	38	31	32
Negative	46	44	48	47	42	49	46	43	40	50	53
Balance	-26	-22	-30	-34	-18	-29	-26	-20	-18	-31	-38
Internet Ads											
Positive	10	9	11	18	13	6	3	8	12	12	8
Indifferent	42	44	41	43	43	41	40	45	44	41	38
Negative	47	47	48	39	43	52	57	47	44	47	54
Balance	-37	-38	-37	-21	-30	-46	-54	-37	-32	-35	-46
Ads via E-Mail											
Positive	3	3	2	4	3	3	1	3	4	3	1
Indifferent	21	23	18	15	19	21	30	35	20	14	12
Negative	76	73	80	81	78	76	69	63	76	83	86
Balance	-73	-70	-78	-77	-75	-73	-68	-60	-72	-80	-85
Ads via SMS/mobile telephone											
Positive	2	2	2	3	3	1	1	3	2	2	1
Indifferent	17	21	13	15	15	18	23	29	16	12	11
Negative	81	76	85	82	82	81	76	68	81	86	88
Balance	-79	-74	-83	-79	-79	-80	-75	-65	-79	-84	-87
Cinema Ads											
Positive	36	38	34	40	50	30	15	19	36	41	50
Indifferent	42	44	40	38	35	48	47	46	43	40	36
Negative	22	18	26	22	15	21	37	34	21	19	14
Balance	14	20	8	18	35	9	-22	-15	15	22	36
Outdoor Ads											
Positive	26	25	29	33	34	22	15	20	30	25	30
Indifferent	52	53	51	47	52	55	53	53	51	54	50
Negative	21	22	21	20	14	23	32	27	19	21	20
Balance	5	3	8	13	20	-1	-17	-7	11	4	10
Number of Responses	1640	848	812	336	549	478	317	392	585	434	341

Source: The RIKS-SOM survey 2005. Respondents ages 15-85. Balance is the difference between positive and negative attitudes

The groups with the lowest grade of education dislike TV-commercials, cinema advertising and billboards. It is interesting to notice that the latter group also shows a negative opinion balance for cinema advertising and billboards—all the other education groups show positive numbers.

This result mainly reflects the fact that elderly persons have less education than younger. Finally, we can note that the category for indifferent opinions shows the following over all tendencies: compared with the younger, the elderly groups more often take a stand, and they form stronger opinions too. The same tendencies are true for the group with the highest education, more often than other education groups this group take a stand and shows stronger opinions.

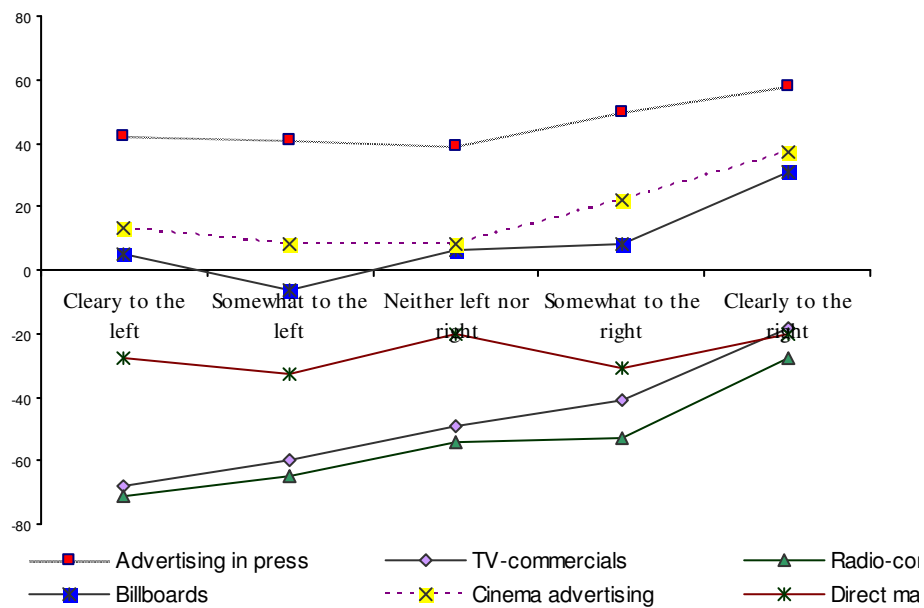
Political Ideology As already been established in the opening of the paper, advertising is in many ways a well debated social phenomena. Because of this it is reasonable to assume that the individual's view of society from a political ideology dimension is of importance. This assumption is also confirmed in the results. The result clearly shows a significant difference between the examined advertising forms (cf. Elfving 2005). When it comes to the publics perceptions of advertising in press, cinema, billboards and radio and TV-commercials there is a distinctive dividing line between peoples' self placements of left and right positions (see figure 2). For all advertising forms, the opinions are more positive for those who politically place themselves to the right. The self placement of political ideology is most significant for TV- and radio commercials.

Among them who consider themselves to be clearly to the left, the opinion balance for TV-commercials is -68, and for radio commercials -71. This result shows that very few within this group have a positive perception of TV- and radio advertising. On the other hand, the ones who place themselves clearly to the right have an opinion balance of -18 for TV-commercials and -28 for radio commercials. Still, the majority of the right-winged can be considered to have a negative view, but compared with the group that consider themselves clearly to the left the result illustrates a more positive perception. The fact that TV and radio commercials distinguish themselves from the other advertising forms can be credited to the political advertising debate that has previously taken place in Sweden (Hadenius & Weibull 2003:208ff; Asp & Weibull 1995:315ff). This kind of debate has for example never occurred around press, one of the few mediums where the perception of advertising has a positive opinion balance. A valid explanation could be the long tradition of advertising in press; because of this it is realistic to assume that the public perceive advertising in press as something "natural".

While the political dimension is strong regarding TV- and radio-commercials, the opposite can be said about perceptions on advertising by e-mail or SMS. These advertising forms seem to have no political dimension at all. For example, there are no differences between those

who place themselves clearly to the left or right regarding negative perceptions of advertising. Instead it is opinions of the *neither left nor right* group that stands out. Compared to the other categories this group is less negative. Concerning advertising inserts, advertising on the Internet and direct mail no explicit results can be drawn. Even though

Figure 2: Perceptions of Advertising Based on Political Dimensions (%)



Source: The RIKS-SOM survey 2005. Respondents ages 15-85. Balance is the difference between positive and negative attitudes. Left-Right self placement.

some ideological differences for advertising inserts in press and advertising on the Internet can be suspected, the ideological differences for perceptions of direct mail are not as evident.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MEDIA CONTEXT

As we have seen there are combinations of factors that determine public perceptions on advertising. Social habits, life styles and social attitudes are important factors for explaining the individual differences in perceptions. However, this study clearly shows that the media factor also plays a significant role in how advertising is perceived. Therefore a major conclusion can be drawn—*where* and *how* you are exposed to advertising has an impact of what you think of it. The result strongly indicates that the conscious use of advertising is connected to the media context. Advertising that ranks high in positive perception can be described to be the individual's personal choice, while advertising forms that rank low

are the opposite—they irritate and are perceived to interrupt the media consumption. On one hand this result can be said to portray the traditional media and advertising system. On the other hand the results demonstrate that the advertising context play a vital role in how it is perceived. In my opinion the advertising context is important enough to be considered the first factor in gaining the consumer's attention.

Implications for the Future?

Gaining the consumers' attention is the first step to establish a relationship. The relationship between consumers and advertising as phenomena is complex and ambivalent, as already mentioned in many ways a love-hate relationship. Some advertising you like—some you hate. This view on advertising may also be transferred to the consumer view on advertising in a media context. As we have seen the perceptions differ a lot depending on the carrier medium. We prefer advertising in morning press, cinema and billboards (out-of-home campaigns), while advertising received by e-mail and by phone text messages (SMS) scores the lowest on the list. Today advertising *per se* comes in many shapes; one denominator is that a majority is distributed by media.

Normally advertising comes along with the media choice, either you want or do not want to take part of it. So even if the medium is chosen by oneself, all parts of the content might not be of taste. It is reasonable to assume that the individual interests *most of the times* play a significant part of what types of advertising we like. When it comes to advertising interests can be described as a form of susceptibility and involvement for advertising. Since interests vary between individuals we have different predispositions for what types of advertising content we prefer. In this study interests, for obvious reason, has not been examined. But the result is very clear when it comes to the distributing form—we prefer advertising that gives us a feeling of personal choice.

These new findings may have implications on the upcoming development of new advertising forms. Future successful advertising could be expected to be built on interactivity (form of personal choice and interests). As a consequence of this we may also expect to see more individually targeted advertising. There is already a trend towards more personal and individually sent advertising. One example is the Internet. Today many of us are signing up on various lists for commercial messages when visiting different web pages. And in return, with help from technical procedures, messages with our special fields of interests get delivered directly to us. And as earlier results have shown, Internet advertising can be described as having the public's basic acceptance—it is most likely that this advertising market will keep on growing in the future.

Based on these predictions, *how* advertising is distributed will be essential. From a sender perspective it will be crucial to make the right decision about which media channel to use, as well as customizing the

advertising message towards the interest of the target group. With this in mind, a future successful media and advertising actor probably has to develop products that catch the interest, as well as invites to some form of interactivity with the individual. But most of all the end product (media and advertising) must give the respondent the experience or illusion of having a personal choice!

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