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The Effects of Congruency in Online Advertising on Swedish Consumers

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ABSTRACT

- Title:** The Effects of Congruency in Online Advertising on Swedish Consumers
- Subject:** International Marketing, Master thesis, 15 ECTS
- Author:** Elvan Cintosun
- Tutor:** Erik Hunter
- Keywords:** Advertising, online advertising, banner, congruency, congruent, incongruent, recall, recognition, attitude towards the web page, attitude towards the brand.
- Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to investigate how thematic congruence, between the online advertising and the web site, affects brand recognition, brand recall and attitude towards the brand and web site of Swedish consumers. In addition, the effect of gender differences on thematic congruence of Swedish consumers has been analyzed.
- Method:** To answer the purpose, a mixed method has been used, by collecting quantitative data from an experiment conducted on 90 participants, and qualitative data from a follow-up interview conducted on 18 respondents.
- Conclusion:** The study has shown that advertising congruency has effects on both advertising processing and advertisement effectiveness categories. In addition, the importance of gender differences in advertising congruency has been shown in this study.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction, in addition to the rising importance of the internet, various studies concerning the influence of the advertising context on the advertising itself will be introduced. Next, the research problem will be discussed which will be followed by the purpose of this study. Last, limitations regarding the study will be presented. In order to give a clear understanding about this study to the reader, important definitions have been given in the beginning of this chapter. In

1.1 Definitions

Congruency is defined as whether or not the advertiser's focal product category is consistent with the web pages focal product category (Moore, Stammerjohan, & Coulter, 2005). *Congruency* and *congruity* have been used as synonyms in this study.

In *recognition* the brand is recalled aided by a stimuli, such as advertising or packaging; a stimuli is present to enhance memory.

Choosing the relevant brand name among a variety of brands is recognition (e.g. Question: Which of the following brands did you consume in the past seven days? Coca Cola, Pepsi, Sprite, Fanta? Answer: Sprite).

Recall is defined in this study as independent recollection of the brand.

Remembering the brand name of a given product category is recall (e.g. Question: What is the first automobile brand which comes into your mind? Answer: BMW).

Attitude towards the brand is defined here as "an individual's internal evaluation of a branded product" (Burns & Bush, 1999; Mitchell & Olson, 1981, p. 318).

Attitude towards the web page "an individual's internal evaluation of a web site" (ibid).

1.2 Background

Advertisers base their media placement decisions mostly on three factors; the target audience which is the composition of people which are exposed to the advertising, reach which is the number of people that will be exposed to the advertisement, and the cost of placing the advertisement (Surmanek, 1995). Media planner use different models concerning reach, target audience, cost in order to calculate the optimal balance between expenses and the size of the target group that will be reached (Rossiter & Danaher, 1998). In other words, advertisers try to spend their media budgets as efficient and selective as possible while choosing where to place their messages.

"The size and composition of the audience attracted by a medium vehicle are usually referred to as the quantitative impact of the medium context of the advertisement."(Moorman, 2003, p.1). In addition to this quantitative impact, medium vehicles allow an audience to see an advertisement. Furthermore, media vehicles have an influence on how the advertisement will affect the audience (ibid). Many studies conducted in conventional media have shown that not only the message itself but also the way how it is processed is affected by the context the advertisement is presented(Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2008). Indeed, it has been shown that the same message, i.e. an

identical message, can have different effects depending on the context it is presented (Chaiken & Stangor, 1987; Cooper & Croyle, 1984). In other words, it is generally accepted that "the same source delivering the same message to the same audience on separate occasions might produce different effects depending on the differing programming or editorial contexts in which the message appears" (Norris & Coleman, 1992, p. 38). The qualitative impact of the medium context of the advertisement, on the other hand, is described as "the influence that the medium context can have on the effects of the embedded advertisements" (Lynch & Stipp, 1999, p. 38). It is commonly agreed that advertisement placement context can have a quantitative as well as a qualitative impact. Two opposing statements referring to the effect of context and congruency in advertisement do exist. On one hand, congruent advertisements may catch people's attention since the topic of the advertisement is already in their mind (Yi, 1990b); on the other hand, incongruent advertisements might attract more attention since they stand out and might be more visible (Moorman, 2003)(New, 1991 in Moorman, Neijens, Smit, 2002).

The first paradigm is based on the notion of priming and argues that consistency between an advertisement and its context, i.e. congruent advertisements, have a more positive outcome on advertising effects (Furnham, Gunter, & Richardson, 2002; Gunter, Baluch, Duffy, & Furnham, 2002). The main argument of this paradigm is that advertising is due to its context already made accessible and can therefore "be stored at the intersection of a greater number of classificatory features, making information easier to locate in memory" (Lambert, 1980, p. 38).

The second paradigm predicts that advertisements will performance better when they are presented in a contrasting environment, i.e. when they are incongruent, due to cognitive interference. The main argument of this paradigm is that the similarity between the context and the advertisement causes a 'meltdown' effect. This means that elements of the context and the advertisement merge together. The result is impaired advertising effects (Furnham, *et al.*, 2002; Gunter, *et al.*, 2002). Even though little research, whose results were consistent with each other, has been published on the effects of congruent and incongruent advertisements, media planners often use congruent advertising.

Even though there have been various studies in the subject of qualitative impact, the question of how context influences advertising effects has not been given a clear answer yet.

1.3 Problem Discussion

It is commonly agreed that even if factors like audience characteristics and advertisement design, are held constant, differences in the media context of advertisements may influence its effects (Moorman, Neijens, & Smit, 2002). Since media planner often use congruent media planning (*ibid*), it can be assumed that according to them, thematic congruence has a positive influence on advertising effects. However, this assumption is mostly based on intuition, since most conducted studies showed contradicting results.

The popularity of the World Wide Web is increasing, which has made it an attractive medium for advertising; 13% of overall media spending in 2010 is expected to be accounted in internet (Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2008). According to the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) Internet Advertising Revenue Report the annual internet advertising revenues of the US have been a total of \$23.4 billion in 2008. The market showed 10.6% growth compared to former year (IAB, 2009).

Since the amount of advertising in internet is increasing, it has become important for advertisers to maximize their revenue by optimizing the placement of these advertisements (Kumar, Dawande, & Mookerjee, 2007) e.g. by choosing the most effective web pages to place their advertisements. In addition, online advertising is a significant and often only source of income for many Internet-based organizations (Amiri & Menon, 2006). The Internet also gives advertisers the opportunity to track consumers via cookies, and therefore, also allows them to decide which consumer to show which advertising at what time. "The flexibility and ease of customization of message and advertisements on the internet leads to increased opportunity for very narrow targeting tactics." (Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2008, p. 28). Although internet advertising options have become more diverse through the past several years, banner advertisements are still one of the major advertising formats with an investment ratio of 21% in 2008 (IAB, 2009).

Even though congruency is an interesting topic for researchers and has often been the focus of studies, just a few studies exist which focus on internet as a medium. Most studies regarding advertising congruency have been done for the television medium (Horn & McEwen, 1977; Moorman, *et al.*, 2002).

Many studies conducted in this subject have focused on the effects of advertisement effects in order to enhance advertising effectiveness. Direct response measures such as click-through rates or more traditional brand measures such as advertising recall, attitude towards the ad or attitude towards the brand have been used by researches investigating the effects of online advertising (Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2008). Some studies focused on advertising processing categories, which measure indicating respondents' immediate reactions to the advertisement such as attention, recall or attitude towards the commercial (Furnham, Gunter, & Walsh, 1998; Gunter, *et al.*, 2002; Horn & McEwen, 1977; Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989; Yi, 1990b). Others focused on advertisement effectiveness categories, which measure indicating what consumers eventually feel, think, and do with regard to the brand, product or service such as attitude toward the brand or product or intention to purchase the advertised product (Yi, 1990a, 1990b; Shamdasani *et al.*, 2001). Learning, memory, recall and recognition are common dependent variables of effectiveness measures (Stewart, Furse, & Kozak, 1983). According to Bruner and Kumar (2000) it is possible to transfer advertising measurement effects which were observed in the traditional media to the dynamic internet environment. Advertising processing categories can be related to the short-term effects of advertisements while advertisement effectiveness categories can be related to the long-term effects of advertisement. Since the importance of short- (Bemmaor & Mouchoux, 1991; Bendixen, 1993; Moschis & Moore, 1982) and long-term effects (Bendixen, 1993; Lodish, *et al.*, 1995; Mela, Gupta, & Lehmann, 1997; Moschis & Moore, 1982) of advertisements have been long since a topic of debate among researchers, it is essential for this study to cover both type of effects i.e. recognition, recall, and attitude towards the brand and web page.

It is commonly agreed that gender differences have different effects on processing measures as well as effectiveness measures. Several studies indicate that women and man not only may use significantly different processing strategies but also prefer to process different kinds of advertisement claims (Darley & Smith, 1995; Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran, 1991). The Selectivity Hypothesis (Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1991) argues that men are classified as heuristic processors while women are portrayed as comprehensive processors. These kind of processing differences between the two genders are likely to influence product evaluation and judgment (Putrevu, 2001) such as showing varying levels of salience to product attributes; different usage of advertised product information when rendering judgment or exhibiting different threshold levels for elaborate

processing of messages. Women, on the other hand, are elaborate processors and focus more on providing a lot of product-related information (Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1991). Consequently, it is expected that congruent or incongruent advertisements will affect males and females differently.

In order to achieve success in advertising communications, understanding cultural differences is considered essential; especially if the communication takes place in the World Wide Web. Consumers become accustomed to the value systems, beliefs, and perception processes of the culture they grow up in. This affects their response to advertising messages. Consumers respond to advertising messages which meet their cultural values and norms. As a consequence, the cultural characteristics and social values of the target audience can limit their choice of advertising themes (Samiee & Jeong, 1994). According to Donthu (1998) there are many cross-country differences in recall of and attitude toward advertising. Therefore, the outcome of advertising congruency may differ among cultures.

1.3.1 Previous Research on the Topic

Since the early 1960s, various studies concerning the influence of the qualitative impact of the medium context from the advertisement on advertising effectiveness have been conducted. However, these studies did not come to an agreement about the outcomes of advertising congruency.

Most studies conducted in the subject of advertising congruency focused on attention, recall or attitude towards the commercial (Furnham, *et al.*, 1998; Gunter, *et al.*, 2002; Horn & McEwen, 1977; Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989; Yi, 1990b), and on attitude toward the brand or product or intention to purchase the advertised product (Yi, 1990a, 1990b; Shamdasani *et al.*, 2001). The other three variables which have been researched most in the relationship to congruency are valence, intensity and psychological responses. Valence is the positive or negative direction of the given response. It is assumed that valence carries over from the context to the advertisement, which influences advertisement effects in the direction of the valence, i.e. positive or negative (Goldberg & Gorn, 1987; Murry, Lastovicka, & Singh, 1992). Intensity is the strength of the response and is divided into two main schools. The negative school forecasts that more intensity has a lowering effect on advertising effectiveness whereas the positive school predicts intensity increases advertising effectiveness (Kennedy, 1971; Norris & Colman, 1993; Pavelchak, Antil, & Munch, 1988). The individual and subjective mental feedbacks that consumers experience right after being exposed to a medium content is called psychological response. Involvement, liking and feelings are the three main categories of psychological responses. (Keith S Coulter & Sewall, 1995; Norris & Coleman, 1992; Yi, 1990a).

Walstra and Nelissen (1992; in Moorman, 2003) found that congruent advertisement in magazines, in other words when the product advertised for is in the same product category as to magazine the advertisement is printed, leads to better recall. Moorman, Neijens and Smit (2002) found in their study, which was conducted in the same medium, that thematically congruent advertisements were recognized in 80%, while incongruent advertisements were recognized in only 53% of the cases. The results of this study also showed no significant interaction effects between psychological responses and thematic congruence on advertising memory. On the other hand, Horn and McEwen (1977) found no effect of thematic congruency on recall. Their research focused on the effects

between the content of advertising and its environment, on memory, in magazines. According to their research, advertisements are not recalled poorer or better depending on congruency.

Kaid and Chanslor (1992) observed in their study, when general stylistic congruence between the television program and correlated advertisement exists, i.e. political television commercials, that respondents have a higher opinion of the candidate and that they are more likely to vote for him or her.

In addition, another experiment conducted by Bello, Pitts and Etzel (1983) in Mooreman (2003) showed that men have more favorable attitude towards the product and purchase intention, when they were exposed to sexually controversial advertisements rather than to non-controversial advertisements during a sexually controversial program. Furnham *et al.* (2002) found contradicting results to these studies. According to Furnham *et al.* (2002), incongruent advertisements in television lead to better recall than congruent advertisements.

Studies conducted in the subject of context not only covered the relationship between the product category of the advertising and the medium, but also the editorial context. According to Gunter *et al.* (2000) non-cartoon advertisements which were placed in a cartoon environment lead to better recall than within a cartoon environment. The findings of Furnham, Gunter and Walsh (1998) and Murphy, Cunningham and Wilcox (1979), which conducted a similar study in a humorous versus non-humorous environment, are consistent with the findings of Gunter *et al.* (2000).

Other examinations have focused on spokesperson –advertised product congruity (J. Lynch & Schuler, 1994), advertisement music- advertised product congruity (Hung, 2000; Kellaris, Cox, & Cox, 1993), advertisement picture-advertisement text congruity (Areni & Cox., 1994) congruity between involvement types of advertisement and television programs (Sharma, 2000), an individual's mood – advertisement content congruity (Howard & Barry, 1994; Lord, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2001), and program context – advertised product congruity (DePelsmacker, Geuens, & Anckaert, 2002; Furnham, *et al.*, 2002; Furnham, *et al.*, 1998; Horn & McEwen, 1977).

According to Yi (1990a, 1990b) brand evaluations and intention to purchase does not depend on advertising congruency. Yi (1990a, 1990b) argued that attitude toward the brand or product and purchase intention depends on the structure of the given information and the context of the advertisement. In the first experiment of Yi (1990a), subjects were asked first to read an article about either fuel economy or safety. After that, an advertisement emphasizing the large size of a car brand was shown to the subjects. The results showed that consumers' evaluation was guided by the article they had read earlier; in other words, the previous given information determined, i.e. the article, whether the type of product information given in the advertisement was perceived as positive or negative. Other experiments, conducted by Yi (1990b), emphasized these findings. In the subsequent experiments (1990b), an PC advertisement was placed in a magazine that primed a PC either positive or negative. These targeted advertisement showed that cognitive priming has an influence on attitude toward the brand or product and purchase intention.

Many researches in the fields of advertising, psychology, and consumer behavior have shown that banner advertisement characteristics and the context of the web page in which the advertisement is placed, have an influence on the web surfers' behavior and attitudes (Cho, Lee, & Tharp, 2001; Dahlen, 2001; Dou, Linn, & Yang, 2001; Shamdasani, Stanaland, & Tan, 2001; Sherman & Deighton, 2001). Moore *et al.* (2005) argue that “incongruity has a more favorable effect on recall

and recognition, whereas congruity has a more favorable effect on attitudes” in internet advertisements (Moore *et al.*, 2005, p.71); however, their study focused more on visual congruency of banners than the context. On the contrary, Yaveroglu and Donthu’s (2008) findings conflict with the findings of Moore *et al.* (2005). Yaveroglu and Donthu (2008) argue that congruent advertisements lead to higher brand name recall, and that repetition is needed to achieve the same result with incongruent advertisements. Their study’s main focus is on alternative advertising repetition which could improve the effectiveness of banners. Shamdasani, Stanaland and Tan (2001) have reported similar findings to Yaveroglu and Donthu (2008). In this study banners for a car advertisement had a performance when placed in a congruent environment, i.e. on an internet site about cars, than placed on an incongruent web site. Shamdasani *et al.* (2001) reported better attitude towards the brand and purchase intention scores for banners placed on congruent Internet sites.

1.3.2 Concluded Research Gap and Critique of Previous Studies

Although many studies regarding the effects of congruent and incongruent advertisements have been conducted, it seems researcher did not come to a common conclusion. The results of these studies seem not to be able to be generalized since many of these studies contradict with each other. That may be caused by the different methods they used e.g. field experiments, real-life observations, surveys; or that they were conducted in different mediums. The results of one editorial environment might not be able to be applicable to another editorial environment since each of these environments have a different way of processing advertising. In other words, consumers process advertisements differently depending on the environment the advertisement occurs (Bezjian-Avery, Calder, & Iacobucci, 1998). The consumer is passive and exposed to product information in traditional advertising. In traditional advertising the presentation is linear. On the other hand, online advertising is interactive and the consumer actively traverses the information (Bezjian-Avery, *et al.*, 1998). “The World Wide Web possesses characteristics such as constant message delivery, audience selectivity, multimedia capacity, measurable effects, global reach, audience controlled advertising exposure, and interactivity, making it an advertising medium as well a customer communications forum and channel of distribution” (Wolin & Korgaonkar, 2003, p. 376). Consequently, it is expected that consumers will show varying beliefs about, attitude towards, and behavior associate with online advertising compared to advertising in other mediums (Wolin & Korgaonkar, 2003).

Given the increasing importance of the World Wide Web in the advertising sector, it is remarkable how little research regarding the internet exist which focus on the effects of advertising congruency. Researchers suggest that congruency has an importance in generating attention, in particular in the internet medium (Putrevu & Lord, 2003; Rodgers, 2003; Sundar & Kalyanaraman, 2004).

Different advertising effects have been researched in many studies. These advertising effects range from advertising processing measures such as attention, recall, and attitude towards the advertisement, to effectiveness measures such as attitude towards the brand or product and purchase intentions (Moorman, 2003). However, in the conducted literature review, no information regarding the effect of different cultures or genders on advertising congruency has been found.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of advertising congruency on Swedish consumers.

This study aims to analyze and understand the effects of advertisement congruency on Swedish internet users' brand recognition, brand recall and attitudes towards the brand and web site and the effect of gender differences. In other words, this study has the goal to investigate how thematic congruence, between the online advertising and the web site, affects brand recognition, brand recall and attitude towards the brand and web site of Swedish consumers and what effect gender differences have on those factors.

In order to reach this goal, an experiment in which consumers will be exposed to congruent or incongruent advertisements will be conducted. Next, it is going to be tested, if in each case, the chosen sample shows stronger or weaker brand attention, brand recall and the attitude towards the brand and the web site. Also, the effect of gender differences will be taken into consideration.

This study's main contribution is to fill an academic literature gap, since little research concerning the internet medium in the subject of advertisement congruency exists, and that the existing findings are not consistent. This study also has a contribution for media planners and advertisers, which can do more effective planning once the effect of advertising congruency on consumers have been discovered. In addition, this study's contribution for web based organizations is that it may add value to their web pages. The contribution for the consumers might be less pollution through advertising clutter.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the problem discussion, the concluded research gap and the critique of previous studies following research questions have been developed;

As stated in the problem discussion, advertising congruency has been the focus of many studies. However, the factors affecting advertising congruency, i.e. what factors effect advertising congruency, has seldom been a topic of research. The aim of *RQ1* is to determine what factors affect consumers' recognition and recall of congruent and incongruent advertisements. Consequently, *RQ1* has been stated as:

RQ1: What factors affect Swedish consumers' recognition and recall of congruent and incongruent banners?

Based on previous researches in this subject, congruent and incongruent advertisements are expected to have different outcomes on attitude towards the brand and web page. *RQ2* aims to determine these outcomes. Therefore, *RQ2* is stated as:

RQ2: How do congruent and incongruent banners affect Swedish consumers' towards the web page?

It is commonly agreed that female and male differ in terms of processing measures as well as effectiveness measures. Consequently, it is expected that congruent or incongruent advertisements will affect males and females differently. *RQ3* aims to identify these differences. As a result, *RQ3* is stated as:

RQ3: Do female and male Swedish consumers differ in terms of advertising congruency? If so, how?

1.6 Delimitations

Firstly, this study focuses only on static banners on web pages and not on other online advertisement formats such as rich media, digital video, sponsorship, keyword search, mailing, classified or lead generation.

Next, this study only focuses on thematic congruency i.e. in which the advertiser's focal product category is consistent or inconsistent with the web site's focal product category. This study does not focus on context congruency such as whether or not the website and/or the advertised product have a humorous or non-humorous content.

Last, this study only focuses on Swedish consumers.

2. THEORETICAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

The theoretical framework is divided into two sections: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework. In the Literature Review, relevant literature to the subject has been reviewed from which the hypotheses have been derived. The Literature Review consists of following headings: Attention and Interest; Brand Attention, Recognition, and Recall; Attitude towards the Brand and Web Page; and Gender Roles. The theory and the hypotheses have been summarized in the Conceptual Framework, as an analytical model.

2.1 Attention and Interest

Attention is the first step of the AIDA model, which is the traditional conceptual model for creating an advertising or marketing communications message. The following steps are interest, desire and action (Hoek, 1999). This model argues that consumer respond to advertisements in a cognitive (i.e. thinking), affective (i.e. feeling) and conative (i.e. doing) sequence (Lamb, Jr.Hair, & McDaniel, 2009). Lamb, Hair and McDaniel (2009, p.407) explain the AIDA model as:

- **A - Attention** : attract the attention of the customer.
- **I - Interest**: raise customer interest by focusing on and demonstrating advantages and benefits
- **D - Desire**: convince customers that they want and desire the product or service and that it will satisfy their needs.
- **A - Action**: lead customers towards taking action and/or purchasing.”

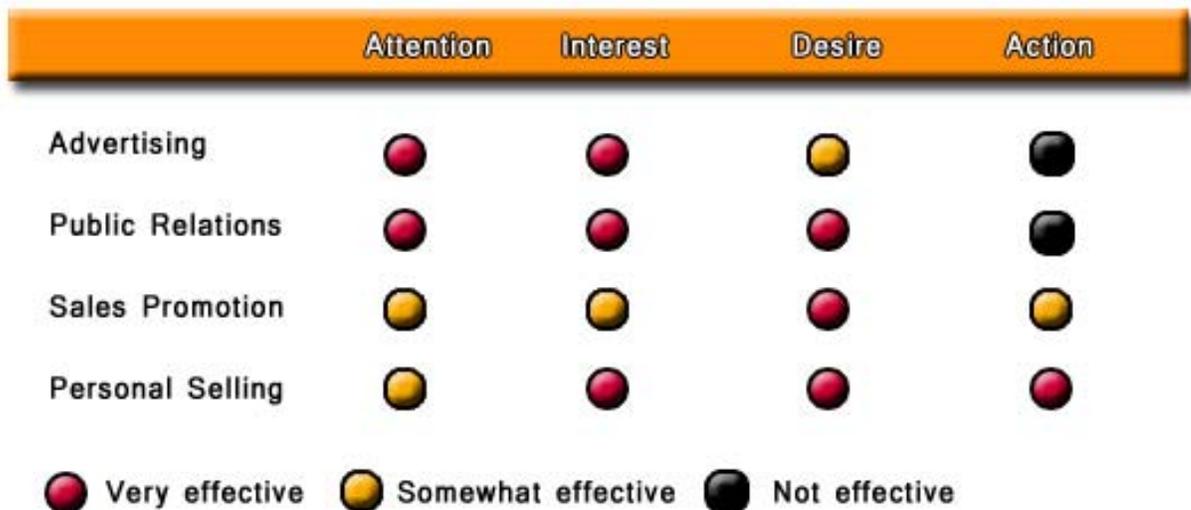


Figure 1: Relationship between the AIDA Model and the Promotional Mix
Source: (Lamb, *et al.*, 2009, p. 408)

As it can be seen in Figure 1, attention and interest play very important roles in advertising.

2.1.1 Attention

Attention is the state of how much mental activity the consumer devotes to a stimulus. It is important for attention to reach a certain level in order to enable information to be perceived and to activate people's senses (Hoyer & Macinnis, 2008).

- **Attention is selective** : Selectivity means that the receiver decided what to focus on when exposed to a large number of stimuli such as products, brand and advertisements. Since all these marketing stimuli cannot be examined simultaneously, the consumer has to determine on which to focus on (ibid).
- **Attention can be divided**: Another feature of attention is that it can be divided. "One can parcel the attentional resources into units and allocate them to one task and some to another" (Hoyer & Macinnis, 2008, p. 75). These attention units can be allocated to meet the demands in the environment. However, also the potential to get distracted, i.e. "when one stimulus pulls the attention from another" (ibid), does exist.

It is important for marketers to understand the characteristics of attention and to enhance consumers' attention to marketing stimuli, because consumers may pay more attention to information and continue with the higher-order processing activities, after perceiving information. Understanding this relationship between attention and perception is essential for marketers (Hoyer & Macinnis, 2008).

2.1.2 Interest

Interest is defined as the degree of concern or psychological involvement in a particular subject or object (Schiefele, 1999).

There are two forms of interest: personal (or individual) interest and situational interest (Hidi, 1990; Renninger, Hidi, & Krapp, 1992). Personal interest is defined as "a relatively stable evaluative orientation toward a certain domain", whereas situational interest is conceptualized as "a temporary state that is elicited by specific features of a text" such as personal relevance (Schiefele, 1999, p. 258). Situational interest, in other words the state of being interested, can be explained as a deep and effortless concentration and as feelings of enjoyment or excitement (Renninger, *et al.*, 1992).

"Feelings like involvement, stimulation or enjoyment are typical of interest. It can be said that there are as many feeling-related valences as there are feelings that are possibly related to an object or topic" (Schiefele, 1999, p. 260).

In feeling-related valence, interest is based more on feelings, whereas in value-related valence, interest is based more on the attribution of personal impressiveness (ibid).

2.2 Brand Recognition and Recall

2.2.1 Brand Recognition

Brand recognition asks the question whether the consumer recognizes elements such as the brand name or product packaging. In order to achieve recognition the consumer must have had prior exposure to the brand. Compared to recognition, brand recall is more demanding of the consumer; the consumer is expected to remember the brand on the mention of a cue, e.g. product category (Heding, Knudtzen, & Bjerre, 2009). “Brand recognition relates to the consumers’ ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue. In other words, brand recognition requires that consumers can correctly discriminate the brand as having been previously seen or heard” (Keller, 1993, p. 3). In order to enhance recognition, a stimulus is required.

In many purchase situations, the consumer gets stimulated to consider the relevancy of category need by being exposed to the product. In other words, the consumer asks the question ‘Do I want this?’ after having seen the product and reminded of the category need. The sequence in the buyer’s mind is that recognition of the brand reminds him or her of the category need. Some brands may fail to be freely recalled, however they can be recognized in the store at the time the purchase decision is made and bought (Percy & Rossiter, 1992).

Consumers seldom include brand names in their shopping list, but prepare the list according to category reminders such as cheese or coffee. Consumers scan the environment for brands they recognize since they rely upon visual reminders of their needs (ibid).

2.2.2 Brand Recall

Recall is defined in this study as independent recollection of the brand (Bower, 2000). There are three different types of recall present;

- **Free Recall:** In free recall a person remembers items of given a list. Free recall is tested by being asked to recall the items in the list in any order.
- **Cued Recall:** In cued recall a person remembers items of given a list with use of cues which act as guides.
- **Serial Recall:** Serial recall is the ability to remember items the order they occurred.

Some researchers argue that it is easier to achieve high recognition scores than recall scores. The reason for that is that recognition requires only the stimulus whereas recall requires more information from the memory (Batra, Myers, & Aaker, 1996). In other words, brand recall is more demanding than brand recognition.

2.2.3 Theories Suggesting that Incongruent Advertisements Have a Positive Effect

Mandler (1982) suggests that in high incongruent situations are considered novel and therefore draw attention. This perspective suggests that consumers are likely to pay increased attention to situations where they have to process incongruent information. Consequently, higher recognition and recall of the information is achieved (Moore, *et al.*, 2005).

In addition, Mandler (1982) suggested that congruent items are predictable and satisfying, since they do not require resolution. As a result of this, congruent items are perceived more favorable than incongruent items, which require resolution. However, congruent items are rather immune from extensive processing. The reason for this is that they are predictable and therefore of limited interest (Tesser, 1978 in Meyers-Levy, Louie, & Curren, 1994). On the other hand, items that are incongruent to some level generate more extensive processing. In contrast with congruent items, incongruent items require resolving of a problem (*ibid*), and therefore are of higher interest.

According to Mandler (1982), incongruent items are interesting and positively valued. Mandler (1982) argues that the problem resolving process of incongruent items lead to even more favorable response than congruent ones (Meyers-Levy, Louie, & Curren, 1994; Tesser, 1978 in Meyers-Levy, Louie, & Curren, 1994).

Finally, Mandler (1982) suggested that extremely incongruent items are unlikely to be resolved. Consequently they lead to negative feelings such as frustration or helplessness. Moreover, extreme incongruities stimulate the negativity of the response due to the extensive processing devoted to it (Meyers-Levy, Louie, & Curren, 1994).

Several studies indicate empirical support for Mandler's (1982) findings. Murphy *et al.* (1979) argues that when humorous commercials are placed in a non-humorous program, they lead to more positive recall. Furthermore, Furnham, Gunter and Richardson (2002), found that the food advertisement placed in a car program was better recalled than the car advertisement placed in the same program. Moore *et al.*'s (2005) findings support Mandler (1982). According to Moore *et al.* (2005) the advertiser pays more attention when advertiser and the web site context are incongruent.

Moreover, several studies indicate that web browser explore web sites more of a gestalt experience. In other words, web browser view web sites more holistically which leads to the result that they fail to separate the advertisement from the web page (Bezjian-Avery, *et al.*, 1998; Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Novak, Hoffman, & Yung, 2000) particularly when the website and the placed advertisement are similar in content.

2.2.4 Theories Suggesting that Congruent Advertisements Have a Positive Effect

Some studies that targeted consumers will show higher recall rates than not targeted consumers (Appel and Blum 1961; Maloney 1961 in Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2008).

“Perception refers the process by which each individual selects, organizes, and evaluates stimuli from the external environment to provide meaningful experiences for him- or herself, whereas selective perception means that people focus on certain features of their environment to the exclusion of the others“ (Mooij, 2009, p. 50). Based on the selective attention explanation, Burke

and Srull (1988, p.57) argue that consumers may “may intentionally process the message in a manner that makes it more resistant to forgetting”, if they are interested in the brand message because of a reason such as purchasing a brand from the product class.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) states that individuals are more likely to follow the central route when motivation to process an advertisement is greater, and to follow the peripheral route when motivation to process an advertisement is smaller. The central route leads to greater cognitive processing and recall for advertisements as well as other product related information.

Likewise, it has been reported that relevant information leads to better recall than irrelevant, more thorough processing of information (Rumelhart and Ortyhony, 1976 in Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2008) as well as more positive behavior and attitude changes (Haberland & Dacin, 1992).

In the light of the discussion stated above, particularly based on the previous researches conducted in the internet medium (Bezjian-Avery, *et al.*, 1998; Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Novak, Hoffman, & Yung, 2000) which argue that consumers fail to separate congruent advertisement from the web page, it is assumed that incongruent advertisements will lead to more positive recognition than congruent advertisements. Therefore, following hypothesis has been developed:

H1a: Consumers will recognize an incongruent banner better than a congruent one.

It is not unusual to see more than one banner on web pages. These banners might be competing brands on content relevant or irrelevant web sites. In line with *H1a*, it is assumed that incongruent banners will be significantly more recalled than the congruent banners, If there are both congruent and incongruent banners present. Consequently, following hypothesis has been developed:

H1b: If there are both congruent and incongruent banners present at the same web page, than the incongruent banners will be significantly more recalled than the congruent ones.

2.3 Attitude towards the Brand or Web Site

Attitude, has been an important topic of marketing research for several years is defined as “the individual's internal evaluation of an object such as a branded product” (Mitchell & Olson, 1981, p. 318). Attitudes can predict consumers’ behavior toward a product or service. (Fishbein 1963; McGuire 1968; Wyer 1974 in Mitchell & Olson, 1981).

A clearer understanding of the factors influencing attitude has to be gained in order to enhance effectiveness (Olson and Mitchell 1975; in Mitchell 1981). This understanding might also affect marketing decision variables such as advertising or price on consumer attitudes. Therefore, a better understanding of attitude could help marketing researchers in measuring the impact of marketing variables. Furthermore, it could aid managers to develop more effective marketing strategies (Mitchell & Olson, 1981).

2.3.1 Attitude towards the Brand

Mandler (1982) argues that congruent information is a more favorable than incongruent information because it fits with consumer's category. Incongruence and problematic of resolving the information are in a positive relationship. This means, as incongruence increases, it gets more difficult to resolve the disparate information. The consequences are negative evaluations.

Several studies have focused on the effects of advertisement congruency on attitude. Researches show that advertising congruency has the strongest effects on advertising processing, whereas the effect on advertising effectiveness is often not significant. Other studies have focused on advertising effects that can be achieved through context. Studies show that context is the strongest factor affecting advertising processing. On the other hand, the effect of advertising effectiveness is again not significant. This can be explained by the fact that processing involves respondents' immediate reactions and therefore is possible to achieve by exposure to a single advertisement, while effectiveness requires multiple advertising exposure (Moore, *et al.*, 2005).

Another research investigated the effects of happy/sad commercials in a happy/sad program in the television medium. The results showed that congruent context leads to more favorable attitude. In other words, happy commercial were placed in a happy program and sad commercial were placed in a sad program resulting in more positive advertising attitudes and greater behavioral intentions (K S Coulter, 1998; Lord, *et al.*, 2001).

Moore *et al.* (2005) also found that congruency has a significant effect on attitudes towards the advertisement. Most of their sample agreed that congruent advertisements are perceived more favorable, while incongruent advertisements lead to less favorable attitude towards the advertisement. Meyers-Levy and Tybout (1989) researched the effects of congruency on attitude towards the advertiser and found that these are more favorable in a congruent context than in an incongruent one (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989).

Russell (2002) investigated the effect of congruency in product placement in the television environment. Russell (2002), found that incongruent product placement is perceived as out of place and therefore leads to more negative attitude towards the brand. Finally, in the context of internet sponsorship, congruent sponsors were perceived as more favorable irrelevant sponsors (Rodgers, 2003).

Based on this literature review, and in line with *H1b*, it is assumed that congruent advertisements lead to poorer recall and therefore to more favorable attitude towards the brand. Consequently, following hypothesis has been developed:

H2: Congruent banners lead to more favorable attitude towards the brand than incongruent ones.

2.3.2 Attitude towards the Web Site

Research over the past decade has shown that consumers show skepticism and persuasion knowledge towards processing advertisements (Campbell, 1995; Friestad & Wright, 1994). Studies point out that particularly in online advertising the mere presence of advertisements have a negative effect on the consumers' attitude towards the website. These finding resulted with Google banning

pop-up advertisements (Moore, *et al.*, 2005). Coulter *et al.* (2001) report that advertisements are perceived negatively due to their role as enabler and counselor. Furthermore, advertisements are particularly perceived as negative, when they appear to attempt seducing the consumer to move away from his or her intended activity. In addition, Becker-Olsen (2003) argue that consumers have more favorable experience when there is no advertisement present on the web page. Consumers may block unwanted contents and interruptions on their search for desired information. Therefore, many internet user install special software on the computers, to block the undesired advertisements (Yuan, Caulkins, & Roehrig, 1998). Moore *et al.* (2005) found that consumers show more positive attitude towards the web site when they go not recognize or recall the advertisement, regardless of advertiser and congruency. Thus, it suggested consumers which are not consciously aware of an advertisement will have a more positive opinion of the web page (*ibid*). According to Moore *et al.* (2005, p.73), “it seems that that advertiser are faced with a trade-off, low attention and more favorable attitudes, or high attention and less favorable attitudes.”

Consistent with the discussion about the effect of advertisement congruency on attention, and in line with *H1b*, it is assumed that congruent advertisements lead to poorer recall and consequently to more favorable attitude towards the web page. Therefore, following hypothesis has been developed:

H3: Congruent banners will lead to more positive attitude towards the website than incongruent ones.

2.4 Gender Roles

Researches show that gender has a significant effect on how female and male behave, process information, and render judgment. The reason for these differences are biological and cultural factors which are further reinforced through the socialization process (Putrevu, 2001).

There have been significant gender differences declared in advertising topics. These are sex-role stereotyping (Klassen, Jasper, & Schwartz, 1993; Knupfer, 1998; Sexton & Haberman, 1974), information processing (Darley & Smith, 1995; Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran, 1991), spokesperson effects (Debevec & Iyer, 1986; Freiden, 1984), advertising response (Bellizzi & Milner, 1991; Prakash, 1992; Severn, Belch, & Belch, 1990), and gender brand positioning (Elliot *et al.*, 1992 in Wolin & Korgaonkar, 2003). Based on these gender oriented gender differences, it can be assumed that gender will also have an effect in advertising media effects. Past research indicates that women and men show significantly different beliefs, attitudes and behavior towards media effect variables (Prakash, 1992).

Researches show that women and men show different attitudes not only towards traditional media advertising but also consumer behavior (Wolin & Korgaonkar, 2003). In general, women exhibit more negative beliefs about and attitude towards the advertising than men (Kempf, Palan, & Laczniak, 1997; Shavitt, Lowery, & Haefner, 1998). Researches also point out that man are more likely to purchase directly through an address or phone number in traditional advertisement (Shavitt, *et al.*, 1998). While males prefer advertising messages indicating dominance and competition, females prefer to see advertising messages that show importance to them and others (Prakash, 1992). The female brain is more symmetrically organized (Saucier & Elias, 2001) which seems giving women memory advantages. Consequently, women are more sensible to visual and

verbal stimuli in advertisements (Edens & McCormick, 2000) than man, whose hemispheres are more specialized (Putrevu, 2001).

Wolin and Korgaonkar's (2003) argue in their research that women and men differ significantly on several dimensions. Men, for example, show more favorable attitude towards the web advertising than women. In addition, several researches show that web usage is growing for both men and women and that both genders make different use of the World Wide Web (Sheehan, 1999). Compared to women, men are more likely to purchase from the internet (Wolin & Korgaonkar, 2003). Also, the reasons for surfing through the internet show differences between men and women. While men surf for functional and entertainment reasons, women prefer to use the internet for shopping reasons.

Moreover, the perception of online advertising differences according to gender (Schlosser, Shavitt, & Kanfer, 1999), such as the use patterns (Weiser, 2000), or online privacy concerns and advertising behaviors (Sheehan, 1999).

As stated in the discussion above, it is commonly agreed that gender has a differentiating effect on processing information, behavior and render judgment. Since the more symmetrically organized brain of females give women memory advantages, it is assumed that women will recall advertisements more than men. Furthermore, as stated in the discussion in 2.2.3. and in line with *H1b*, it is assumed that incongruent advertisements lead to better recall than congruent ones. Therefore, following hypothesis has been developed:

H4a: Incongruent banners will lead to higher recall in women than in men.

Since males are more likely to purchase from the internet and to surf the web not only for functional reasons but also for entertainment reasons, it is expected that men will show more positive attitude towards the web page than women. This assumption is also based on the discussion that women exhibit more negative beliefs about and attitude towards advertising than men (Kempf, et al., 1997; Shavitt, et al., 1998) and the discussion in 2.3.2. where it is argued that advertisements have a negative effect on consumers' attitude towards the website. Consequently, *H4b* is stated as:

H4b: Congruent banners will lead to more positive attitude towards the website for men than for women.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature stated above, a model has been developed to see a more complete picture than it can be seen while analyzing the variables one by one. The aim of this model is to highlighting correlation structures between the variables and to clarify the derived hypotheses and research questions for the reader.

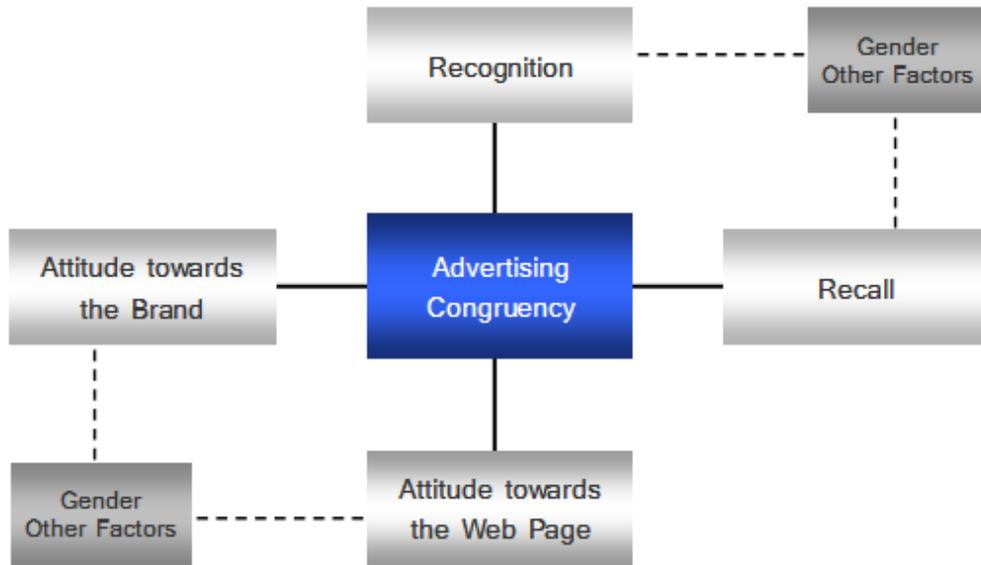


Figure 2: Basic Conceptual Framework of Advertising Congruency

Advertising congruency (blue) is the independent variable of this study. Recognition, recall, attitude towards the web page and brand (white) will be analyzed by a quantitative study. On the other hand, the effects of gender and other factors (grey) will be analyzed and determined via a qualitative study.

The basic model has been developed further in order to cover the correlations between the different hypotheses and research questions.

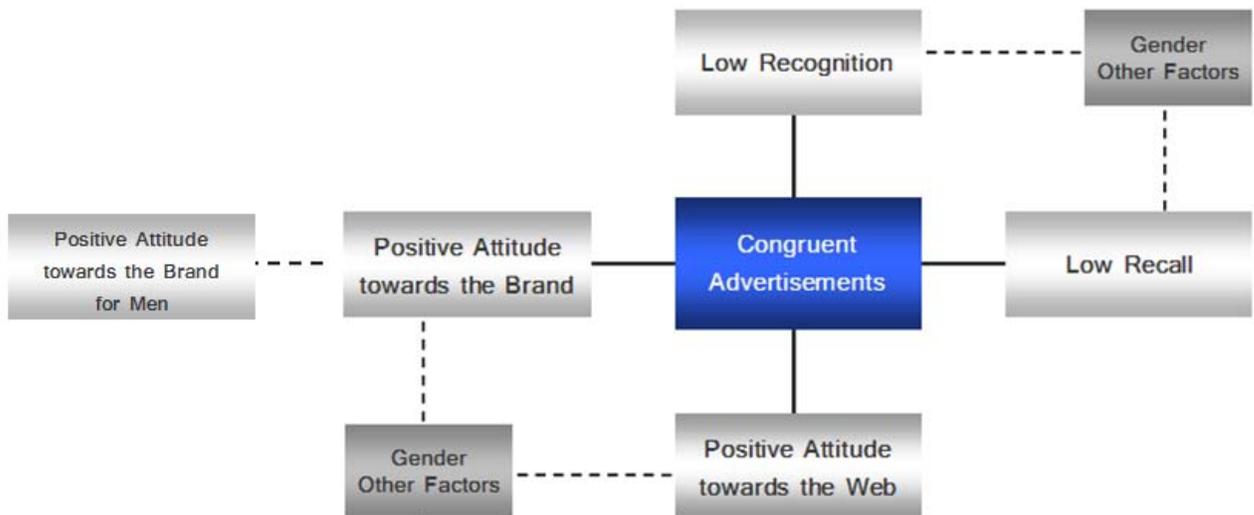


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework for Congruent Advertisements

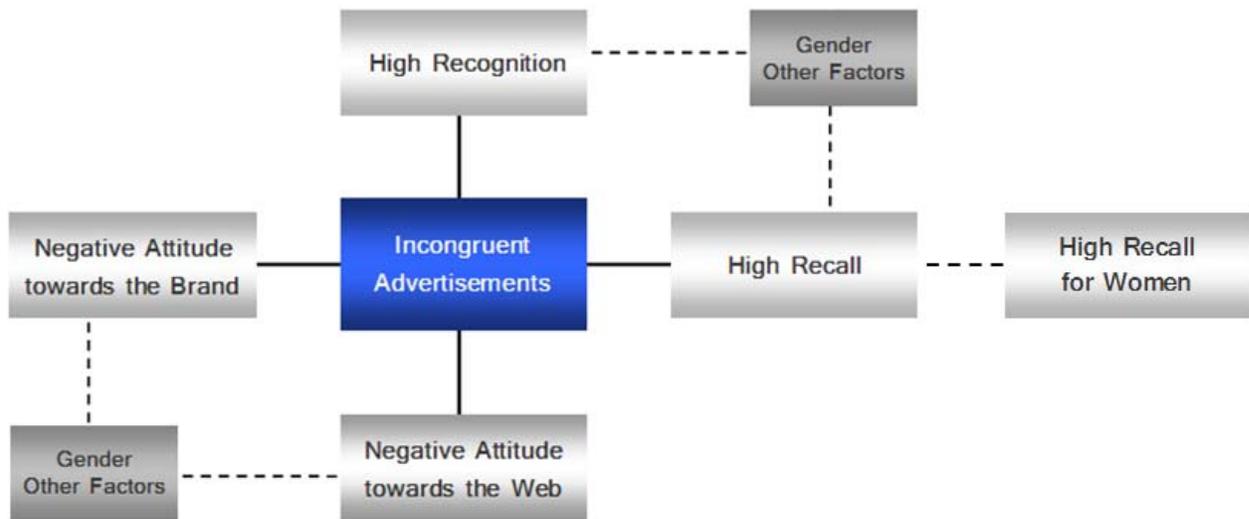


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework for Incongruent Advertisements

Figure 3 covers *H2, H3 and H4b; RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3*.
 Figure 4 covers *H1a, H1b and H4a; RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3*.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter gives an insight about chosen research methods and designs and their justification as well as information about the validity, reliability and generalizability of the study.

3.1 Research Method

In this study both quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used. Quantitative research can be described as “entailing the collection of numerical data and as exhibiting a view of the relationship between theory and research as deductive, a predilection for a natural science approach (and of positivism in particular), and as having an objectivist conception of social reality” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 154) whereas qualitative research focuses the subject’s point of view (Silverman, 2001) and is defined as a research strategy “that usually emphasized words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 28)

Even though collecting quantitative data is relevant since it allows generalization between the variables and provides information regarding the research questions, it is not enough to simply analyze the collected data (Creswell & Clark, 2007). A quantitative model can be developed to see a more complete picture than it can be seen while analyzing the variables one by one. Since complexity and the number of variables are in a positive relation, i.e. complexity increases when the number of variables increases, including all relevant variables in a quantitative framework gives the researcher an overview of the study. Developing such a model, in addition to highlighting correlation structures, gives the researcher the opportunity to examine if these correlation structures are statistically relevant or not (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

Qualitative research gains a more intensive understanding of a phenomenon than can be obtained through qualitative data (Silverman, 2001). Qualitative analysis has been used in order to “structure data using narrative to recognize relationships and in order to produce well grounded conclusions” (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 516).

Research can be divided into the deductive approach and the inductive approach. “Deductive theory represents the commonest view of the nature of the relationship between theory and research.” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 11).

The deductive method is based on collected data explains the reason of why something is happening. In the deductive approach, the hypothesis is derived after reviewing the literature. After, the hypotheses is tested and the outcome is examined. Finally, the theory is modified based on the findings, if necessary (Saunders, *et al.*, 2009). This study was conducted with a deductive approach as well as an inductive approach since in addition to interviews, which were performed in order to get a deeper understanding of the actions of the sample, hypotheses were developed and tested.

Positivism is an epistemological position and argues that “same principles, procedures and ethos” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p.16) can be used in both social and natural sciences. Positivism is phenomenalist, deductive, inductive and objective. Different from positivism interpretivism argues that social and natural sciences need to be analyzed by different principles, procedures and ethos. According to interpretivism social sciences basically differ from natural sciences (*ibid*). The epistemological orientation of quantitative research strategy is considered to be positivism, whereas the

epistemological orientation of qualitative research strategy is considered to be interpretivism (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Since this study uses both research strategies, it bears marks of both interpretivism and positivism.

3.2 Research Design

In this study, a planned experiment has been used as method to gather data in order to test the hypotheses. The basic intent of an experiment is to test the impact of a treatment on an outcome, while controlling all other factors that may influence that outcome. However, an experiment may also identify a sample and generalize the results to a population (Creswell, 2003, pp. 153-154).

The data was collected by both a planned experiment and a semi-structured interview. The experiment was conducted in order to “test the impact of a treatment on an outcome, when one group receives a treatment and the other group does not“ (Creswell, 2003, p. 154). In other words, It was tested what outcome the manipulation of the independent variable has on the dependent variable (Burns & Bush, 1999).

Interviews have been performed in order to gather qualitative data for this study. Interviews have been performed to gain a deeper understanding of the subject’s responds to the questionnaire. Interviews are the most commonly used tool to gather qualitative data. Other than in quantitative interviewing, where the main concern is the generalizability of the results, in qualitative interviewing, there is a great interest in the interviewee’s point of view (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In semi-structured interviews, there are no specific questions; however, the researcher has a list of specific topics which should be covered. In the semi-structured interview the interviewee has a leeway in how to reply (ibid). The interviews have been performed after the questionnaire in the experiment and the subjects were asked about the reasoning for their answers in the questionnaire. It was expected that most subjects might have performed different in the questionnaire and therefore a semi-structured interview has been used as the suitable method for the interview, since it is flexible and as a consequence, gives the interviewer more opportunity to adapt to new situations.

In this study the dependent variables are brand recognition, brand recall and attitude towards the brand and web site, while the independent variable is congruency. The independent variable is the causes changes in the values of the dependent variable; the dependent variable is influenced by the independent variable (Creswell, 2003).

3.3 Sampling

Quantitative research nearly always needs to encounter sample. To be able to generalize the findings of the study the researcher has to choose a representative sample (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In this study a convenient sample has been used. Convenience is an often used sampling method at universities, because it is convenient, has low cost and high accessibility (Aczel & Sounderpandian, 2006).

The population of this research consisted of students at Halmstad University with Swedish nationality. Students have been used in this not only because of the nature of the study but also of students' literacy for the computer and Internet. The choice of nationality as a demographic selection is based on the assumption that customers have different attitudes towards brands in

different countries (Samiee & Jeong, 1994). This population is chosen because the respondents are similar and were expected to have similar attitudes towards products or brands. Also, the communication process is expected to be the same (ibid).

A total of 90 students enrolled at Halmstad University participated in the experiment and were randomly assigned into three groups of each 15 men and 15 women. Stevens (1996, p.72) recommends that “for social science research about 15 subjects per predictor are needed for a reliable equation”. The sample consisted of 45 women (50%) and 45 men (50%) with an average age of 22.3 years.

3.4 Experiment Design

First, in order to determine congruent and incongruent products a pilot study, which was adopted from Norris and Coleman (1992), was performed on 10 male and 10 female students of Halmstad University. Participants were asked to mark those products they relate to the music, which was selected as a topic as interest for university students, from a list with 48 different product types. After that, the same procedure was performed, however this time the participants were asked to mark the products they do not relate to music. The products which got the highest rates were selected as congruent and incongruent products for the experiment. Congruent products were determined as radio, energy drink, nightclub and festival whereas incongruent products were determined as bike shop, restaurant, student housing and hair dresser.

After the congruent and incongruent products were determined, four banners in each category have been designed. The same background color has been used for all eight banners. Also no bright colors or humans have been included in any banner design. The reason for that is that different background colors, use of humans or bright colors might effect attention, recognition or recall and therefore interfere with the results of the study. As a precaution, fiction brand names were developed or existing brand names from the non-Swedish market were used for the products in order to avoid any former knowledge, relation, and attitude towards the brand which might affect the outcome of the study.

Next, three web pages were designed, which had the same music related content, however different banners. The first web page only contained congruent banners i.e. radio, energy drink, nightclub and festival. The second web page only contained incongruent banners i.e. bike shop, restaurant, student housing and hair dresser. The third web page contained two congruent and two incongruent banners i.e. bike shop, restaurant, radio and energy drink. All web pages were designed so that when the page was refreshed, the banners appeared in a random order due to the fact that a fixed order might also have an effect on attention, recognition or recall.

The experiment consisted of three groups: one groups being exposed to congruent advertisement, the other group being exposed to incongruent advertisement, and the last one being exposed to both congruent and incongruent advertisements. Participants of the experiment were asked to surf through the web page for five minutes and afterwards to proceed to the questionnaire.



Figure 5: Screenshot of Experiment 'Congruent Advertisements'



Figure 6: Screenshot of Experiment 'Incongruent Advertisements'

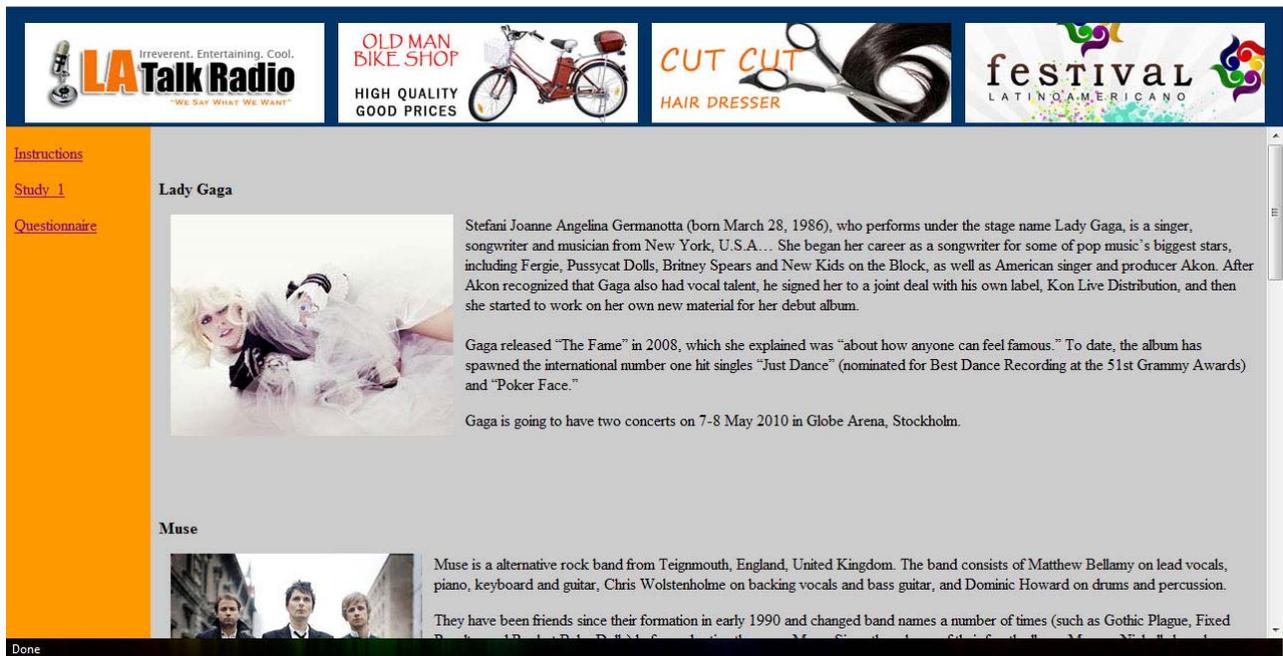


Figure 7: Screenshot of Experiment 'Both Congruent and Incongruent Advertisements'

The questionnaire consisted of each two questions measuring brand recognition and recall, five questions measuring attitude towards brand and four questions measuring attitude towards the web page. The measurement methods used in the questionnaire will be explained further in 3.6.

3.5 Interview Design

First, an interview guide with related themes to the research questions has been developed. Next, a test interview has been performed in order to see whether or not the interview questions have been clear formulated. Also, leading questions have been removed from the interview guide.

Semi-structured interviews were performed on randomly chosen 3 female and 3 male participants of each group; i.e. a total of 18 people (20%) have been interviewed. The interviews have been performed as follow up to the experiment and in the same environment.

The interview aimed to gather a deeper understanding why the subjects did or did not recognize or recall a brand or product and why they did have a positive, negative or neutral attitude towards the brand and attitude towards the web page. In other words, the aim of the interviews was to answer the research questions. Questions regarding the subject's former knowledge about the brand, their interest level in the advertised product type, questions regarding the banner design, special reasons for paying or not paying attentions to the advertisements, reasons for positive or negative attitude towards the web page and brand have been asked. To avoid any missing data ease the analyzing process, all interviews have been recorded and afterwards transcribed (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

3.6 Measurement Methods

Recognition and recall measurement methods were taken over from Norris and Colman (1992, p.40). “Subject’s recall and recognition of the four advertisements were measured with the following four measures:

- Free recall: subjects were asked to write down as much as they could remember about the advertisement including brand name, product and details of the advertisement
- Recognition of products: subjects were asked to try to recognize the six product types from among a total of 48 randomly organized products types
- Cued recall of brand names: the four product types relating to the target advertisements were given, and subjects were asked to remember corresponding brand names
- Recognition of brand names: each brand name was printed beneath the relevant product type among six possible brand names, randomly ordered, and subject’s task was to select the appropriate brand name.“

Free recall and cued recall of product types and names were scored on a three-point scale. Two marks were given for perfectly or virtually correct recall, one mark for non-precise answers and zero points for incorrect answers. The same scale was used in measuring recognition.

A five-point likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) has been used to measure both attitude towards the brand and attitude towards the web page. The five-point rating scale were each scored from one (low) to five (high).

3.7 Data Analysis

Data retrieved from the survey was analyzed through a statistical computer program, Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Factor analysis (FA) through principal component analysis (PCA) has been used in order to reduce the data set into a manageable number of components. Tabachnick and Edell (1996, pp. 662-663) state that “If you are interested in a theoretical solution uncontaminated by unique and error variability, FA is your choice. If on the other hand you want an empirical summary of the data set, PCA is the better choice”. In order to ensure that the PCA/FA could be used as an appropriate method, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Barlett's Test of Sphericity have been conducted. The components produced by the PCA were controlled with a Scree plot. In addition, the components having Eigen values above 1 were kept on the based on the Kaiser criterion. To ease interpretation, factors with less than 0.3 of variance were suppressed (Pallant, 2003). A KMO value of .6 or above is needed to have valid result whereas the Barlett's Test of Sphericity value should be .05 or smaller (ibid). The KMO level has been 0.65, demonstrating that the patterns of correlations were relatively compact. The Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity showed a significant rate of .000. Therefore, using PCA analysis in this study is appropriate. By computing the variables, the number of variables, in the factors with high loadings, have been decreased into four groups. The first group consisted of questions measuring recognition, the second included questions relating recall, the third group was questions regarding items building up the attitude towards the brand and the final group consisted of questions measuring to attitude towards the brand. Following analyses have been conducted according to this grouping.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to compare the variance between the different groups as well as the variability within each of the groups (ibid). In ANOVA analysis “an F ratio is calculated which represents the variance between the groups, divided by the variance within the groups. A large F ratio indicates that there is more variability between the groups (caused by the independent variable), than there is within each group (referred to as the error term)” (Palant, 2003, p.186). A F value higher than 1 indicates more variability (ibid). Since planned comparison is more sensitive in detecting differences, it is better to use this method rather than post-hoc analysis, if one is interested in a subset of the possible comparisons. The results of planned comparison are expressed in t-values which correspond to the square root of the F-value (ibid). Above mentioned tests’ result may get affected by the level of significance, sample size, and the effect size (Hinkle & Wiersma, 1998). If the significance value is less than or equal to .05, then there is a significant difference somewhere among the mean scores on the dependent variable for the three groups (Pallant, 2003). However, since the derived hypotheses are giving a direction, i.e. since they are assuming an specific outcome, in this case it is suitable to use a 1-tailed significance rate, which can be calculated by dividing the 2-tailed through two (ibid).

It is not possible to straightforward analyze qualitative data retrieved from interviews, since the data takes the form of a large corpus of unstructured textual material. In order to investigate if a pattern in the answers of the interviewees exist, the method of coding was used for analyzing the collected qualitative data. Coding is a key process in grounded theory and helps to analyze the qualitative data (Bryman & Bell, 2007). During the process of coding similar concepts have been grouped into categories and irrelevant data have been filtered. The grouping process aims to show connections to the research questions.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity refers to the issue whether or not the relationships which are found between the variables are true relationships (Saunders, *et al.*, 2009), or whether an indicator that is devised to quantify a concept really measures the concept in question (Bryman & Bell, 2007). A quantitative research is valid if the researcher can draw meaningful conclusions from the results to a population (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Whether the results can be trusted and if they are credible is called qualitative validity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). While internal validity is concerned to what degree the change in the dependent variable was actually due to the independent variable, external validity looks at what extent the relationships between the variables can be generalized to the real world (Bryman & Bell, 2007). External validity has been covered under the heading 3.9.

There are several threats which might affect internal validity. Participant dropping during the study is one of these threats (Robson, 2002). To reduce this risk a detailed description of the procedure which is expecting them has been given to the participants. Questionnaires which have not been answered in a proper way were excluded from the study and a new participant was chosen instead of the fault one. Another threat to validity is the ambiguity of casual direction. This means the researcher cannot be certain whether or not the dependent variable is causing effect on the independent variable (ibid). This threat has been minimized by conducting a qualitative interview in order to find out why respondents answered in a certain way to determine whether the relationship is causal. Another risk for decreased validity is the diffusion to treatment, when participants in different experimental groups communicate with each other. This can influence the answers of the group (Creswell, 2003). However, this threat was minimized by encouraging the respondents not to

talk to each other during the experiment. It was pointed out that the researchers were interested in their answers and not the thoughts of their neighbors. Another way of reducing this threat was to keep the different participants as separate as possible.

“Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure of a concept.”(Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 163). In other words, reliability is concerned whether or not the results of the study are in consistent when repeating it several times (Saunders, *et al.*, 2009). According to Robson (2002), there are four threats concerning reliability. These are: subject or participant error, subject or participant bias, observer error, and observer bias.

To reduce the threats to subject or participant error, all experiments and interviews were conducted during a neutral point in time, i.e. daytime.

To minimize participant bias, the answers to the questionnaire and interview was treated anonymous. In addition, the experiment was conducted in a planned setting and also respondents were encouraged not to talk about the experiment to each other. This precaution was to ensure that all respondents answered the questionnaire in the same order, without interference from their neighbors.

The risk for observer error and bias was taken into account when constructing the interviews. To reduce the threat to reliability, the interviewer considered the manner of being objective and avoiding leading questions while conducting the semi-structured interviews (Saunders *et al.*, 2003). The interviews have been recorded, in order to avoid the risk of data loss or interpreting the data differently in time.

In order to prove the variables of the questionnaire are internal consistent Cronbach's alpha coefficient analysis has been performed. In ideal cases the Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale should be above .7. However, it should be noted that Cronbach alpha values are sensitive to the number of items present in the scale. Short scales with less than ten items usually have a Cronbach alpha value of .5. (Pallant, 2003). All variables measured in this study have been short scaled. Therefore the Cronbach alpha values have been .635 for recognition, .673 for recall, .697 for attitude towards the brand and .650 for attitude towards the web page. One item in both attitude towards the brand and web page showed an exceptionally low inter-item value; these item was removed from the study. After conducting both analyses once more, the final Cronbach alpha value of attitude towards the brand raised to .854 while the one of attitude towards the web page rose to .803.

To increase the reliability of the study, whenever possible, questions from previous questionnaires were adapted or created from established theories to reduce errors.

3.9 Generalizability

The generalizability refers to the external validity of the study. In other words, generalizability refers whether the findings of a study are applicable to other settings (Saunders, *et al.*, 2009). In quantitative research, usually one of the main concerns of the researcher usually is research the generalizability of the study, i.e. whether the findings can be generalized outside the limits of the specific context in which the research was conducted. On the other hand, qualitative data is usually not able to be

generalized, since the main aim is not to maximize the reliability and validity of measurement concepts (ibid), however to gain a deeper understanding of a certain subject (Creswell, 2003).

One threat, which might affect the outcome of the study is that the experiment was conducted in a laboratory setting. This threat is referred to as the interaction of setting and treatment (Creswell, 2003). It could be argued that the outcome of this study may have been different if the respondents were asked in a real-life setting. To test the external validity, an additional experiment is needed. This experiment should be conducted in a new, natural setting, to determine if the results the same as the laboratory setting (Burns & Bush, 1999).

4.1.4 Attitude towards the Web Page

Variable	Group	Manipulation	Mean	Sig. Rate		Df	t	F
				2-tailed	1-tailed			
Attitude towards the Web Page	1	Congruent	2.50	0.26	0.13	58	1.147	1.32
	2	Incongruent	2.30					

F(1,58) = 1.32 p = 0.13

Table 4: Empirical Findings of Attitude towards the Web Page

The score for congruent advertisements' is higher, indicating a positive effect for attitude towards the web page. The significant difference for recognition is [F(1,58) 1.32; p=0.13] where F is above the critical value with a rate of 1.32, while the significance level is higher than 0.05 suggesting that there no statistical significant difference is present between the attitude towards the web page of congruent and incongruent advertisements.

Therefore:

H3: Congruent banners will lead to more positive attitude towards the website than incongruent ones.

Hypothesis H3 is accepted

4.1.5 Gender Roles

Variable	Group	Manipulation	Mean	Sig. Rate		Df	t	F
				2-tailed	1-tailed			
Gender Recall	2	Female	1.67	0.00	0.00	22	5.244	27.50
		Male	1.00					

F(1,22) = 27.5 p = 0.00

Table 5: Empirical Findings of Gender Roles / Recall

Female's score is higher than Male's, indicating more positive recall of the advertisements. The significant difference for recognition is [F(1,22) 27.5; p=0.00] where F is above the critical value with a rate of 27.5, while the significance level is lower than 0.05 suggesting that there is statistical significant difference present between the recall of female and male.

Thus:

H4a: Incongruent banners will lead to higher recall in women than in men.

Hypothesis H4a is accepted.

Sample ID	Group	Advertising Type	Gender	Age	Recognition*	Recall*	Attitude towards the	
							Brand**	Web Page**-
2	1	congruent	female	23	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0
14	1	congruent	female	22	2.0	1.0	2.3	1.7
26	1	congruent	female	22	1.0	1.0	2.5	2.7
7	1	congruent	male	21	2.0	-	3.0	3.0
18	1	congruent	male	23	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.7
28	1	congruent	male	24	1.5	-	2.8	4.0
39	2	incongruent	female	21	1.0	-	2.8	2.7
49	2	incongruent	female	24	-	-	2.8	2.0
58	2	incongruent	female	24	1.0	1.0	1.8	2.0
34	2	incongruent	male	22	1.0	1.0	3.8	2.3
42	2	incongruent	male	21	2.0	1.0	1.8	2.7
51	2	incongruent	male	22	2.0	1.0	1.8	2.7
66	3	congruent	female	21	1.5	1.5	1.3	2.3
73	3	congruent	female	22	1.0	1.0	3.8	2.0
84	3	congruent	female	23	1.0	1.0	3.8	2.0
62	3	congruent	male	24	1.5	-	2.0	1.7
76	3	congruent	male	21	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.7
88	3	congruent	male	24	2.0	1.0	2.0	1.7
66	3	incongruent	female	21	2.0	2.0	1.3	2.3
73	3	incongruent	female	22	1.0	1.0	3.8	2.0
84	3	incongruent	female	23	1.0	1.0	3.8	2.0
62	3	incongruent	male	24	1.5	1.5	2.0	1.7
76	3	incongruent	male	21	2.0	1.0	1.3	1.7
88	3	incongruent	male	24	1.5	1.5	2.0	1.7

- * 1 indicates non-precise or poor recall or recognition for brand name, products or advertisement details;
1.5 indicates more precise recall or recognition;
2 indicates correct recall or recognition;
- indicates no or re
- ** 1 - 4 indicates the level of attitude in a descending order.
1 indicates the most positive attitude while 4 indicates the most negative attitude.

Table 7: Summary of Interviewees’ Results of the Experiment

4.2.1 Brand Recognition and Recall

Interest and attention are the main factors affecting brand recognition and recall in both congruent and incongruent advertisements. Need is another factor affecting recognition and recall; however, it is not as strong as interest or attention.

Congruent Advertisements:

“I was very interested in both the advertisements and the website since music is my passion and I am also a very active musician.”
(Male, 23)

“I am not good in remembering names, so I wasn’t able remember any details of the advertisements. But I remember there was for example a radio station. I thought it was a good ad since I was already reading about music.”
(Female, 23)

“Sure, I looked through the advertisements. I always focus on whole content of one page. I like to pay attention to details. Therefore the questionnaire wasn’t a big challenge for me.”

(Male, 24)

"I am not very interested in advertisements so I didn't pay much attention to them."

(Female, 22)

"I don't have a good memory, but I remember that all the banners were related to the web site."

(Male, 21)

"I was surprised by my own performance of remembering the banners. I didn't know that I pay unconsciously so much attention to advertisements"

(Female, 22)

Incongruent Advertisements:

"I remember more details about the bike shop and the hair dresser than for example the radio banner simply because they just got my attention."

(Male, 21)

"I remember that I saw the hair dresser banner in midway reading through the web page. Once I focused on this one I also took a look at the other banners. Afterwards I couldn't remember much about the radio and the festival. I remember the hair dresser and the bike shop more clearly maybe because I need a new hair cut or maybe I am just more interested in them than the other products."

(Female, 21)

"I remember seeing the bike shop ad first. Do I have a special interest in bikes? No, I don't. It just got my attention somehow."

(Male, 21)

"I was surprised, when I saw the questions, how much I remembered about the advertisements, even though I don't remember paying attention to them."

(Female, 21)

"I saw the banners, but I wasn't very interested in them, so I don't remember them clearly."

(Female, 21)

"I remember the advertisements because they caught my attention. However, I am not interested in the advertised products."

(Male, 22)

4.2.2 Attitude towards the Brand and Web Page

Interest and disturbance are the main factors affecting attitude towards the brand and web page for both congruent and incongruent advertisements.

Congruent Advertisements:

“As a musician I liked both the web page and the banners.”

(Male, 23)

”I liked the web page because of its content. I thought the information there was interesting. I didn’t pay much attention to the advertisements. I don’t like them.”

(Female, 22)

“I didn’t like the web page. I am not very interested in music. Don’t have much opinion about the products advertised there. There are ok I suppose, no need to like or dislike them”

(Male, 24)

“I liked the web page. I think it was interesting to read. The banners weren’t too obvious and therefore not disturbing.”

(Female, 22)

“The web site was kind of acceptable, but the advertisements were disturbing. I would have a higher opinion of the web site if there were no advertisements”

(Male, 21)

Incongruent Advertisements:

“I think advertisements are disturbing, that’s why I don’t like them. The web page was ok though.”

(Male, 22)

”The web page was very nice. I didn’t like the advertised products very much, I couldn’t relate to them; they weren’t interesting for me.”

(Female, 24)

”I liked the advertised products since they got my attention and I thought they might be interesting. However, I think other websites with a similar content are better.”

(Male, 21)

”The web page was interesting to read. I didn’t like the advertised products much, since they are not my topic of interest.”

(Female, 21)

“I liked the advertised products. The web page could have a broader content, otherwise its ok.”

(Male, 22)

4.2.3 Gender Roles

Females and males show some similarities and some differences in terms of recognition, recall, attitude towards the brand as well as attitude towards the web page.

While both genders' recognition and recall gets affected by interest and attention, interest is a stronger factor for female than male, while attention is a stronger factor for male than for female. Need is another factor enhancing recognition and recall of female.

Males:

"I remember the advertisements because they caught my attention. However, I am not interested in the advertised products."
(Male, 22)

"Sure, I looked through the advertisements. I always focus on whole content of one page. I like to pay attention to details. Therefore the questionnaire wasn't a big challenge for me."
(Male, 24)

"I remember more details about the bike shop and the hair dresser than for example the radio banner simply because they just got my attention."
(Male, 21)

"I remember seeing the bike shop ad first. Do I have a special interest in bikes? No, I don't. It just got my attention somehow."
(Male, 21)

"I was very interested in both the advertisements and the website since music is my passion and I am also a very active musician."
(Male, 23)

Females:

"I saw the banners, but I wasn't very interested in them, so I don't remember them clearly."
(Female, 21)

"I am not very interested in advertisements so I didn't pay much attention to them."
(Female, 22)

"I remember that I saw the hair dresser banner in midway reading through the web page. Once I focused on this one I also took a look at the other banners. Afterwards I couldn't remember much about the radio and the festival. I remember the hair dresser and the bike shop more clearly maybe because I need a new hair cut or maybe I am just more interested in them than the other products."
(Female, 21)

"I was surprised, when I saw the questions, how much I remembered about the advertisements, even though I don't remember paying attention to them."

(Female, 21)

On the other hand, in attitude towards the brand or web page female and males show no significant difference. Both genders get affected by interest and disturbance.

Males:

"The web site was kind of acceptable, but the advertisements were disturbing. I would have a higher opinion of the web site if there were no advertisements"

(Male, 21)

"I didn't like the web page. I am not very interested in music. Don't have much opinion about the products advertised there. There are ok I suppose, no need to like or dislike them"

(Male, 24)

"I liked the advertised products since they got my attention and I thought they might be interesting. However, I think other websites with a similar content are better."

(Male, 21)

Females:

"I liked the web page. I think it was interesting to read. The banners weren't too obvious and therefore not disturbing."

(Female, 22)

"I liked the web page because of its content. I thought the information there was interesting. I didn't pay much attention to the advertisements. I don't like them."

(Female, 22)

"The web page was very nice. I didn't like the advertised products very much, I couldn't relate to them; they weren't interesting for me."

(Female, 24)

5. ANALYSIS

This chapter first analyzes the hypotheses stated in the frame of reference and after, the answers received from the interviews.

5.1 The Experiment

5.1.1 Brand Recognition

H1a: Consumer will recognize an incongruent banner better than a congruent one.

Hypothesis H1a is rejected.

The mean rate between congruent (mean 1.58) and incongruent (mean 1.53) advertisements did not show, as it was expected, a high difference. Consequently, the F value stayed below 1.0 (F 0.34), which resulted with the rejection of the hypothesis *H1a*.

The findings of this study contradict with those of Mandler (1982), who argued that consumers which are exposed to incongruent information, are more likely to pay increased attention to that information. According to Mandler (1982), this consumers would exhibit high recognition of the provided information. Moreover, several studies demonstrated that when the website and the web advertisement are similar in content, i.e. when they are congruent, web surfers fail to separate the advertisement from the web site (Bezjian-Avery, *et al.*, 1998; Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Novak, *et al.*, 2000).

However, this study's result also contradict with Rumelhart and Ortyhony's (1976, in Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2008) findings, which argue that recognition and recall scores will be higher for relevant information than for irrelevant information, caused by a more thorough information process.

According to the results of *H1a*, neither incongruent, nor congruent advertisements lead to higher recall, which supports the findings of Horn and McEwen (1977). Horn and McEwen (1977) found no effect of thematic congruency on recall. The results of this study also could be explained by the nature of recognition. Percy and Rositter (1992) argue that recognition usually occurs when there is a category need. In other words, recognition of the brand reminds the consumer of the category need. It can be concluded that if there is no need, no recognition will occur.

5.1.2 Brand Recall

H1b: If there are both congruent and incongruent banners present at the same web page, than the incongruent banners will be significantly more recalled than the congruent ones.

Hypothesis H1b is rejected.

The mean rate between congruent (mean 1.19) and incongruent (mean 1.30) advertisements showed, as expected, some difference. The F value stayed above 1.0 (F 1.31), which indicates the acceptance of the hypothesis *H1b*.

This study is consistent with Mandler's (1982) findings, who argued that incongruent information leads to higher attention and therefore to higher recall. The higher recall rate of incongruent advertisements can also be explained by Tesser's (1978 in Meyers-Levy, Louie, & Curren, 1994) findings, who argues that congruent items are predictable and therefore cause limited interest. According to Tesser (1978 in Meyers-Levy, Louie, & Curren, 1994), people exposed to congruent items are immune to a certain degree to extensive processing which supports more extreme evaluative responses. Also Meyers-Levy, Louie and Curren's (1994) study is in line with Tesser (1978 in Meyers-Levy, Louie, & Curren, 1994), which argue that incongruent items form more extensive processing, since people seek meaning in incongruity.

Another explanation for this result could be those web browsers explore a web page more of a gestalt experience, which leads to the result that the advertisement cannot be separated from the web site, especially when the advertisement is congruent (Bezjian-Avery, *et al.*, 1998; Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Novak, *et al.*, 2000).

However, even though incongruent advertisements lead to higher brand recall than congruent advertisements, the difference between the two mean values (1.19 and 1.30) is not big enough to state that incongruent advertisements lead to significant better recall than congruent ones. As a result, hypothesis *H1b* is rejected.

5.1.3 Attitude towards the Brand

H2: Congruent banners lead to more favorable attitude towards the brand than incongruent ones.

Hypothesis H2 is rejected.

The mean rate of congruent (mean 2.18) advertisements was not higher than the rate of incongruent (mean 2.33) advertisements, as it was expected. Consequently, the F value stayed below 1.0 (F 0.95), which resulted with the rejection of the hypothesis *H2*.

This result contradicts with Meyers-Levy and Tybout (1989) and Moore *et al.*'s (2005) studies, who argue that congruent context leads to more favorable attitude. In addition, Mandler (1982) states that congruent information will lead to more favorable attitude, since this information fits with consumer's category schemas. Mandler (1982) also argued that as incongruence in information increases, negative attitude will occur because consumers have more difficulty resolving the different information. Another contradicting study is from Russell (2002), who found that incongruent advertisements lead to more negative attitude since they seem out of place.

This result can also be explained by the fact that advertising effectiveness, such as attitude towards the brand or web site, requires multiple advertising exposures, while advertising processes, such as recognition or recall, involves respondents' immediate reactions toward a single advertisement (Moorman, 2003).

Therefore, hypothesis *H2* is rejected.

5.1.4 Attitude towards the Web Page

H3: Congruent banners will lead to more positive attitude towards the website than incongruent ones.

Hypothesis H3 is accepted

The mean rate of congruent (mean 2.5) advertisements was, as expected, higher than the rate of incongruent (mean 2.3) advertisements. Consequently, the F value stayed above 1.0 (F 1.32), which resulted with the acceptance of hypothesis *H3*.

This hypothesis was derived from the assumption that congruent advertisements lead to poorer recall and consequently to more positive attitude towards the web site. The first part of this assumption, i.e. that congruent advertisement lead to poorer recall, has been proven right with *H1b*. The second part of the assumption, i.e. that poorer recall of the advertisement will lead to more positive attitude, was based on the literature review.

As Moore, *et al.* (2005) point out, especially in online advertisements, the mere presence of advertisements have a negative effect on viewers' attitude towards the website. Zaltman and Coulter's (2001) studies agree with the findings of Moore, *et al.* (2005). Furthermore, Moore *et al.* (2005) suggest that consumers have more favorable attitude of the web site when they are not consciously aware of an advertisement. From these studies it can be concluded that poorer recall of the advertisement will lead to more positive attitude towards the web site.

As a result, hypothesis *H3* is accepted.

5.1.5 Gender Roles

H4a: Incongruent banners will lead to higher recall in women than in men.

Hypothesis H4a is accepted.

The mean rate of female (mean 1.67) was, as expected, higher than the rate of male (mean 1.00). Consequently, the F value stayed above 1.0 (F 27.5), which resulted with the acceptance of hypothesis *H4a*.

Many researches show that gender has an important effect on the belief, attitude, and behavior media effect variables (Prakash, 1992). According to Saucier and Elias (2001), the more symmetrically organized brain of women, gives them memory advantages compared to men, whose hemispheres are more specialized (Putrevu, 2001). Together with the information that incongruent advertisements lead to better recall, retrieved from *H1b*, it can be concluded that women recall incongruent advertisements more than men.

Therefore, hypothesis *H4a* is accepted.

H4b: Congruent banners will lead to more positive attitude towards the website for men than for women.

Hypothesis H4b is accepted.

The mean rate of female (mean 2.20) was, as expected, lower than the rate of male (mean 2.80). Consequently, the F value stayed above 1.0 (F 3.63), which resulted with the acceptance of hypothesis *H4b*.

As many researchers argue, men show in general more positive attitudes towards advertising than women (Kempf, *et al.*, 1997; Shavitt, *et al.*, 1998). Wolin and Korgaonkar (2003) point out, that this difference is particularly in web advertising. Furthermore, men are more likely to purchase from the World Wide Web and to surf for entertainment reasons than women (*ibid*). Considering males more positive attitude towards both the internet and advertisements, it can be concluded that men have a more positive attitude towards web sited than women.

Consequently, hypothesis *H4a* is accepted.

5.2 The Interviews

5.2.1 RQ1: What factors affect Swedish consumers' recognition and recall of congruent and incongruent banners?

Based on the information retrieved from the interviews interest and attention are the two main factors affecting recognition and recall of Swedish consumers.

As Lamb, *et al.* (2009) point out in their figure of the relationship between the AIDA Model and the Promotional Mix, attention and interest play a particularly important role in advertising. While attention is the first step of for creating an advertising or marketing communications message and therefore attracts the attention of the consumer, interest raises consumer interest by focusing on and demonstrating advantages and benefits (Hoek, 1999).

Attention:

Attention is selective, which means that one can decide what to focus on at any time, even when one is exposed to potentially overwhelming number of stimuli such as advertisements. Since it is not possible to examine all marketing stimuli at once, the consumer has to determine on which to focus on (Hoyer & Macinnis, 2008).

"Sure, I looked through the advertisements. I always focus on whole content of one page. I like to pay attention to details. Therefore the questionnaire wasn't a big challenge for me."
(Male, 24)

"I am not good in remembering names, so I wasn't able remember any details of the advertisements. But I remember there was for example a radio station. I thought it was a good ad since I was already reading about music."
(Female, 23)

In this case, the consumer intentionally decides to focus on the advertisements; he determines on which stimuli to focus on.

Another feature of attention is that it can be divided. "One can parcel the attentional resources into units and allocate them to one task and some to another" (Hoyer & Macinnis, 2008, p. 75). These attention units can be allocated to meet the demands in the environment. However, also the potential to get distracted, i.e. "when one stimulus pulls the attention from another" (ibid), does exist.

"I remember the advertisements because they caught my attention. However, I am not interested in the advertised products."
(Male, 22)

"I remember seeing the bike shop ad first. Do I have a special interest in bikes? No, I don't. It just got my attention somehow."
(Male, 21)

“I was surprised by my own performance of remembering the banners. I didn’t know that I pay unconsciously so much attention to advertisements”

(Female, 22)

“I was surprised, when I saw the questions, how much I remembered about the advertisements, even though I don’t remember paying attention to them.”

(Female, 21)

In these cases the consumers are not aware paying attention to the advertisements. This can be explained by the feature that attention can be divided. Even though the consumers allocate their attention to the content of the web site, the other stimulus, in this case the banners, pull attention.

Interest:

As defined previously, Interest is the degree of concern or psychological involvement in certain domain (Schiefele, 1999).

“I was very interested in both the advertisements and the website since music is my passion and I am also a very active musician.”

(Male, 23)

“I am not very interested in advertisements so I didn’t pay much attention to them.”

(Female, 22)

“I remember that I saw the hair dresser banner in midway reading through the web page. Once I focused on this one I also took a look at the other banners. Afterwards I couldn’t remember much about the radio and the festival. I remember the hair dresser and the bike shop more clearly maybe because I need a new hair cut or maybe I am just more interested in them than the other products.”

(Female, 21)

“I saw the banners, but I wasn’t very interested in them, so I don’t remember them clearly.”

(Female, 21)

These cases are examples of personal interest, which corresponds to a relatively stable evaluative orientation toward a subject or object (ibid). As a result, feelings of involvement, stimulation, or enjoyment can occur. In these cases the lack of interest results in boredom and less attention towards the advertisement whereas high interest resulted with high recognition and recall. These findings are consistent with the feeling-related valence belief.

5.2.2 RQ2: How do congruent and incongruent banners affect Swedish consumers' attitude towards the web page?

Based on the information retrieved from the interviews interest and disturbance are the two main outcomes of congruent and incongruent banners affecting consumer's attitude towards the brand and web page.

Interest:

Interest not only has an outcome on advertising processing categories, but also on advertisement effectiveness categories.

"I liked the web page because of its content. I thought the information there was interesting..."

(Female, 22)

"I didn't like the web page. I am not very interested in music. Don't have much opinion about the products advertised there. There are ok I suppose, no need to like or dislike them"

(Male, 24)

"I liked the web page. I think it was interesting to read..."

(Female, 22)

"The web page was very nice. I didn't like the advertised products very much, I couldn't relate to them; they weren't interesting for me."

(Female, 24)

"I liked the advertised products since they got my attention and I thought they might be interesting. However, I think other websites with a similar content are better."

(Male, 21)

"The web page was interesting to read. I didn't like the advertised products much, since they are not my topic of interest."

(Female, 21)

In these cases, personal interest has again an effect on feelings of involvement, stimulation and enjoyment. In these cases the lack of interest results in negligence towards the brand and web site, while increased interest resulted with more favorable attitude towards the brand and web site. These findings are, again, consistent with the feeling-related valence belief.

Disturbance:

Many researches show that consumers are skeptic towards advertisements (Campbell, 1995; Friestad & Wright, 1994).

Particular the mere presence of online advertisements have a negative effect on the web browser's attitude towards the web page (Moore, *et al.*, 2005). In line with these findings, Becker-Olsen (2003) state that the experience of the web page is perceived more positive when there is no advertising present.

".... I didn't pay much attention to the advertisements. I don't like them."
(Female, 22)

In this case, the consumer searches for the desired information and blocks unwanted interruption (ibid).

Moore, *et al.* (2005) also suggested that consumers will show more favorable attitude when they are not consciously aware of the advertisement.

".... The banners weren't too obvious and therefore not disturbing."
(Female, 22)

Here, the consumer has more favorable attitude, since she was not consciously aware of the advertisement and therefore did not perceive it as disturbing.

Coulter *et al.* (2001) found in their study that advertisements are perceived as especially negatively when they seem to attempt to seduce the viewer to move away from his or her intended activity. Furthermore, . Moore *et al.* (2005) argue that attitude is more positive for those who do not recognize or recall the advertisements.

"The web site was kind of acceptable, but the advertisements were disturbing. I would have a higher opinion of the web site if there were no advertisements"
(Male, 21)

"I think advertisements are disturbing, that's why I don't like them. The web page was ok though."
(Male, 22)

5.2.3 RQ3: Do female and male Swedish consumers differ in terms of advertising congruency? If so, how?

As stated previously, women and man show some differences and similarities in the subjects of recognition, recall, attitude towards the brand and web page. These differences or similarities are caused by biological and cultural factors and are further reinforced through the socialization process (Putrevu, 2001).

Based on the information retrieved from the interviews interest is a stronger factor for female, while attention is a stronger factor for male than for female affecting recognition and recall.

"Sure, I looked through the advertisements. I always focus on whole content of one page. I like to pay attention to details. Therefore the questionnaire wasn't a big challenge for me."
(Male, 24)

"I remember more details about the bike shop and the hair dresser than for example the radio banner simply because they just got my attention."
(Male, 21)

Wolin and Korgaonkar's (2003) findings show that men are more likely to purchase from the web and surf the World Wide Web for functional and entertainment reasons, while women are more likely to surf the web for shopping reasons. Since women surf more for shopping reasons, it can be concluded that they will recognize and recall products in their interest while man surf for entertainment, and consequently recognize and recall products which catch their attention.

"I remember that I saw the hair dresser banner in midway reading through the web page. Once I focused on this one I also took a look at the other banners. Afterwards I couldn't remember much about the radio and the festival. I remember the hair dresser and the bike shop more clearly maybe because I need a new hair cut or maybe I am just more interested in them than the other products."
(Female, 21)

"I saw the banners, but I wasn't very interested in them, so I don't remember them clearly."
(Female, 21)

On the other hand, the interviews show that there is no significant difference between the genders for attitude towards the brand or web page; both genders get affected by interest and disturbance.

"The web site was kind of acceptable, but the advertisements were disturbing. I would have a higher opinion of the web site if there were no advertisements"
(Male, 21)

"I liked the web page. I think it was interesting to read. The banners weren't too obvious and therefore not disturbing."
(Female, 22)

As stated previously, researches show that consumers are skeptic towards advertisements (Campbell, 1995; Friestad & Wright, 1994), the mere presence of online advertisements have a negative effect on the web browser's attitude towards the web page (Moore, *et al.*, 2005).

"I liked the advertised products since they got my attention and I thought they might be interesting. However, I think other websites with a similar content are better."
(Male, 21)

"The web page was very nice. I didn't like the advertised products very much, I couldn't relate to them; they weren't interesting for me."
(Female, 24)

6. CONCLUSION

In the final chapter, the conclusions of this study are presented in order to fulfill the purpose. This is followed by implications of this study, the limitations and suggestions for further research.

6.1 Conclusion and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to analyze and understand the effects of advertisement congruency on internet users' brand recognition, brand recall and attitudes towards the brand and web site. In other words, this study aims to investigate how thematic congruence, between the online advertising and the web site, affects brand recognition, brand recall and attitude towards the brand and web site of Swedish consumers. In addition, the effect of gender differences on thematic congruence of Swedish consumers has been analyzed.

In order to fulfill the purpose, a mixed method has been used. Quantitative data has been collected by an experiment conducted on 90 participants, and qualitative data by follow-up interview conducted on 18 respondents.

This study provides a number of insights with regard to effects of advertising congruency on advertising performance. The results of this study showed that congruency has no effect on recognition; however, incongruent advertisements lead to more recall than congruent advertisements. Other factors affecting consumers' recognition and recall of congruent and incongruent banners have been determined as interest and attention. While interest is a stronger factor for women affecting recognition and recall, attention has more effect on men. In addition, incongruent banners lead to higher recall in women than in men.

Another result of this study is that congruent banners do not lead to more favorable attitude towards the brand, but to more favorable attitude towards the web page. Additional factors affecting attitude towards the brand and web page are interest and disturbance for both genders. Moreover, it has been determined that congruent banners lead to more positive attitude towards the website for men than women.

The internet is constantly gaining importance in people's everyday life. Consequently, the importance of online advertisements is increasing. Therefore, it is of importance to maximize online advertising effectiveness, which is only possible through research. This study is another step which is taken in this direction.

The results of this study are interesting for advertising practitioners. Taking the results of this study into consideration, it is possible not only to prevent advertising clutter, but also to enhance the effectiveness of online media planning by determining a congruent or incongruent advertising strategy. Also, the effect of advertising congruency on the different genders gives valuable information which might be used for efficient planning.

It can be concluded that advertising congruency has some effects on both advertising processing and advertisement effectiveness categories. That the results of this study were not always as expected can be explained by the fact that studies are not always applicable into different mediums. Suggestions for further studies regarding this subject are stated in 6.4 in this chapter. Also, the

importance of gender differences in terms of advertising congruency, which has not been a topic of research before, has been shown in this study.

6.2 Implications

The results of this study will contribute to many different areas.

First of all, this study's main contribution is to academic theory. Little research concerning the internet medium in the subject of advertisement congruency exists. Moreover, no study concerning Swedish consumers and the effect of gender on advertisement congruency in this medium does exist.

The present findings can have important implications for media planning. Media planner and advertiser can base their planning strategies, i.e. the decision whether to use congruent or incongruent planning, on the results of this study. This is particularly the case for online media plans, i.e. banners, in the Swedish consumer market. Furthermore, the results can also be applied to gender based planning.

In addition, more effective media planning has a contribution for web based organizations. Web based organization may add value to their web pages, since they are able to determine the correct target audience.

Finally, this study has a contribution to consumers. The results of this study might lead to more effective planning and consequently to less pollution through advertising clutter for consumers.

6.3 Limitations

The main limitation of this study is the limitation of the used methods. Some hypotheses have been rejected. This might have been due to the manipulation of the dependent variables. The manipulation of the dependent variables might not have been big enough to achieve results. In other words, the within group variance might have been greater than between the groups. The manipulation might have been, for instance, too weak or confusing.

Most results of this study are not of statistical relevance. This might be caused by the sample size. For instance, the most common pricing strategy for banners is cost-per-thousands-impression, i.e. CPM (Amiri & Menon, 2006). As the name already indicates, in CPM the cost is associated with the number of exposures of the advertisement, which is calculated per thousands. Since the sample size of this study is rather smaller than thousand, it can be assumed that a bigger sample size will lead to more realistic and statistically relevant results.

Another limitation of this study is that the participants have been exposed to the advertisements only once. It is argued that multiple exposures to an advertising is necessary in order to increase the possibility for the viewer to see the advertisement and to create action (Surmanek, 1995). Also, the CPM pricing strategy indicates the importance of multiple exposure to a banner.

Even though factors like background color have been taken into consideration during the banner design process, not all factors attracting attention (except advertising congruency) might have been eliminated. This might affect the results of the study.

In addition, the results of this study might not be applicable to other mediums or target audiences. In other words, the findings of this study are not generalizable.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Advertising congruency is an area where still a lot of research can be done.

For further research it can be suggested to choose a different research method for this topic. It could be better to use a real life setting than a controlled environment in order to achieve more realistic results. However, it is suggested to keep the research approach used in this study, which consisted of both quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to be able to both gain more intensive understanding of a phenomenon, and to highlighting correlation structures.

Since the internet is a relatively new medium, it gives the opportunity for interesting research topics. Another suggestion for future research is therefore a study in this medium, but with a different advertisement format than static banners. Other online advertisement formats such as such as rich media, digital video, sponsorship or keyword search may have different outcomes than this study.

In addition, conducting a study in a different cultural setting than Swedish consumers is suggested, since it is well known that different cultural norms and values have an effect on advertising messages.

Also, the effect of different variables such as age or geography on advertising congruency is suggested for further research.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire of the experiment

1. Gender

Female

Male

2. Age

3. Please write down the advertisements you remember from the web-page (such as brand name, products or advertisement details).

4. Please select the product types which were advertised on the web-page.

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> VIP club | <input type="checkbox"/> radio | <input type="checkbox"/> language course | <input type="checkbox"/> phone company |
| <input type="checkbox"/> digital camera | <input type="checkbox"/> make-up | <input type="checkbox"/> magazine | <input type="checkbox"/> coffee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dvd/cd | <input type="checkbox"/> hair care products | <input type="checkbox"/> energy drink | <input type="checkbox"/> hotel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> optic mouse | <input type="checkbox"/> second hand shop | <input type="checkbox"/> soft drinks | <input type="checkbox"/> restaurant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> watches | <input type="checkbox"/> hair dresser | <input type="checkbox"/> festival | <input type="checkbox"/> student houses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> nightclub/lounge | <input type="checkbox"/> pharmacy products | <input type="checkbox"/> mp3 player | <input type="checkbox"/> handy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> alcoholic drinks | <input type="checkbox"/> bike shop | <input type="checkbox"/> concerts | <input type="checkbox"/> travel agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> external hard disk | <input type="checkbox"/> tailor | <input type="checkbox"/> poster |

5. Please write the brand name under each product category which were advertised on the web-page.

Radio

Nightclub/Lounge

Energy Drink

Festival

6. Please select the right brand name for each advertised product on the web-page.

Radio

- Salute
- La Talk
- Cool Hour
- World
- La Listen
- Listen Fm

Nightclub/Lounge

- Essence
- Tribe
- Asa
- Assi
- Essi
- Esso

Energy Drink

- Ruby
- Power
- Blue Moon
- The Hour
- Ever After
- VIP

Festival

- Electronica
- Spanish
- Soulclipse
- Flower
- Alternative
- Latinoamericano

7. Please answer following questions according to this scale:
(strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree)

Radio

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
I am likely to purchase the advertised brand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would prefer the competitor brand in the same product category	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The advertised brand was irrelevant to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The advertised brand was interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My overall attitude towards the advertised brand is positive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Nightclub/Lounge

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
I am likely to purchase the advertised brand	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would prefer the competitor brand in the same product category	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The advertised brand was irrelevant to me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The advertised brand was interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>				
My overall attitude towards the advertised brand is positive	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Energy Drink

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
I am likely to purchase the advertised brand	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would prefer the competitor brand in the same product category	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The advertised brand was irrelevant to me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The advertised brand was interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>				
My overall attitude towards the advertised brand is positive	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Festival

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
I am likely to purchase the advertised brand	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would prefer the competitor brand in the same product category	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The advertised brand was irrelevant to me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The advertised brand was interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>				
My overall attitude towards the advertised brand is positive	<input type="checkbox"/>				

9. Please answer following questions according to this scale:
(strongly not agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree)

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
My overall impression of the web-page is positive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to visit this web-page again	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would prefer another web-page with a similar content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The content of the web-page was interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Each number has been displayed on a separate page and participants did not have the opportunity to go back to the previous questions once proceeded to the next question.