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Mass media advertising: Information or wallpaper?

Smit, E.G.

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Use and evaluation of advertising

The aim of this first empirical chapter is to answer the following research questions: 'What kinds of behaviour do people (claim to) have with respect to advertising in a specific medium?' and 'How do people evaluate advertising in the media they use?' The words 'claim to' have been added to the first question to underline the fact that self-reported or perceived behaviour is measured instead of electronic measurement or observation of behaviour. The results of the first and second study are used to answer these research questions. The results of the first study (the in-depth interviews) describe how the interviewees generally describe their 'advertising behaviour' and evaluation of advertising (Section 4.1). Based on these results and the results of the literature review of Chapter 2, statements were formulated to measure 'use' in the second study. The aim of this study is to measure advertising use and evaluation on a larger scale by means of a survey, and to compare the results for the four media: newspapers, magazines, radio and television (see previous chapter for method of data gathering). This latter aim refers to the research question on intermedia comparison (see Table 1.4, question 6). The results of the questions on advertising use will be presented in Section 4.2. Section 4.3 discusses the respondents' evaluation of advertising in the four media. In the final section, the answers to the first two research questions as well as the question about intermedia comparison will be given.

4.1 Different types of advertising use (study I)

The focus of the first study was to interview various people about what they do with advertising in the various media they use and why they do so. During the interviews, it became clear that it was easier for them to talk about general opinions on advertising than about (advertising) behaviour, such as talking about the number of advertisements they saw or the amount of time they spend on reading advertisements. Moreover, television advertising was primarily the first association with advertising, especially the avoidance of it. An often heard first reaction was: *"For me, advertising is just that stuff you immediately avoid when unwillingly confronted with it while watching television programs"*. It appeared more difficult to recall behaviour towards advertisements in print media or outdoor and radio advertising.

In this section, the most apparent types of advertising behaviour will be described per medium. These types are based on the categorisation of parts of the interviews (for details see Section 3.2). Besides the types of use, explanations given by the interviewees are described to clarify these behaviours. Most often, evaluation of advertising was given to explain behaviour. Part of the results are excluded from this dissertation, namely opinions and behaviour regarding outdoor advertising, direct mail and local papers (see for more information about these other media: Smit, 1995; Tel, 1995).

Television advertising

Avoidance of television advertising is the most apparent type of advertising use the interviewees refer to. Avoidance is done by zapping, turning the volume down ('muting') or by doing something else for a short moment, such as looking out the window (in other words: shifting attention) or using a break to go to the toilet or make some coffee. Reasons for these types of avoidance behaviour are the confrontation with something they did not ask for (*"I want to continue the movie ... I didn't ask for that confrontation"*), the nature and content of the commercials (*"intrusive"*, *"the volume"*, *"the rapid shots"*, *"phoney"*, *"unrealistic"*), the expectation to see something that would irritate (*"I don't have to see them, I know they're all stupid and it's too much"*) and several beliefs about the role of television advertising in society. Different interviewees stated that:

"Advertising shows a non existing world", "Advertising dictates what to do, is prescriptive, especially for the adolescents", "Advertising stimulates consumption, is unnecessary", and "Advertising is nothing more than a sales talk, because it's fake and unbelievable".

Although television commercials are not explicitly named in these statements, the context of these statements and the examples given showed that television advertising was referred to. For instance, frequently heard examples of the last statement are the 'famous' three

types of product categories: commercials for detergents, diapers and sanitary towels which are said to have the same format (*"always that blue liquid, so unbelievable"*).

Some of the interviewees said to like advertising in general, including television advertising. They explain that they continue watching the commercials when confronted with them. Advertising is generally accepted by these more positive interviewees because it is seen as *"necessary evil"*, *"it belongs to these modern times"*, and because television advertising gives useful information about new products. A nice example of this latter function is given by a mother of three children:

"For me, advertising is a kind of getting informed about the existence of new products. For instance, I'm having trouble with cleaning my bathroom, you know, that I'm not getting the lime scale off the walls. And I thought, I've tried everything. And the other night, I saw something on television, Viakal or something. And now I know that I can use that stuff".

Watching commercials does not mean that every commercial is watched. This depends on the commercial's content. The question is whether a specific commercial is funny or relevant for the interviewees.

Radio advertising

Most radio listeners use the radio as background music during household activities, at work or in their cars. Radio is said to be on without attentive listening to it. Different people explained that they turn on the radio the moment they come home. Concerning radio commercials, two types of use were referred to. The first and often used statement was *"I'm sorry, I seldom hear radio commercials"*. A couple who listen all day to a commercial channel, even stated that there are no commercials on that channel:

"There is little advertising on the radio, no, especially not on this channel. On this channel, you never hear commercials, there is the news, and ... no, no commercials. That's why we have this channel on. We listen to the music, the news, ... no commercials at all!"

Remarkably, this channel – namely the commercial Dutch channel Radio 10 Gold – was on during the interview. While listening to the recorded interview, one could hear a lot of commercials.

Some of the interviewees said that mostly they realised a commercial had been aired when the host made a joke about the last commercial in the break. Other commercials are suddenly noticed when sentences are repeated or when certain voices are used. However, it appeared difficult for the interviewees to give examples of radio commercials.

Newspaper advertising

Newspapers are characterised by having a separate section with classified ads. These ads are perceived as a completely different type of advertising from that in the editorial sections, because they are seen as *"exchange of information, a kind of flea market in the newspaper"*. Another

reason for this positive function of newspaper advertising is – according to the interviewees – that it is clear in which part of the paper these ads are:

“you can search for them yourself, you know where they are, and you are not confronted with them, on every page”.

People refer to different types of newspaper advertising behaviour: paying just a little attention to them (*“Generally, I don't pay attention, but sometimes your eye catches one”*), skimming through the articles and advertisements, and searching for specific advertisements (especially the small, classified ads). Most interviewees are positive about newspaper advertising. Newspaper advertising does not irritate, and can easily be avoided (*“you just skip to the next page”*). The interviewees are also positive, because newspaper ads are seen as information (*“they keep you informed”*). Moreover, newspaper advertising is generally accepted, because of the belief that the newspaper can only exist by the grace of the advertising revenues.

Magazine advertising

During the interviews, it was clear that it was difficult for the interviewees to talk about their magazine reading¹ and especially their behaviour and opinions on the advertisements inside these magazines. For some interviewees, the advertisements in these magazines are so much perceived as part of its content that it is *“not advertising anymore”*. Moreover, magazine advertising is not perceived as irritating because it is not the medium that decides when and for how long you read the advertisement.

Especially in special interest magazines, such as music or computer magazines, advertisements are read as part of the information of the magazine. Other magazine types – such as women magazines – are read because they are comforting, entertaining, and give information about clothes or recipes. The ads in these magazines are read because they generally give this kind of information as well. A man (28) explains how he perceives the ads in the monthly music magazine ‘Oor’:

“(...) a lot of ads indeed, but they're about new CDs. Most of the time, I've already seen them in the shops or something. So, if I see the ad, I already know it or bought it. I wouldn't know about the other ads, I don't really notice them ... oh yes, on the back, cigarette ads. But inside the magazine, there are only ads about music, that's different”.

For the infrequent readers of a magazine, it appeared more difficult to talk about magazine advertisements. For them, advertisements are sometimes noticed because they have an outstanding colour or a diverting subject. For all interviewees, magazine advertisements were generally perceived as not irritating and were sometimes seen as beautiful pictures.

To sum up

The interviews showed that the main types of advertising use were: 'avoiding and sometimes watching television commercials', 'hardly noticing radio commercials', 'searching, skimming and sometimes reading newspaper advertisements' and 'reading magazine advertisements as part of the content' (see Table 4.1). The reasons for these types of behaviour in terms of a general evaluation of advertising is summarised as well.

Table 4.1: Main types of advertising use (AU)

	behaviour	evaluation
television AU	avoiding by zapping, muting or doing something else sometimes watching	Television advertising is evaluated as negative, because it is regarded as an unwanted confrontation (external pacing), disturbing and irritating. Sometimes commercials are funny, beautiful, or provide information (relevance). Moreover, it is believed that advertising belongs to these modern times (acceptance).
radio AU	hardly noticing	Radio is listened to as background noise. Sometimes commercials are noticed when an element attracts attention (repetition, voices).
newspaper AU	searching skimming (skipping, sometimes reading)	Primarily the small classified advertisements are positively regarded because they provide specific information ('flea market') and are easily found in the newspaper (specific section). Newspaper advertisements are seen as part of the newspaper: newspaper advertising does not irritate, because it can easily be avoided ('internal pacing'). Newspaper advertising offers information.
magazine AU	reading as part of medium content	The advertisements are perceived as part of the magazine's information – especially special interest magazines – and positively evaluated as such. magazine ads do not irritate, because the reader can decide to read them or not ('internal pacing')

In general, television advertising is negatively evaluated, while newspaper and magazine advertising are evaluated as positive sources of information or as part of the medium environment. The interviewees explained this difference as a difference in control they perceive. For print advertising it is possible to select the advertisements yourself, while the television station decides when to interrupt your viewing by broadcasting commercials. In the literature this difference is called 'pacing' or the difference between 'search media' and 'display media' (see first chapter). Radio advertising is perceived differently because it is not seen as intrusive (as television) and it serves a background function most of the times.

4.2 Advertising use in four media (study II)

The aim of the second study was to measure advertising behaviour on a larger scale and to compare this behaviour for four media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television). Since the previous study showed that it was difficult for people to recall their advertising exposure, the respondents of this study were first questioned about the last time they were using the medium (see Chapter 3). After these filter questions, the respondents were asked to give an estimation of the amount of advertisements they saw during the last period of use and to give an indication of the percentage of the advertisements that drew their attention. Besides these estimations of last time advertising use (Section 4.2.1), different behavioural statements were presented to the respondents with the question whether they do this 'never', 'sometimes', 'regularly' or 'always'. These statements concerned behaviour toward advertising in that medium. For all four media, statements were listed with respect to the selection or avoidance of advertising in that medium and the amount of attention paid to advertising (Section 4.2.2).

Before presenting the results, some remarks are necessary. As a consequence of the design, not all respondents answered the questions for all four media. As was described in the previous chapter, all respondents were interviewed about one of the four media by telephone. In the follow-up, about half of these respondents also answered the questions for the other three media. This resulted in about 660 respondents per medium. The net samples per medium do not differ in terms of background characteristics (see previous chapter). Some of these samples overlap; about 400 respondents actually completed the questionnaires for all four media. Per table, the valid *n* will be presented per item or set of items. The difference between the number of respondents and the net samples per medium – item non response – are due to the absence of answers ('refused to answer'), the routing in the questionnaire (see previous chapter), as well as 'don't know answers'. This latter category of item non response is presented in the appendix because 'don't know answers' are an indication of the perceived difficulty of the questions. Another consequence of the design is that two different methods were used for data gathering: telephone and mail. For most variables, these different methods did not result in significant differences in average scores. These differences are reported in a note to Tables 4.2, 4.4, and 4.6.

4.2.1 Estimation of 'last time use'

As mentioned before, the respondents were asked to give an estimate of the number of advertisements they noted, and the amount of advertisements that drew their attention. To facilitate these rather difficult questions, the respondents were asked to recall the last time

they were using the medium. They were asked whether they used the medium at home or somewhere else, with whom, why, and for how long they were using the medium that specific time. 'Last time' included the day of the interview. 'Using' was explained by the interviewer as "it is not important how attentive you were whilst reading/listening/watching. It is about the opportunity you had to see/hear what was on the page/air/screen". If the respondents used the medium for at least 1 minute, they were asked to give an estimation of the number of advertisements they noticed. These respondents were also asked to estimate what percentage of advertisements drew their attention. For both questions, the interviewer was allowed to help the respondents by adding "it is not necessary that you remember the exact content of the advertisements, or whether you liked them or not. Try to give an estimation of the number of advertisements you noticed, at least in part", or "an estimation of that part of all advertisements possibly seen that drew your attention, whether positively or negatively". With the addition that '0' means 'none of the advertisements' and '100', 'all advertisements'. The average scores of 'last time duration of medium use', 'number of advertisements noted' and 'percentage of attention drawn' are presented in the next table.

Table 4.2: Results of last time estimations (average scores)²

	newspaper	magazine	radio	television
(a) last time duration	39.27 m. (n=602)	50.36 m. (n=533)	2 h. 27 m. (n=515)	1 h. 46 m. (n=628)
(b) number of ads noted	19.72 (n=247)	15.82 (n=248)	11.86 (n=198)	10.78 (n=310)
(c) number of ads 'per hour' *	45.27 (n=242)	34.50 (n=246)	9.20 (n=194)	8.81 (n=306)
(d) attention drawn (0-100%)	22.80 (n=228)	25.05 (n=237)	12.41 (n=176)	15.43 (n=265)

m. = minutes, h. = hour, n = valid n, distributions of items b and d are skewed (see Table A6.1), * = corrected by duration of medium use (number of ads noted divided by duration and multiplied with 60 minutes).

[a] Last time duration

The respondents spent quite a long time using their medium: they were reading their newspaper for about 40 minutes, their magazine for more than 50 minutes, and they were listening to the radio for almost 2 and a half hours. They watched television for less than 2 hours (1 hour, 46 minutes). As expected, these estimations are not as high as the estimation of the time the respondents normally use the medium. The reason for this difference is that people tend to overestimate their average or 'normal' media behaviour (see Chapter 3). The results show that respondents normally read their newspaper almost 6 days a week for about 45 minutes. They read their (last read) magazine almost every week, and when they do, they spend almost an hour reading it (on

average 56 minutes). The radio is on, every day, for on average 3 and a half hours. Also the television is used every day, for on average 2 and a half hours. Remarkably, this 'normal' – or average – medium use is especially highly correlated with last time medium use for newspaper and radio use ($r_{np}=0.72$, $r_{ma}=0.39$, $r_{ra}=0.72$, $r_{tv}=0.40$; all significant at the 0.01 level).

This difference can possibly be explained by the nature of medium use. Newspapers are mostly instrumentally used as a source of information. This was shown in the previous study as well as studies of others (e.g. Cebuco, 1994; Platform'95, 1998). Moreover, newspapers are often read as part of the morning ritual (Bogart & Tolley, 1988; Hemels, 1987; Tel, 1995). As a result, respondents last time medium use will not strongly deviate from their normal use. The strong relationship between normal and last time radio use can be explained by the nature of medium use as well. Radio is mostly used as secondary medium (e.g. Faasse & Van Meerem, 1997; Trompert, 1994), which makes it more likely that last time use resembles normal or average radio use. This was also explicitly mentioned by the interviewees in the previous study, who regularly listen to the radio during household activities, at work or in their cars (Section 4.1). Television and magazines on the other hand, are more often used for relaxation, leisure, or entertainment (e.g. Frissen, 1992; Hermes, 1993; Lull, 1980; Vierkant, 1987). According to McQuail (1987), use of these media is more flexible in terms of motives and duration of use. This difference can account for the fact that duration of last time use deviates from the average or normal use.

Finally, the respondents appeared not only to overestimate their normal medium use, but their last time use as well. According to figures of the Dutch Time Budget Survey³ of 1995, people spend on average more than 15 hours per week watching television, more than 9 hours listening to the radio, almost 2 hours reading newspapers and 1 and a half hours on reading magazines (Faasse & Van Meerem, 1997; SCP, 1996). Per day, this is: 2 hours and 10 minutes television, 1 hour and 20 minutes radio, 12 minutes magazine, and 17 minutes newspaper. Compared with these figures, the respondents in our study overestimated their use of print and radio. However, another study, shows that people listen on average 3 and a half hours to the radio (TMP, 1993) and watch 2 and a half hours television per day (TMP, 1994). Respondents in these studies possibly overestimated their media use as well, since a telephone survey was used instead of the diary method of the Time Budget Survey.

[b, c] Estimation of number of ads noted

Respondents who used the medium for at least 1 minute, were asked to give an estimation of the number of advertisements they noted. Not surprisingly, this question appeared very difficult. It appeared that a lot of respondents did not even try to give an estimation, which was shown

in Table 4.2 by the difference between the valid n of this question and the previous question about duration. An important reason for this item non response is the large number of respondents who did not know how many ads they saw (see Table A6.1 in the appendix). The difficulty in giving an estimation was confirmed by transcripts of part of the CATI-interviews⁴. These transcripts showed that in this part in the interview a lot of interaction took place between the interviewer and the respondent, which means that respondents as well as interviewers often asked for explanation or illustration.

Table 4.2 also showed that the rest of the respondents noted on average 20 newspaper ads, 16 magazine ads, 12 radio commercials and 11 television commercials. This means that the respondents claimed to see more print than broadcast advertisements. Also when corrected for duration of last time medium use, this difference stands out (see item c). Remarkably, these estimations of duration and number of advertisements are only highly significantly correlated for the two broadcast media ($r_{np}=0.13$, $p>0.05$; $r_{ma}=0.04$, $p>0.05$; $r_{ra}=0.51$, $p<0.01$; $r_{tv}=0.46$, $p<0.01$). In other words: the longer respondents listen to the radio or watched television, the more commercials they estimated to have noted. On the other hand, their estimation of the number of print advertisements does not depend on the minutes they spend on reading the print media. A possible explanation of this difference, is the fundamental difference of interaction with advertising in these media. While using the so called 'display media' (broadcast media), users are exposed to advertising at regular times, for instance every hour, around every program, or three times within a program. Contrary to print advertising, it is the medium that determines this regularity. This difference could have caused different types of estimation processes. The broadcast users could probably have used the strategy of deducing the number of commercials by their duration of use, i.e.: 'I've listened for 2 hours, that means 4 breaks with about 5 commercials each, so ... 20 commercials'. On the other hand, the estimation of number of print advertisements is probably less depended on time of use. Since the reader of the so called 'search media' decides what to see, for how many minutes, and in what sequence, noticing print advertisements is probably more a matter of recalling places in the newspaper or magazine than of time. As a calculation strategy, this respondent could have reasoned that he or she read the issue from cover to cover and therefore saw a certain number of advertisements.

[d] Attention drawn

Table 4.2 showed that on average 25% of the magazine advertisements and 23% of the newspaper advertisements drew the attention of the respondents. Compared with broadcast advertising – which attracts on average between 12% and 15% of the respondents' attention – respondents are more positive about their behaviour towards print advertisements. As was the case with the estimation of number of ads

noted, this difference reflects the respondents' willingness to pay attention to print advertising or the willingness to select advertisements instead of avoiding them. It is not a reflection of the technical possibilities of broadcast media to get attention by means of sound and movement modalities. Moreover, it reflects the 'wallpaper' function of radio and television (advertising). The programs as well as the commercials are perceived most of the time as a continuous flow of images and sounds, which can easily be ignored by paying a minimal amount of attention (Edell & Keller, 1989; Platform'95, 1998; Neijssel & Smit, 1998).

Testing the media differences

In the previous table (Table 4.2), results were shown for four groups of respondents who completed the questionnaire for at least one of the four media. These results were used to describe and understand differences between the four media, since these net samples per medium do not differ in terms of background characteristics (see Table A4.1 in the appendix). As was mentioned previously, about 400 respondents actually completed the questionnaires for all four media. In addition, this group of respondents was used to test the intermedia differences in average scores on the 'last time' measures (see Table 4.3). In other words, missing values were excluded list wise in the comparisons. Since previous analysis showed that the estimation of number of advertisements noted depended on the duration of someone's last time use of the medium, a correction for duration is presented as well (item c).

Table 4.3: Last time advertising behaviour (average scores)

	NP	MA	RA	TV
(a) last time duration of medium use (n=333)	40.60 m. ^a	47.10 m. ^b	2 h. 12 m. ^d	1 h. 47 m. ^c
(b) number of ads noted (n=34)	15.56	23.00	14.47	13.12
(c) number of ads noted 'per hour' * (n=34)	45.27 ^b	34.50 ^b	9.20 ^a	8.81 ^a
(d) attention drawn (0-100%) (n=31)	28.52 ^b	21.61	13.65 ^a	22.94 ^b

m. = minutes, h. = hour, * corrected by duration of medium use (x divided by duration and multiplied with 60 minutes), NP = newspaper, MA = magazine, RA = radio, TV = television; a,b,c,d = cells with different letter differ significantly from each other (Paired Samples T-test, missing cases are excluded list wise, p<0.05).

Results in this table show that duration of last time medium use (items a) is comparable with the results in the previous table: the print media are used for more than 40 minutes, television is watched for more than 1 and a half hours, and radio is listened to for more than 2 hours, on average. Moreover, a Paired Samples T-test showed that all differences are significant.

Prudence, however, is called for in the interpretation of the other results of Table 4.3. A relatively small number of respondents actually answered the questions about the last time advertising use of all four

media (items b to d). The average estimations of number of ads noted, deviate somewhat from the figures in Table 4.2. The difference between broadcast and print media, however, is still there, albeit not significantly. When corrected for duration of medium use ('per hour'), the estimated number of ads noted is significantly higher for print advertising. The last comparison by means of 'attention drawn' shows that radio commercials attracted significantly less attention than newspaper ads and television commercials. This difference was also shown in Table 4.2, although the average scores are somewhat higher in Table 4.3. Again, this group of (only) 31 respondents might represent an extreme group of respondents who completed both questionnaires as well as all filter questions in the questionnaire.

To sum up

The respondents claimed to have noted more advertisements when using print, rather than when using broadcast media. They also estimated to have paid more attention to print advertisements, and significantly less attention to radio commercials. This difference between print and broadcast media is difficult to explain by the number of advertisements present in the medium, because there are probably more commercials around television programs than there are around magazine articles. This difference could possibly be understood as a reflection of the difference in willingness to see advertisements in the medium instead of ignoring them. In other words: it reflects a (positive) attitude towards looking at print advertisements (behavioural intention) instead of remembering the amount of advertisements seen.

Besides this willingness to look at print advertisements, broadcast commercials are perceived as part of the continuous flow of images and sounds and therefore possibly perceived as wallpaper, which one pays less attention to. Another explanation is that the differences are a result of different 'calculation rules' caused by the fundamental difference between broadcast and print. Contrary to print advertisements, it is possible to deduce the number of radio and television commercials seen from knowing the duration of listening to the radio or watching television (breaks per hour and estimated number of commercials per break). Finally, the results show that the 'last time' questions appeared to be more difficult to answer than other questions. This difficulty is shown by the relatively large amount of 'don't know' answers, and the rather skewed distribution of scores.

4.2.2 General advertising behaviour

Next to the (rather difficult) questions about recalling the number of advertisements seen during the last exposure to the medium, general statements were used to measure what people generally do with advertising in the media they use. This list of behavioural statements was based on the interview results of the first study and the meta-

analysis of the second chapter. Advertising use was defined in the previous chapters as behaviour of media users with respect to advertising in these media. This behaviour consists of selection or avoidance of advertising before exposure and paying attention to advertising during exposure. It is, however, not possible to use exactly the same statements for all media. Especially avoidance behaviours differ as a result of the opportunities the medium offers for avoiding advertising. It is for instance impossible to 'mute' (turn the volume down on) magazine advertisements. This difference was found in the results of the literature review of Chapter 2 as well: avoidance studies were all conducted for broadcast media, while the other (positive) behaviours (summarised as 'attention') were measured for various media. The only study found in which avoidance behaviours were compared for four media, is the study of Speck and Elliott (1997)⁵. Speck and Elliott measured avoidance of television, radio, newspaper and magazine advertising by asking how often respondents 'ignore ads' (cognitive avoidance), 'flip past ads' (behavioural avoidance), and 'eliminate ads' (behavioural avoidance). These kinds of avoidance behaviours were not measured in the same way for broadcast and print media because of fundamental technical differences between the two. Ignoring was measured as 'ignoring print advertising' and 'tuning out broadcast commercials', while eliminating was measured as 'switching tv channels/radio stations' and 'discarding ad inserts before reading a magazine/newspaper' (ibid., 68).

The next table (Table 4.4) lists all behavioural statements which are used in our study, as well as the average score on the four-point scale (see Table A6.2 in the appendix for % per item). Since mechanical avoidance behaviour does not exist for print, these behaviours are only measured for broadcast media. Avoidance of broadcast advertising was measured by means of items a to d. The combination of these four items is constructed by counting the respondents who avoid television or radio advertising by at least one of the avoidance behaviours. Avoidance of print advertising was measured by item e. Non avoidance behaviours are measured by the remaining items. Item f refers to the selection of advertising before exposure. Items g, h and i resemble attention to advertising during exposure. Since print offers the reader not only the opportunity to look at the ad, but also to read it over and over again, the item 'reading thoroughly' (item i) was added to these non avoidance statements.

Table 4.4: General newspaper advertising behaviour (average scores on four-point scale)⁶

avoidance items:	NP	MA	RA	TV
(item a) You'll zap to another channel (=zapping)	—	—	1.35 *	2.22
(item b) You'll turn the volume down (=muting)	—	—	1.25 *	1.41 *
(item c) You'll leave the room	—	—	2.26	2.59
(item d) You'll do something else (in the same room)	—	—	1.65	2.08
(item e) You'll skip the ad immediately	2.76	2.78	—	—
selecting and attention items:	NP	MA	RA	TV
(item f) You'll search for the ads in ...	1.45 *	1.31 *	1.03 *	1.03 *
(item g) Do you generally pay attention to advertising in ...?	2.10	1.95	1.55	1.80
(item h) You'll look (briefly) at /listen to or watch the ad	2.55	2.54	2.51	2.15
(item i) You'll read the ad thoroughly	1.88	1.80	—	—

scale: 1='never', 2='sometimes', 3='often', 4='always'; NP = newspapers, MA = magazines, RA = radio, TV = television; — = not asked; sample size: about n=660 per sample/medium; these do not differ in terms of background variables (see Table A4.1 in the appendix); * = skewness > 1 (see Table A6.2 for valid n per statement, skewness and % of respondents per category).

Avoidance of broadcast and print advertising

Table 4.4 shows that especially television advertising is 'sometimes' or 'often' avoided by zapping, and leaving the room. Radio as well as television advertising is seldom avoided by muting. Moreover, radio advertising is almost never zapped. Most respondents 'never' use these avoidance strategies, which is also shown by the negatively skewed distribution of these three variables (*). Avoiding print advertising is (on average) done more often. Skipping the advertisement when confronted with it while reading the newspaper or magazine is 'sometimes' or 'often' done. These results are about the same for newspaper and magazine advertising.

Selecting and paying attention to advertising

Most respondents 'never' select advertisements by searching for them in the medium they are using, especially broadcast media are never used for this reason. Print advertisements on the other hand are searched for a little more often. On average, respondents 'sometimes' pay attention to print advertising, especially advertisements in newspapers. Radio commercials are seldom paid attention to. Will respondents watch, read or listen to the advertisements when confronted with them? The results from the last two items show that all four types of advertising are on average 'sometimes' or 'often' consumed (overall mean is 2.44). Television commercials are watched a little less often than the other three (mean is 2.15). When asked whether respondents will read the print ad thoroughly, more than 8% do this 'often' or 'always', and about 70% do this 'sometimes' (see Table A6.2 in the appendix). On average, reading thoroughly is done less often than looking briefly, watching or listening to commercials (item h).

Testing the media differences

As mentioned previously, only some positive items were measured in the same way for all four media. The avoidance statements differ for the print and broadcast media. Despite these differences, avoidance and attention were compared for all four media. The print statements are listed in the left of Table 4.5, while the average results on the broadcast statements are shown on the right. This comparison is based on those respondents who completed the questionnaire for all four media (missing cases are excluded list wise).

Table 4.5 Intermedia comparison for behavioural statements (average scores)

avoidance:	NP	MA	RA	TV	avoidance:
(e) skipping (n=300)	2.72 ^c	2.70 ^c	1.36 ^a	2.24 ^b	zapping (a)
(e) skipping (n=293)	2.72 ^c	2.70 ^c	1.22 ^a	1.40 ^b	muting (b)
(e) skipping (n=293)	2.72 ^c	2.68 ^c	1.68 ^a	2.06 ^b	leaving the room (c)
(e) skipping (n=319)	2.75 ^c	2.70 ^c	2.29 ^a	2.59 ^b	doing something else (d)
selecting and attention:	NP	MA	RA	TV	selecting and attention:
(f) searching (n=306)	1.42 ^b	1.27 ^c	1.01 ^a	1.03 ^a	searching (f)
(g) paying attention (n=450)	2.09 ^c	1.91 ^b	1.54 ^a	1.85 ^b	paying attention (g)
(h) looking briefly (n=313)	2.56 ^b	2.53 ^b	2.56 ^b	2.15 ^a	listening/watching (h)
(i) reading thoroughly (n=315)	1.89 ^a	1.83 ^a	2.55 ^c	2.16 ^b	listening/watching (h)

scale: 1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = always; NP = newspapers, MA = magazines, RA = radio, TV = television; a,b,c = cells with different letter differ significantly from each other (Paired Samples T-test, missing cases are excluded list wise, p<0.05).

The different types of avoidance behaviour were expected to be most often practised when confronted with television advertising. The pair wise comparison by means of T-tests showed that this is not the case. For all four avoidance behaviours, 'skipping' (print) is done significantly more often than zapping, muting, doing something else or leaving the room. As was mentioned in Section 4.1, 'skipping to the next page' was perceived as an advantage of print advertising. Television and radio avoidance differ significantly as well. As expected, all four behaviours are claimed to be practised more often when confronted with television commercials than with radio commercials.

The pair wise comparison of the average scores on the positive statements shows that print advertising is searched for significantly more often than broadcast advertising. Because most respondents almost never perform this kind of behaviour, it would be better to say that advertisements in print media alone are sometimes selected. This difference of course, is due to the (technical) difficulty in selecting or searching for commercials while using broadcast media ('pacing'). Results of the T-tests also showed that respondents pay significantly less often attention to radio advertising and more often to newspaper advertising (item g). This finding is in line with the results of the previous section about the estimation of last time advertising use. The

difference reflects the willingness of the respondents to pay attention to newspaper advertising. Radio programs as well as commercials, on the other hand, are perceived as a background medium which is not paid a lot of attention to. Finally, the results of the other two comparisons show that television commercials are 'consumed' significantly less often when confronted with them (item h). Comparing 'reading thoroughly' (item i) with listening to or watching commercials, it shows that this kind of print behaviour is done significantly less often. The question of course is, whether these items have the same meaning.

4.3 Evaluation of advertising

A second central concept of this dissertation is 'evaluation of advertising', which means the attitudes people have towards advertising in the medium they use. This attitude (i.e. the degree of liking or disliking advertising in a certain medium) is expected to be closely related to the evaluative beliefs people hold with respect to advertising, for example 'Newspaper advertising provides me with useful information about bargains' or 'I think, magazine advertisements are funny'.

Based on the meta-analysis, different kinds of beliefs were distinguished: beliefs about negative aspects of advertising (irritation) and beliefs about positive aspects of advertising. These positive beliefs refer to functions of advertising for the consumer in terms of information they provide or entertaining qualities. Ten belief statements were presented to the respondents⁷ with the question whether they agree or disagree with these statements (five-point scale; see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Ten belief statements (average scores)⁸

items:	NP	MA	RA	TV
(a) NP/MA/RA/TV advertising provides me with useful information about bargains	3.49	3.04	2.45	2.35
(b) For me, NP/MA/RA/TV advertising is funny	2.74	2.68	2.36	2.32
(c) NP/MA/RA/TV advertising provides me with meaningful information about the product use of other consumers	2.48	2.50	2.18	2.10
(d) NP/MA/RA/TV advertising provides me with useful information about new products	3.24	3.37	2.69	2.81
(e) For me, NP/MA/RA/TV advertising is entertaining	2.52	2.49	2.45	2.59
(f) For me, NP/MA/RA/TV advertising appears at inconvenient moments	2.47	2.70	3.10	3.90 *
(g) For me, NP/MA/RA/TV advertising is too 'loud'	2.51	2.68	3.07	3.33
(h) For me, NP/MA/RA/TV advertising has no credibility	2.84	3.00	3.24	3.59
(i) For me, NP/MA/RA/TV advertising is repeated too often	2.92	3.17	3.73	4.15 *
(j) For me, all NP/MA/RA/TV ads are alike	2.80	2.91	3.05	3.29

items a-e are positive and items f-j are negative statements; scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; NP = newspapers, MA = magazines, RA = radio, TV = television; sample size is about 660 respondents per medium, these samples do not differ in terms of background variables (see appendix); * skewness > 1 (see Table A6.3).

Newspaper advertising

This table shows that respondents generally agree with statements about the information function of newspaper advertising: newspaper advertising provides them with useful information about bargains (item a) and new products (item d). On the other hand, respondents disagree with the statements about the entertaining and funny aspects of newspaper advertising (items b and e). The statement that newspaper advertising could provide them with information about the product use of other consumers (item c), was not recognised as a function of newspaper advertising (about 60% disagrees, see Table A6.3 in the appendix). Respondents generally disagree with the negative statements (items f to j). In other words: respondents do *not* believe that newspaper advertising appears at inconvenient moments, is too 'loud', is repeated too often and that all ads are alike. The statements about the absence of credibility in newspaper advertising and repetition of ads received relatively most agreement.

Magazine advertising

Not only advertising in newspapers is appreciated, but also advertising in the other print medium was positively evaluated. Respondents generally agree with the statements that magazine advertising could provide them with useful information about bargains and new products (items a and d), especially with the latter statement. Most respondents generally disagree with the other three positive statements: the social information aspect of magazine advertising (item c) and the two entertaining aspects of magazine advertising (items b and e). Especially the three negative statements about 'inconvenient moments' (item f), 'too loud' (item g) and 'all alike' (item j) are *not* perceived as aspects of magazine advertising. The statement about repetition (item i) is relatively most agreed with, although more than 35% disagrees with this statement. The opinion on 'credibility' (item h) is balanced: the disagreement group is about the same size as the agreement group (see Table A6.3 in the appendix).

Radio advertising

Respondents generally disagree with the positive statements about radio advertising. In other words: radio advertising does not provide them with information about bargains, new products or product use of others, and is not entertaining. On the other hand they are neutral about four of the negative statements, and (strongly) agree with only one of the negative statements, namely that radio advertising is repeated too often. Overall, the average scores on these evaluative statements show that respondents do not have a strong opinion on radio advertising. They generally disagree (a little) with the positive statements and are (on average) fairly 'neutral' about the negative statements, except for the statement that radio advertising is repeated too often. These findings are in line with our results of the qualitative study (study I). This study

showed that the interviewees did not have a strong opinion on radio advertising, and that radio – including commercials – often functions as background medium. These findings are also in line with a Dutch study on media perception (Platform'95, 1998). Radio is mostly perceived as background medium, while some respondents evaluate its advertising as irritating (although not as irritating as television advertising).

Television advertising

Compared to the other three media, television advertising is the least liked. A majority of respondents most strongly disagree with the statements on information about other consumers (item c) and information about bargains (item a; see also the appendix). They also disagree with the statement that television advertising is funny (item b). On the other hand, the respondents mostly agree with the negative statements about the repetitive character of television advertising (item i) and the inconvenient moment at which commercials appear (item f). These two items are the only two items which are skewed (*), meaning that the scores on these items are not normally distributed and concentrated in the positive categories. This confirms our findings of the first study that television irritation is one of the first aspects of advertising that comes in mind. Most of the respondents apparently do not differ in this respect.

Belief structure

To compare the different evaluative beliefs about advertising in the four media, it was first analysed to what extent these opinions form one or more evaluative dimensions. In a first analysis, all statements for all media were included. This factor analysis (Principal Components Analysis, followed by Varimax rotation)⁹ of all 40 items (ten statements per medium type) yielded 11 factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 ($R^2=0.62$). In general, three factors per medium could be distinguished: an irritation factor, an information factor and an entertainment factor (it was found that only the information and entertainment items for newspaper advertising loaded on one factor). The irritation factor consists of the beliefs '... inconvenient moments', '... too loud', '... no credibility', '... repeated too often' and '... alike'. The information factor consists of the beliefs '... useful information about bargains', '... product use of others' and '... new products'. The entertainment factor consists of '... funny' and '... entertaining'. These results show the medium specificity of respondents' belief structure. This means that the respondents' evaluation of, for instance, the information function of advertising is different for television and newspapers. Because of these clear results, factor analyses for each medium were performed. The resulting factor matrix of each analysis confirmed the three factors 'irritation', 'information' and 'entertainment' for each of the four media (see Table A6.4 to Table 6.7 in the appendix).

As a final step, summary-scores were computed for each factor by computing the sum of the items loading high (>0.35) on that factor and dividing by the number of items. This resulted in three new variables per medium (Cronbach's alpha of most of these scales was higher than 0.65, the only exception being 'information' and 'entertainment' for newspapers which had values of 0.61 and 0.64, respectively). The average scores on the different belief dimensions are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Average scores on the three belief dimensions

	NP [n=485]	MA [n=482]	RA [n=471]	TV [n=529]
irritation (n=284)	2.66 ^a [^a]	2.85 ^b [^b]	3.22 ^c [^b]	3.65 ^d [^b]
information (n=322)	3.07 ^c [^b]	2.97 ^b [^c]	2.43 ^a [^a]	2.41 ^a [^a]
entertainment (n=340)	2.63 ^d [^a]	2.59 ^c [^a]	2.40 ^a [^a]	2.46 ^b [^a]

scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; a,b,c,d: cells with a different letter differ significantly from each other (first letter = row wise comparison, second letter [] = column wise comparison; Paired Samples T-test, missing cases are list wise excluded, p<0.05).

This table shows that, on average, respondents believe that broadcast advertising is more irritating and less informative, and (slightly) less entertaining than print advertising. A column wise comparison of this table shows that the highest scores for television and radio are for the dimension irritation. The highest scores for newspapers and magazines are for the dimension information. The fact that information (and to a lesser extent entertainment) is associated with print advertising and irritation with broadcast advertising was also found in other studies (see Chapter 2).

One of the explanations of these differences is the extent to which advertising is perceived as disturbing the expectations with respect to medium use. The previously mentioned study on media perception (Platform'95, 1998), showed – inter alia – that newspapers are perceived as sources of information (news), while television is mostly used for transformational reasons (entertainment, relaxation, escape from reality). This study also showed that print advertising is perceived as providing information, while television advertising highly scores on irritation. Advertising in newspapers is possibly perceived as information because of the perception of the medium, and the possibilities to search the medium for this information. Television, however, is used for relaxation. Because television is a display medium, advertising disturbs this relaxing moment, and is thereby probably more perceived as irritating than advertising in other media.

Attitude

Along with these evaluative beliefs, the respondents were asked to what extent they are positive or negative about advertising in the various media (on a five-point scale). The results show that the previous division

of print versus broadcast advertising is also reflected in the respondents' general like or dislike of advertising (attitude). The percentages of respondents who negatively evaluate advertising are for newspapers, magazines, radio and television: 16.1%, 24.8%, 44.5% and 62.1%, respectively. Table 4.8 shows the average attitude per medium. Respondents have on average a negative attitude towards broadcast advertising. Their opinion on print advertising on the other hand, is more positive. These differences are significant.

Table 4.8: Attitude towards advertising (average scores)

	newspaper (n=1029)	magazine (n=1004)	radio (n=994)	television (n=1062)
positive/negative about ... advertising	3.56 ^d	3.35 ^c	2.84 ^b	2.42 ^a

scale; 1 = very negative, 5 = very positive; this attitude question is asked to all respondents (CATI); a,b,c,d = cells with different letter differ significantly from each other (Paired Samples T-test, missing cases are excluded list wise (n=934, p<0.05) (skewness<1).

As was described in the previous chapter, the evaluative beliefs about advertising are expected to be closely connected with people's general evaluation of advertising in that medium. These relationships between the belief dimensions, attitude, and other variables are more closely analysed in the next chapter.

4.4 Conclusion

Three key elements were discussed in this chapter about the perception of advertising use and evaluation of advertising. First, it appeared difficult for the respondents to recall their behaviour with respect to advertising. Second, respondents generally overestimated their amount of medium use. The question is whether they also overestimated their advertising use. Third, respondents perceive their use and evaluation of advertising differently for print and broadcast media. Print is more positively evaluated in terms of information, and more actively used in terms of selection, (non-) avoidance and attention. On the contrary, television advertising is less positively evaluated, more associated with irritation, and more often avoided than radio advertising. Radio advertising is perceived more so than the other media as part of the background, which is poorly attended to.

Difficulty

During the in-depth interviews of the first study, it became clear that it was difficult for the interviewees to describe their advertising use, especially their use of radio and print advertising. It also became clear that advertising behaviour was closely connected with the interviewees' opinions on advertising ('beliefs') and their evaluation of the function of advertising in that particular medium, which were easier for them to talk

about. In the subsequent survey (study II), not only general advertising behaviour was measured but a more specific estimation of the amount of advertising noted as well. To aid this latter estimation, the respondents' exposure to advertising was clarified by asking questions about the last time these respondents used the medium. Results show a substantial number of 'don't know' answers, which indicates a difficulty in answering this question. It also indicates the difficulty in memorising and visualising the last time of medium use, and more specifically the amount of advertising the respondents noted.

Estimation of use

The respondents spent quite a long time reading their newspaper, their magazine, listening to the radio and watching television. As expected, the last time estimations are less subject to overestimation than the indication of the time they normally (claim to) use these media. Compared with the Dutch Time Budget Survey (SCP, 1996), the respondents overestimated their use of print and radio.

Respondents who used the medium for at least one minute, were asked to estimate the number of advertisements they noted. Results showed that print advertisements were more noted than broadcast commercials, also when corrected for duration of medium use. It was also shown that only the estimation of broadcast commercials was (highly) correlated with duration of use. This difference probably reflects different calculation strategies the respondents could have used to estimate the number of commercials. For broadcast media, respondents could have deduced the number of commercials by means of the estimated number of breaks (and thus commercials) in a hour. The number of print advertisements, however, depends on positions in the specific issue instead of duration of use.

The estimation of the percentage of advertisements that draw the respondent's attention also shows a difference between print and broadcast. More print advertisements are estimated to have drawn attention than broadcast commercials. This difference probably reflects the respondent's willingness to pay attention to print advertising rather than the technical possibilities of broadcast media to attract attention. Moreover, radio and television function most of the time as 'wallpaper'. The programs as well as commercials are possibly perceived as a continuous flow, which can be ignored by paying less attention to it.

Advertising use and evaluation

The first study already showed that respondents say they avoid television commercials most of the time, by zapping or leaving the room. Sometimes television commercials were watched, especially when they were funny or relevant. These findings were confirmed by the second study, in which respondents were asked to indicate how often they performed certain types of behaviour. Moreover, television advertising is

most negatively evaluated of the four media, and on average more associated with irritation.

Avoiding newspaper advertising by means of immediately skipping the advertisement, appeared to be done more often than avoiding broadcast advertising (study II). The first study showed however that newspaper advertising is not perceived as an unwanted confrontation, and is therefore rarely avoided. Moreover, both studies showed that newspaper advertisements are sometimes read and more often paid attention to. The indication of these findings is that respondents probably perceive their print advertising use as more active than their broadcast advertising use. Print advertising is more avoid, selected and paid more attention to than broadcast advertising.

Television and newspaper advertising not only differ most in terms of use, but in terms of evaluation as well. Newspaper advertising is evaluated as most positive, while television advertising is seen as most negative (attitude). Moreover, respondents evaluate newspaper advertising as most informative and least irritating. On the other hand, television advertising has the highest average score on irritation, and the lowest on information.

The interviews in the first study showed that radio and magazine advertising are perceived as part of medium use. Radio commercials are hardly noticed because of the secondary use of the medium itself (as background noise). This finding explains why the respondents of the second study claim to rarely avoid radio commercials and to pay any attention to them infrequently. When confronted with commercials while listening to the radio, respondents will on average 'sometimes' listen to them. Results of the second study with respect to general magazine advertising use, show that advertisements are on average sometimes skipped, sometimes read, and sometimes paid attention to. Compared with the other media, magazine use is said to be very diverse in terms of motives and patterns of use (McQuail, 1989; Platform'95, 1998). Since the first study showed that magazine advertising is perceived (and used) as a part of its content, the diversity of medium use could be reflected in use of its advertising content.

To sum up

The aim of this chapter was to answer two research questions. First, the question 'How do people (claim to) use advertising?' was posed. The words 'claim to' were added to this question to underline the fact that self-reported or perceived behaviour is measured instead of electronic measurement or observation of behaviour. In general, people are more willing to pay more attention to print advertising than broadcast advertising. Particularly radio commercials are ignored and perceived as part of the background – or wallpaper – function of the medium itself.

The second research question refers to the beliefs and attitudes of people with respect to advertising, namely: 'How do people evaluate advertising in the media they use?'. The division in print and broadcast

media is also shown in the evaluation of advertising. Print advertising is evaluated more as information, while broadcast advertising (especially television) is perceived by most respondents as negative and irritating.

This chapter also aimed to discuss the differences between the four media (intermedia comparison). As was expected on the basis of pacing differences, use as well as evaluation of advertising differ in print and broadcast media. As was mentioned throughout this chapter, technical differences as well as differences in habits of media use and motives of use were reflected in advertising use, evaluation of beliefs and evaluation of advertising in general (attitude). In the next chapter, these concepts will be further explained by relating them to each other, to medium use and to demographics.

Notes chapter 4

- 1 The observation that it was difficult for the interviewees to talk about their magazine reading behaviour was also found in the study of Hermes (1993) on reading women magazines.
- 2 A consequence of the method of data gathering is the possibility that different modes could cause differences in results. T-tests showed that only 'last time duration of newspaper use' and 'last time duration of television use' were significantly influenced by method ($t(600)=-4.44$, $p=0.00$ and $t(626)=-2.55$, $p=0.01$, respectively). When answered by means of the mail questionnaire, average duration of last time use appeared higher. This difference had no effect on the presented results.
- 3 The Time Budget figures are measured by means of a diary in which was noted during a week in October how much time was spent on a lot of activities ($n=3000$) (Faasse & Van Meerem, 1997).
- 4 Part of the telephone interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed by means of computer assisted interaction coding. The questions about the estimation of ads noted appeared to be one of the difficult questions, since a lot of extra interactions – meaning extra questions or explanations – took place between the interviewer and the respondent (Vander Zouwen & Dijkstra, 1996).
- 5 This study was published in the fall of 1997, and therefore not included in the meta-analysis of Chapter 2.
- 6 Only a few mode differences occurred. It was shown for item g (Magazine) that respondents completing the phone questionnaire paid on average more attention to magazine advertising than those completing the mail questionnaire ($t(547)=3.62$, $p=0.00$). The opposite was the case for item g (Radio) and item h (Television). The mail respondents scored on average higher than phone respondents ($t(524)=3.44$, $p=0.00$ and $t(644)=-3.72$, $p=0.00$, respectively). These differences had no effect on the presented results.
- 7 A restriction to ten statements was made for pragmatic reasons, namely the length of the CATI questionnaire. These ten statements were first tested in a pilot study (see Chapter 3).
- 8 Significant mode differences appeared for only 2 of the 40 belief statements: the average score on items i for radio and television advertising appeared higher when interviewed by phone.
- 9 All factor analyses in this dissertation are based on the Principal Component Analysis, followed by a Varimax rotation. The aim of these analyses is to search for the best summary variables of various items to be used in further analysis (data reduction). The advantage of PCA with Varimax rotation is that different components are not correlated and thereby do not explain part of the variance of the other components (Knippenberg & Siero, 1994). Another advantage of Varimax is that different variables will be more univocally ascribed to a factor (Sikkel, 1995).

