

Reception, Reception reception

The Effects of Receiver Context  
on Advertising Effectiveness



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The Effects of Receiver Context  
on Advertising Effectiveness

John Karsberg





Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D.,  
in Business Administration  
Stockholm School of Economics, 2016

Reception, Reception, Reception: The Effects of Receiver Context  
on Advertising Effectiveness

© SSE and the author, 2016  
ISBN 978-91-7731-019-8 (printed)  
ISBN 978-91-7731-020-4 (pdf)

*Front cover illustration:*

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*Back cover photo:*

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*Printed by:*

Ineko, Göteborg, 2016

*Keywords:*

Advertising Effectiveness, Advertising Context, Context Effects, Receiver  
Context, Media Context, Extended Effects, Attitudes, Intentions, Behavior

*To*  
*Viktoria, Ruben, Sonja, Julius and Jum-Jum*



# Foreword

This volume is the result of a research project carried out at the Department of Marketing and Strategy at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE).

This volume is submitted as a doctor's thesis at SSE. In keeping with the policies of SSE, the author has been entirely free to conduct and present his research in the manner of his choosing as an expression of his own ideas.

SSE is grateful for the financial support provided by the Torsten Söderberg Foundation, which has made it possible to fulfill the project.

*Göran Lindqvist*

Director of Research  
Stockholm School of Economics

*Richard Wahlund*

Professor and Head of the  
Department of Marketing and Strategy





# Acknowledgements

So this is it, here I am laying the last hand on my dissertation project. It has been an exciting journey with ups and downs, frustration and joy. But it has at all times brought with it a steep upward sloping learning curve, and that is what it is all about, isn't it?

Much of this positive learning experience is due to the people that I have had the privilege to be around during these last years. I am very grateful to all of you.

First, I would like to thank my supervisors Micael Dahlén and Sara Rosengren who patiently have challenged and supported me throughout this process. From giving me the opportunity to teach too soon, to not giving me the answers to questions they knew I would eventually find out the answer to myself. Thanks also to the extremely quick feedback I have always received. If I were to say that you have at any time slowed down my work, I would be lying. A big thanks also to Fredrik Lange, who joined my supervising committee during the last critical period, for also being present with support and nudges in the right direction.

Thanks also to recent and current colleagues and the Center for Consumer Marketing and Center for Retailing at SSE for feedback, stimulating discussions and just general collegial chatter: Carl-Philip Ahlbom, Hanna Berg, Jonas Colliander, Per-Jonas Eliäson, Rebecca Gruvhammar, Mikael Hernant, Claes-Robert Julander, Karina T. Liljedal, Erik Modig, Jens Nordfält, Joel Ringbo, Sofie Sagfossen (thanks also for the co-authorship), Stefan Szugalski and Magnus Söderlund. I am also grateful to the administrative staff at SSE for all your assistance.

Thanks also to many other teachers and students at SSE who have made me further push my intellectual boundaries in various directions.

A special thanks to my fellow PhD-candidates Angelica Blom and Nina Åkestam. We have shared many courses and discussions throughout these years and I have learnt a lot from you. Thanks Angelica for taking the lead on our common project, and it would be fun, Nina, if one of yours and mine project-ideas will ever happen.

Thanks to Tor Norinder for the help with the image on the front page and for my early advertising stimuli.

I would also like to thank the Torsten Söderberg Foundation for providing the generous financial support enabling this thesis.

Last, and surely the most, thanks go to my family. Mom and dad, thanks for the support, both mental and practical during these years. Ruben, Sonja and Julius, thanks for being you, thanks for having the opportunity to spend some extra time with you, and thanks for you being supportive when I am not able to be present. Viktoria, my beautiful wife, thanks for everything. Your love, wisdom, patience, hard work and willingness to make our lives the best they can, inspire me. Let's stay curious. I love you very much. And Jum-Jum thanks for keeping me sain in the woods; voff voff.

*Danderyd, October 2016*

*John Karsberg*

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This thesis investigates the influence of the surroundings of the receiver of advertising, the *receiver context*, on advertising effectiveness. Advertising effectiveness is concerned with whether and to what degree advertising influences consumers, and with what consumer reactions advertising can evoke (Eisend, 2016). With the rapid transformation of technology and media today comes changes in consumer behavior (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016) and advertising is today increasingly spread, shared and discussed, viewed on the run, consumed digitally and is affecting us not only as consumers. The transformation drives advertising to be more consumer centric and integrated into consumer's lives to stay relevant and effective, leading to increasing consumer participation, engagement and interactivity with advertising (e.g., Rayport, 2013; Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016; Rosengren and Dahlen, 2015). This, in turn, gives the consumer an increased influence on the advertising and he or she can both affect and be affected by advertising in new ways (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016). The *receiver context* is thus becoming increasingly important to consider when evaluating advertising effectiveness (Rayport, 2013; Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016). Prior research on contextual influence on advertising effectiveness has focused on the effect of the surroundings of the advertisement, not those of the receiver of the advertising. In other words, it has emphasized “location, location, location” (cf. Shamdasani, Stanaland, & Tan, 2001) rather than “reception, reception, reception.” This thesis considers the importance of the latter factor when

assessing how advertising affects consumer attitudes, intentions, and behaviors.

Research on the receiver context and its relation to advertising effectiveness is sparse (e.g., Puntoni & Tavassoli, 2007, Ritson & Elliott, 1999). The predominant conceptualization of receiver context is coined by Moorman (2003). She describes receiver context as the situational circumstances in which a person is exposed to an advertisement, and includes the social environment (who else is present when exposed to advertising, in this thesis labeled *social context*), the physical environment (how and where the subject is exposed to advertising, in this thesis labeled *spatial context*), the time frame (when is the subject exposed to advertising, in this thesis labeled *temporal context*) and the mental state prior to the exposure to the advertising (what mood the subject is in when exposed to advertising, in this thesis labeled *antecedent mental state*). Moorman (2003) does not discuss receiver context beyond the conceptualization, and uses the concept of receiver context to refer to everything that is not advertisement context, which is what her studies are investigating. In the same way also other researchers in the field of advertising context has mentioned receiver context and the dimensions included in the concept, but using receiver context to position their own research on the context of other advertisements (*clutter*; Rosengren, 2008), and the context of the media vehicle used to convey the ad (de Pelsmacker, Geuens, and Anckaert, 2002; de Pelsmacker, Geuens, and van den Bergh, 2007; Herrewijn and Poels, 2013). In contrast, this thesis is investigating the explicit influences of the receiver context on advertising effectiveness.

There is prior research, however, on the dimensions of receiver context, without explicitly referring to receiver context. The research on social context has concluded that the presence (real or perceived) of other people when one is exposed to advertising has effects on memory, attitudes, and behavior (Dahlén et al., 2013; Eisend, 2008; Puntoni & Tavassoli, 2007; Ritson & Elliott, 1999), and temporal context in the form of which day or time of day exposure to advertising occurs has been shown to impact ad processing (Hornik, 1989; Bronner, Bronner and Faasse, 2007).

In contrast, the effect of advertisement context on advertising effectiveness has been thoroughly researched (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002; Moorman, 2003; Rosengren, 2008). This research has concluded that a clut-

ter of ads competing for attention will lead to lower effectiveness (Ha, 1996; Nelson-Riebe, 2013; Rosengren, 2008) and that the medium and the programming content can create associations (Dahlén, 2005; de Pelsmacker et al., 2002; Moorman et al., 2002; Yi, 1990, 1993) and induce emotional responses (Cauberghe et al., 2011; de Pelsmacker et al., 2002; Goldberg & Gorn, 1987) that in turn will affect attitudes and intentions toward the advertisement and the brand. Consumers' increasing use of social media (Colliander, 2012; Rayport, 2013) and mobile devices (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2016) and the call for advertising to be contextually relevant (Rayport, 2013) are extending the need to incorporate the effects of receiver context on advertising effectiveness. I contend that the receiver context can affect advertising effectiveness through social influence, affect transfer, and how the advertising is either assimilated or contrasted to the context.

In this thesis, I theoretically and empirically focus on the social and the spatial receiver context as these are the dimensions mostly affected by the new advertising media and the changes in consumer social and mobile behavior. Hence the temporal context and antecedent mental state are excluded from the theoretical and empirical investigations in this thesis. The temporal dimension is in this thesis conceptualized as the aspect of time on advertising effectiveness (for example 'in the morning'), and not as the activity performed during a certain time (for example 'eating breakfast') which is seen as included in the spatial context. Hence, I treat the temporal dimension as not affected by the changes in the development and thus prior research will hold. Furthermore, the antecedent mental state is excluded as I see it as either a personality trait that is independent of the context or an affective response that is induced by the context, and as such not an independent variable, but rather an effect, or a mediator of the effect, of receiver context on advertising effectiveness (c.f. Bronner et al., 2007). I also respond to the growing acknowledgment of the extended effects of advertising (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2016; Rosengren & Bondesson, 2014) by investigating how the receiver context can have other effects on the subject along with, or instead of, the consumer responses frequently assessed.

## 1.1. Purpose of this thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the effects of *receiver context* on advertising effectiveness. More specifically, it extends the academic literature on the effects of the *social receiver context* (who else is present when the subject is exposed to advertising) and the *spatial receiver context* (how and where the subject is exposed to advertising) on consumer responses to an advertisement and to the brand sponsoring the advertising.

The consumer responses of interest in this thesis are mainly attitudes and intentions regarding the advertising and the advertised brands. These dependent variables were chosen since they are the dominant variables in assessing the effectiveness of advertising. In addition, actual consumer behavioral responses to the receiver context are used to further develop the investigation of receiver context, consistent with a recommendation in prior research (Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007). Furthermore, the influence of the advertised product is investigated, as well as the potential for the receiver context to cause extended advertising effects such as employer attractiveness, organizational identification, investment attitudes, and investment intentions.

## 1.2. Outline of this thesis

This dissertation includes 13 experimental studies, presented in five research articles. The thesis is divided into two parts, of which the research articles constitute the second part. The first part of the thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 contains a literature review on the topic of context effects in advertising (including both advertisement context and receiver context) on advertising effectiveness. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework, including the key theories and literature used to explain the effects of receiver context within the thesis. Chapter 4 introduces the articles; chapters 5 and 6 discuss the contributions and implications of this thesis for academic research and practice, respectively. Chapter 7 discusses the limitations of the thesis and suggestions for future research and chapter 8 leads Onwards.



# Chapter 2

## Literature review: Context Effects in Advertising

In this chapter, I present an overview on previous research on the effect of both advertisement context and receiver context on advertising effectiveness.

Advertising effectiveness can be influenced by three factors: *stimuli characteristics*, *personal characteristics*, and *advertising context* (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002). The vast majority of existing research has investigated the first two of these factors. Stimuli characteristics refer to elements contained in advertisements, such as colors, copy text, and images. Personal characteristics are traits or attitudes possessed by the receiver of the ad, such as one's level of involvement with a product category (Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984). Advertising context refers to factors surrounding the ad and the receiver that can influence the effectiveness of the advertisement (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002). Examples of advertising context are the effects of other ads competing for attention, effects of the media context spilling over on the ad, and other people who may be talking during the commercial break and thus interfering with the processing of the ad (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002). The idea that the context impacts consumers' responses to advertising is analogous to the premise in psychology that both personality and environment (i.e., context) must be considered in explaining human behavior (Fleeson, 2004; Kenrick & Funder, 1988).

Advertising context, in turn, has been divided into factors concerning the advertisement (*advertisement context*) and factors concerning the receiver (*receiver context*) (de Pelsmacker et al., 2007; Moorman, 2003; Rosengren, 2008). Advertisement context includes the impact of other ads, or *clutter* (Rosengren, 2008; Rosengren & Dahlén, 2013), as well as the impact of the medium used to communicate the ad, or *media context* (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002; de Pelsmacker et al., 2007; Moorman, 2003; Rosengren & Dahlén, 2013). Receiver context (de Pelsmacker et al., 2007; Moorman, 2003) has been divided, as noted in the previous chapter, into social context (e.g., “with three family members”), spatial context (“at home”), temporal context (“during breakfast”), and the antecedent mental state of the subject when exposed to the advertising (“in an early morning mood”) (Moorman, 2003).

Prior research on context effects in advertising has focused almost exclusively on the effects of advertisement context. But the increasing tendency, amidst the proliferation of new communication technologies, of consumer-centered approaches to interpreting advertising strongly justifies a greater interest in the receiver context (Colliander, 2012; Dahlén & Rosengren, 2016; Rayport, 2013).

## 2.1 Advertisement Context

Advertising messages are not communicated in a vacuum. There is substantial evidence that the context surrounding an advertisement influences people’s response to the ad (Dahlén, 2005; Dahlén, Rosengren, Törn, & Öhman, 2008; de Pelsmacker et al., 2002; de Pelsmacker et al., 2007; Moorman et al., 2002; Smit et al., 2015).

As already noted, the two primary components of advertisement context identified by prior research are clutter and media context. Clutter refers to competition for attention (Ha, 1996, Rosengren & Dahlén, 2006; Nelson-Field, Riebe, & Sharp, 2013). When one is exposed to many ads, one can give less attention to each ad, and thus advertising effectiveness is negatively affected.

The effects of media context on advertising effectiveness are dispersed and, to some extent, point in opposite directions (de Pelsmacker et al.,

2002; Moorman et al., 2002), reflecting the complexity of psychological responses to persuasive communication. The differences in the findings have been attributed to variations in setting (i.e., the laboratory versus a more ecological setting) or to the dependent variables and interaction variables used (for an overview, see Moorman et al., 2002). The effects of media context on advertising effectiveness have been grouped into three main categories (Moorman et al., 2002): the effect of congruence between the medium and the ad, the effect of the affect induced by the medium, and the effect of the intensity of the involvement with the medium. Recent research has established the need for a fourth category, the effect of competition for attention between the medium and the ad (somewhat related to clutter; see Janssens, de Pelsmacker, & Geuens, 2012; Smit et al., 2015).

The primary mechanisms that explain the psychological responses to ads viewed either successively or simultaneously are priming (cognitive and affective; Dahlén, 2005; Yi, 1990, 1993), limited capacity theory (Lang, 2000; Smit et al., 2015), and excitation transfer (Cantor, Zillmann, & Bryant, 1975; Duff & Sar, 2015).

### 2.1.1. Clutter

Clutter, or the effects of other advertisements on advertising effectiveness (Rosengren, 2008), highlights the constant competition among commercial messages and the fact that consumers are exposed to many advertisements every day (Ha, 1996). Not only does the presence of competing commercial messages decrease each one's chances of gaining attention and negatively impact one's overall perception of advertising, but the messages also affect each other. Clutter frequently creates difficulty in distinguishing brands from each other, hence exerting a negative impact on advertising effectiveness (Nelson-Field et al., 2013; Rosengren, 2008; Rosengren & Dahlén, 2006; Smit, Neijens, & Heath, 2013).

### 2.1.2. Media Context

There is ample research on the effects of media context on advertising effectiveness. This type of impact can be related to the characteristics of the medium itself or the editorial content in the medium (Dahlén, 2005; Dahlén et al., 2008b; Moorman et al., 2002; Moorman, 2003). For example,

the impact of a television ad may depend on the TV program during which it is shown; an outdoor ad placed in a bus shelter may have different impact from the same ad displayed on a billboard; ads on social media are evaluated differently from those at online shopping sites (de Pelsmacker et al., 2007). Although research on media context has focused on the relation between the medium and the ad (Rosengren, 2008), Smit et al. (2015) suggested that the presence of competition (clutter) can also explain some effects of the media context. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the four main categories into which the effects of the media context on advertising effectiveness are divided.

### **Competition**

Most research on media context has studied the effect of a medium or program on a subsequently viewed ad in an experimental setting (Moorman, 2003; Rosengren, 2008) or a controlled environment free from disturbing contexts. This practice has been contested, and other studies have investigated simultaneous exposure to both media content and advertising (Janssens et al., 2012; Smit et al., 2015). Just like the competitive effects of clutter, the effects of competition between a medium and advertising are mainly negative (Janssens et al., 2012; Smit et al., 2015), and both processes can be explained by means of the same general principle, limited attentional capacity. Yet another case in which competition for attention negatively affects advertising effectiveness is media multitasking, or the simultaneous use of several media devices (Angell, Gorton, Sauer, Bottomley, & White, 2016; Duff & Sar, 2015), although in some cases, holistic processing (Duff & Sar, 2015) or motivation and social accountability (Angell et al., 2016) can neutralize the negative effects.

### **Congruence**

Research on media context has also found that the evaluation of an ad that is congruent (similar) with the context will be positively affected (Dahlén, 2005; de Pelsmacker et al., 2002; Janssens et al., 2012; Moorman, 2003; Myers, Royme, & Deitz, 2014; Segev, Wang, and Fernandes, 2014; Yi, 1990, 1993). The general explanation for this effect is grounded in the priming principle (Dahlén, 2005; Higgins and King, 1981; Wyer and Srull, 1981; Yi,

1990, 1993). The medium activates (or primes) specific knowledge structures that guide the interpretation of the embedded ad. For example, reading an article about a burglar will activate associations of safety, thus causing an ad for a large car to evoke a sense of safety; in contrast, someone who has just read an article on oil dependency might view a large car primarily as a gas guzzler (Yi, 1993). This process has also been labeled the mood congruency–accessibility hypothesis (Goldberg & Gorn, 1987), and it enhances learning and evaluation of the ad, thus creating positive effects on memory. The spillover effects of congruence due to priming have also been explained in terms of assimilation (Dahlén, 2005). This effect is particularly strong when the consumer is (unconsciously) looking for clues as to how to evaluate the advertising. The context will then lend attributes to the ad, hence causing assimilation of the associations between the ad and the context (Dahlén, 2005).

Even though the positive effects of congruence between the medium and the ad generally predominate, there are instances in which congruence has been found to have negative effects (Furnham, Gunter, & Richardson, 2002), depending on the level of product involvement (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002); conversely, incongruence has sometimes been found to have positive effects (Dahlén et al., 2008b). The reasoning behind these effects is that congruence can make it difficult to separate the program from the ad, thus inhibiting recall (Furnham et al., 2002), whereas incongruence in cases of familiar brands (Dahlén et al., 2008b) and high product involvement (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002) produces an effect of novelty and surprise, leading to more processing and thus positive effects on behalf of the brand. Furthermore, the effect of assimilation (Dahlén, 2005) has been shown to also work in the opposite direction if the context is categorized as (too) similar to the advertisement or if the priming is very strong (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1997; Stapel, Koomen, & Velthuisen, 2008), thus causing the ad to be contrasted with the context. Instead of lending attributes to the ad, for example an elevator lending attributes to an energy drink (having positive effects), the ad is compared with the context, which risks having negative consequences.

## **Affect**

The medium can also induce either positive or negative emotions in the subject, and thus these emotions have been used to explain media context effects. This dimension of pleasantness is called valence and is a facet of mood (Shapiro, MacInnis, & Park, 2002). Positive valence (i.e., liking) has been found to affect the evaluation of advertising. Valence induced by the medium or program has been found to mainly affect one's attitude toward the ad (Moorman et al., 2002). Most research has agreed that positive valence leads to a more positive attitude toward the ad (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002; Goldberg & Gorn, 1987; Lee & Sternthal, 1999; Moorman et al., 2002; Murry, Lastovicka, & Singh, 1992) and memory (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002; Goldberg & Gorn, 1987; Kuykendall and Keating, 1990). The positive effects are due to the positive mood spilling over to the ad (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002; Lee & Sternthal, 1999). Conversely, a media context that induces a negative valence generally has negative effects on advertising effectiveness (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002). On the other hand, some studies have also suggested a negative effect of liking on ad processing, due to either the limited capacity theory (Lang, 2000) or the feelings-as-information theory (Kuykendall & Keating, 1990). The former theory posits that the positive mood will not leave any capacity to process the ad, and the latter suggests that people want to retain their happy feeling and thus do not engage in processing that potentially could alter this affective state.

The effects of the transfer of mood from the media context to the evaluation of the subsequently viewed advertising can also be explained in terms of affective priming. Priming can be both cognitive (as in the example of advertising for a large automobile, cited above) and affective (Yi, 1990). Affective priming refers to context-evoked moods that affect the subsequent ad and brand evaluations, as can result from involvement (discussed in the next paragraph). Another mechanism used to explain the transfer of (non-valence) arousal to the subsequent ad is excitation transfer (Bee & Madrigal, 2012; Cantor et al., 1975; de Pelsmacker et al., 2002; Duff & Sar, 2015). This mechanism posits that arousal can be transferred and (mis)attributed to the ad, in that the brain is partly crediting the ad for the increased arousal (Cantor et al., 1975; Duff & Sar, 2015).

## **Involvement**

Another important aspect of media context is the intensity with which the subject feels involved with the medium or program. This feature has been used extensively to explain the effects of media context on advertising effectiveness, finding support for both positive and negative consequences (for an overview, see Moorman, Willemsen, Neijens, & Smit, 2012). The main explanation for a negative effect is that the arousal caused by high involvement does not leave any cognitive capacity for processing of the subsequent ad (Soldow & Principe, 1981). The opposite explanation is based on the argument that the enhanced attentional focus that follows high program involvement spills over to the advertising and thereby favorably influences advertising effectiveness (Krugman, 1983; Moorman et al., 2012; Segev et al., 2014). One study has found the relationship to take the form of an inverted U-curve, with increasingly positive effects as one moves from low to moderate levels of involvement, but with greater negative effect when the subject is highly involved (Tavassoli, Schultz, & Fitzsimons, 1995). Furthermore, an ad at the beginning of a sequence of advertisements will be more affected by the media context than one placed at the end of the sequence, since the contextual effects wear out over time and due to the intervening input from preceding ads (Murry et al., 1992).

## **2.2. Receiver Context**

Just as context effects depend on the surroundings of the advertisement, so also the receiver context has been shown to influence the effectiveness of advertising, although these effects have been sparsely explored.

Receiver context has been previously conceptualized by Moorman (2003) who lists four dimensions that are part of the receiver context; social context (who else is present), spatial context (the physical environment surrounding the receiver of the ad), temporal context (what time of day, what season) and a person's antecedent mental state. The examples of the concept of receiver context in advertising research that I have found (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002; de Pelsmacker et al., 2007; Rosengren, 2008; Moorman, 2003; Herrewijn and Poels, 2013) use the concept of receiver

context as a concept that is in referring to the context in general excluding advertisement context, which is the concept specifically studied. Receiver context is treated in the same general all-encompassing way in the one of the general advertising textbooks that most extensively elaborate on the context effects of advertising (de Pelsmacker, Geuens, and van den Bergh, 2007). The textbook refers to the four dimensions of receiver context above, but stop the elaboration with the fact that receiver context is implicitly explained in the chapter that describes “communication effects”.

Although the concept of receiver context is seldom used to describe the impact of the surroundings of the receiver on advertising effectiveness, some existing research has investigated its effects. The limited research on receiver context has mainly discussed the influence of other people on how advertising is viewed and evaluated; it has also peripherally touched on the effects of other aspects of receiver context in people’s homes (Brodin, 2007; Jayasinghe & Ritson, 2013; Ritson & Elliott, 1999). These ethnographic studies have argued that interpersonal processes and social context influence one’s experience of advertising. As with the findings in media context research the effects can be both positive, explained because positive ads receive more processing (e.g., through talking about the ad with fellow viewers, Jayasinghe & Ritson, 2013), or negative, because the context creates distractions (Bellman, Rossiter, Schweda, & Varan, 2012; Mora, 2015).

The common denominator in research on receiver context is that it has explored the direct effect of other people with whom one has some kind of relationship. However, social situations can also involve the non-interactive influence of other people present, or even the social influence of an imagined audience (Puntoni & Tavassoli, 2005). For instance, the non-interactive presence of strangers in a shopping context impacts consumers’ emotions and self-presentation (Argo, Dahl, & Manchanda, 2005). In that study, people shopping with other people present engaged less in “uncool” behavior (interacting with a battery testing station) and chose a more expensive battery than people shopping alone. The effects were found to increase with the number of people present and the perceived social distance from the subject. Research has also shown that the presence of even a non-interactive social context impacts evaluations of advertising (Fisher &



Dubé, 2005; Puntoni & Tavassoli, 2007). The mere presence of others when one is exposed to advertising creates an awareness of social context. This awareness activates concern regarding the impressions that others may be forming, which in turn affects evaluations of the advertising (Puntoni & Tavassoli, 2007).

Even an imagined social context can have this effect, suggesting that the impact of social context is not limited to those occasions when other people are actually present. However, prior research has mainly investigated the effects of other specific people, albeit imaginary and with no relation to the subject. For example, Puntoni and Tavassoli (2007, p. 292) posited “the presence of four other people: a male and a female in their 30s who seemed to know each other well and a male and a female in their mid-20s who did not know each other.” As such, the research on social context has not focused on the effects of other faceless people in general on advertising effectiveness. This type of situation is becoming more prevalent in digital media, as represented for example by the number of “shares” or “likes” associated with a communication (Collinader, 2012; Marder, Joinson, Shankar, & Houghton, 2016; Rayport, 2013). There have been a few cases in which the perceived influence of advertising on others has had an impact on the subject himself or herself (Dahlén, Sjödin, Thorbjörnsen, Hansen, & Linander, 2013; Eisend, 2008; Kim, 2013). With the exception of Eisend (2008), most of this research has examined the negative effects of controversial advertising; as such, the research on the social receiver context on noncontroversial advertising has not been sufficiently explored.

The temporal receiver context is in this thesis defined as the effect of when the receiver is exposed to the advertising. It has been conceptualized by Moorman (2003) as ‘during breakfast’ and then not further developed. In this thesis I have chosen to see temporal receiver context as only referring to the time-aspect and not the activity performed at that time, that I instead see as belonging to the spatial context. As such ‘during breakfast’ contains both a dimension of time (one usually has breakfast in the morning) and a spatial dimension (the activity of sitting down and eating), where the first is an example of temporal receiver context and the latter an example of spatial context. Given my definition of temporal receiver context prior research has found that the time of the day (Hornik, 1989) and the

day of the week (Bronner et al., 2007) a subject is exposed to advertising is influencing advertising effectiveness. Hornik (1989) concluded that the delayed recall of advertising is better later in the day and suggests that this effect is due to that the state of arousal increases throughout the day. Bronner et al. (2007) find that advertising viewed on Sundays is better recalled and explain this finding with people being in a better mood on Sundays, than on weekdays.

Research on the effects of receiver context on advertising effectiveness other than the social and temporal dimensions remains very sparse. The coining of the concept of “contextual advertising” has represented an argument that could also be applied to effects other than the actual advertising and medium, but this vein of research has mainly considered the increased ability offered by online forms of advertising to adapt the advertising to the context (Chun, Song, Hellenbeck, & Lee, 2016). Also, the research on context-induced arousal could be extended to also consider the context of the receiver of the advertising, but it has been discussed only as an effect of other media and advertising (Duff & Sar, 2015).

In summary, prior research on the effects of the receiver context on advertising effectiveness is sparse and has focused overwhelmingly on the impact of the social context, usually involving specific people. The increased importance of the receiver context in contemporary advertising settings calls for further understanding of how the receiver’s surroundings impact advertising effectiveness. In the next chapter, I will describe the framework that I have used as a theoretical base for 13 studies empirically investigating how and why the receiver context is influencing advertising effectiveness.

# Chapter 3

## Theoretical framework

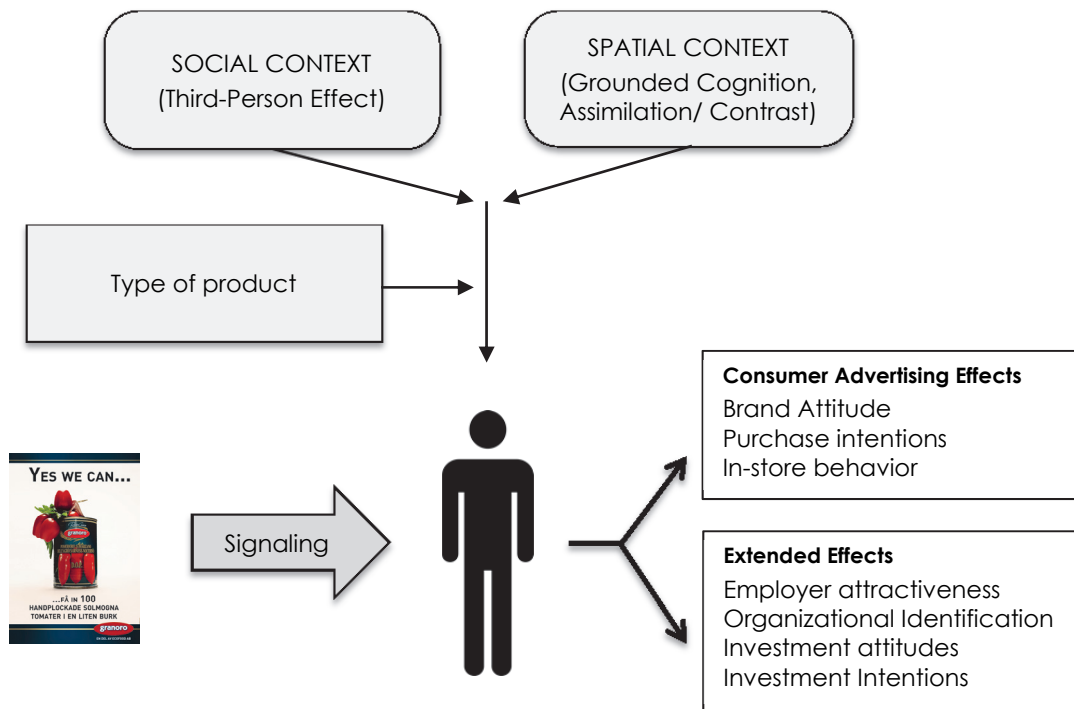
This thesis responds to calls for a broadening of the scope of advertising research. Both Rayport (2013) and Dahlén and Rosengren (2016) have acknowledged the need for advertisers to move from a media-centric view to a customer-centric view—that is, from a focus on which media to emphasize to considering how advertising can be integrated into consumers' lives. In line with this reasoning, there is an increased need to highlight the potential of the receiver context to contribute to the effects of advertising on consumers' attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. The importance of receiver context is also implicit in the call for more contextually relevant advertising (Rayport, 2013) aligned with the consumer's experience as he or she encounters the ad, as well as with the increasingly social and mobile consumer.

This thesis is concerned with the social receiver context (who else is present when one is exposed to advertising; see articles 1 and 2) and the spatial receiver context (how and where the subject is exposed to the advertising; see articles 3 and 4). Receiver context also includes the dimension of temporal context and the antecedent state of mind of the consumer when exposed to advertising (Moorman, 2003), but these dimensions are not within the scope of this thesis for reasons earlier explained and thus are neither included in the framework nor empirically investigated.

It is also important to understand how the advertised product influences the effect of receiver context. For this reason, I investigate how the receiver context per se can have extended effects on how advertising is

evaluated, such as by affecting employer attractiveness and investor intentions (article 5). To explain the influence of receiver context on advertising effectiveness, I have applied a selection of suitable theories. The theoretical framework in Figure 1 graphically describes my approach to investigating the effects of receiver context on advertising effectiveness.

Figure 1. The theoretical framework.



### 3.1. Advertising Effectiveness

Advertising effectiveness is concerned with whether and to what degree advertising influences consumers, and with what consumer reactions advertising can evoke (Eisend, 2016). In this thesis, I use signaling theory to study advertising effectiveness. Signaling theory has been used to assess the effectiveness of advertising and to demonstrate that not only the actual content of advertising but also the way in which advertising is conveyed

affects the evaluation of the ad and brand (Dahlén et al., 2008a). As such, signaling is particularly relevant with regard to contextual effects of advertising. Signaling theory is particularly relevant to the present research for three reasons. First, the receiver context can influence the perception of the signal; second, the receiver context can be seen as a signal in itself, giving the consumer clues that can affect the evaluation of the advertising; third, signaling can be extended to include effects outside of the actual ad and medium.

Signaling theory stems from research in information economics, which has found, for example, that unobservable product quality can be communicated through observable signals such as price and warranties (Kirmani & Rao, 2000). As the marketplace has become increasingly cluttered, consumers, finding it difficult to differentiate between brands through marketing communications, often rely on marketing signals to derive clues and guide their choices (Dahlén et al., 2008a).

Earlier studies have mainly focused on the perception of marketing efforts through the signal of perceived advertising expense (Kirmani & Rao, 2000). Larger advertisements (Kirmani & Wright, 1989) or a higher paper quality (Ambler & Hollier, 2004) signal that the company has spent more money on the advertisements, thus positively influencing perceptions of product quality (Kirmani & Wright, 1989) and brand fitness (Ambler & Hollier, 2004). Recent studies (Dahlén et al., 2008a; Modig, Dahlén, & Colliander, 2014) have broadened advertising signals to look not only at perceived expense but also at creativity. The signal of creativity hints that the company has put more effort into the advertising, so the company is perceived as more confident in its product, more competent, and more capable as a marketer (Dahlén et al., 2008a). This perceived brand ability, in turn, spills over to perceptions of other aspects of the brand, resulting in positive impact on attitude toward the brand and purchase intentions. Signaling has also been used to explain the effects of advertising on other stakeholders than the consumer (Rosengren and Bondesson, 2014), concluding that it is a mechanism that can help explain advertising effects also in other receiver contexts.

The dependent variables studied in research on advertising effectiveness in general, including signaling, have predominantly been attitudes to-

ward the brand and purchase intentions (Eisend & Tarrahi, 2016), and my empirical investigations follow this tradition. Furthermore, I have also investigated the effects on actual purchase behavior, as recommended by other researchers (Baumeister et al., 2007).

## 3.2. Receiver Contexts

### 3.2.1 Social Context

The aspect of *who else* is exposed to the advertising has been found to affect advertising effectiveness. As established in the literature review in chapter 2, social influence has been shown to impact consumers' attitudes, intentions, and behaviors in various situations, including their responses to advertising, but has mainly focused on the influence of other specific people. With consumers becoming increasingly social in their media and advertising consumption, and with people in general (not just specifically identifiable others) being increasingly recognized as information sources, it is important to take these new social contexts of advertising into consideration when trying to understand advertising effectiveness (Dahlén et al., 2013; Puntoni & Tavassoli, 2007).

One theory used to explain the influence of what one believes about other people's perceptions is the third-person effect (TPE; Dahlén et al., 2013; Davison, 1983; Eisend, 2008; Perloff, 2009). TPE arose in the field of communication and media research, but has also been applied in advertising research to explain the effects of other people, i.e., the social receiver context, on advertising effectiveness. The theory posits that people can be affected by their perceptions of how others are influenced by a communication (Gunther & Storey, 2003).

Using TPE, researchers have thoroughly established that consumers believe others to be more affected by media and advertising than they themselves are (Dahlén et al., 2013; Eisend, 2008; Perloff, 2009). This notion is psychologically built on the tendency to perceive oneself as more intelligent, more objective, and less prone to error relative to others (Alicke, Kooz, Breitenbecher, Yurak, & Vredenburg, 1995; Zhang & Daugherty, 2009), and hence less affected by persuasive attempts such as advertising.

TPE has mainly been used to explain the negative effects of controversial communication and advertising when that communication is perceived as also reaching other people. These audiences are perceived as being negatively affected by the message, and hence the attitudes and intentions of the subjects themselves are negatively impacted (Dahlén et al., 2013; McLeod, Eveland, & Nathanson, 1997; Youn, Faber, & Shah, 2000). However, TPE can also have the opposite effect if a consumer perceives that being affected by a particular piece of communication may appear to be a positive feature, demonstrating one's superiority to others (Eisend, 2008). More specifically, Eisend (2008) showed that scarcity appeals enhance the value perception of an offer and that this influence is mediated by the perception of the ad's influence on oneself relative to others (e.g., the belief that "Since I am smarter than others, I understand how good this offer is") and therefore enhances purchase intentions.

Recently, the argumentation underlying TPE has been somewhat simplified and advertising research has instead examined the influence of perceived influence (IPI) (Noguti & Russell, 2014; Sharma & Roy, 2016). The difference is that IPI does not explicitly involve the need for a difference between the perceived influence on others and the perceived influence on oneself, as with TPE. Rather, it merely claims that the perceived influence of other people influences one's subsequent evaluations.

Hence, our awareness of other people and their perceptions affects how we evaluate advertising. In this thesis, TPE and IPI are used to explain the effects of noncontroversial advertising due to the presence of a perceived social receiver context. Both the potential positive effects due to the social context (because advertising that is signaling cognitive effort is perceived as smart to understand and be affected by) and the negative effects (due to others being more affected by advertising, and one in general does not want to be affiliated with "others") are investigated.

### 3.2.2 Spatial Context

Just as the media context can induce emotions in the advertising consumer, the physical surroundings of the receiver and how the receiver is functioning in that environment may influence advertising effectiveness. I contend

that the physical state of the receiver when exposed to advertising may be another aspect of receiver context that affects advertising effectiveness. With the increased mobility of consumers, the effect of *how* advertising is received becomes increasingly relevant. Advertising is increasingly consumed in motion, with more advertising intersecting with our everyday lives—e.g., showing up on the portable media devices that are receiving more and more daily use.

The predominant view in psychology during the last four decades has described the brain as an amodal computer and information processor not connected to bodily experience (Krishna & Schwarz, 2014). In contrast, it has been proposed that we cannot properly understand human cognition without assuming that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are grounded in sensory experiences and bodily states (Barsalou, 2008; Krishna & Schwarz, 2014; Meier, Schnall, Schwarz, & Bargh, 2012). This notion has been labeled as *grounded cognition*. Indeed, there is ample empirical evidence of the connection between bodily motor responses and cognition. For example, it has been shown that eating popcorn while watching advertising can have negative effects on advertising effectiveness, since the chewing inhibits the ability to subvocalize brand names and thus has negative effects on memory (Topolinski, Lindner, & Freudenberg, 2014). Similarly, an advertisement in which the product is oriented toward the person's dominant hand makes the mental simulation of interacting with the object easier, thus having positive effects on purchase intentions (Elder & Krishna, 2012). Consistent with theories on body–mind connections, research has found that physical activity or movement can affect cognition (Cantor et al., 1975; Mussweiler, 2006).

In this thesis, I use grounded cognition to investigate the actual (nonvalenced) physical arousal brought about by the physical environment surrounding the receiver of an advertisement. Physical arousal induced by the medium (e.g., an exciting TV program; Lull & Bushman, 2015) or by another ad (Duff & Sar, 2015) has been found to transfer to positively impact the effectiveness of another ad viewed subsequently. In the same way, I suggest that arousal induced by the physical environment surrounding the ad (for example, a staircase or a gym) spills over to positively affect evaluations of advertising.



I also propose that a second aspect of spatial receiver context, namely *where* the advertising is received, should influence advertising effectiveness. The increased amount of physical advertising around us and the increased use of portable media devices teeming with advertising messages make advertising an increasingly constant presence in our physical environment. Just as the medium spills over into perceptions of an ad (Rosengren & Dahlén, 2013), the physical environment around the receiver should influence how an ad is perceived.

Previous research on context effects has shown that consumer evaluation is affected by the context in which the evaluation occurs (Stapel, Koomen, & Velthuisen, 1998). Evaluations and emotions are contrasted with their relations to the context, and thus the context becomes a frame of reference in which the stimulus is interpreted. The context can make things seem better and more attractive if the contrast is with something relatively unattractive (Kenrick & Gutierrez, 1980). In the same way, I propose that the receiver context can function as a benchmark against which the evaluation of the ad is interpreted.

According to the theory of assimilation and contrast, the context in which a stimulus is evaluated can lead to either an assimilation or a contrast effect (Bless & Schwarz, 2010). When an advertisement is categorized as similar to the receiver context, the evaluation of the ad will be contrasted with the context, and thus compared to the environment. If the advertisement, on the other hand, is categorized as dissimilar to the context, an assimilation effect will occur, leading to the perception of the context as the reference, with the contextual clues spilling over to the evaluation of the ad (Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1993; Stapel et al., 1998). For example, a restaurant was found to be evaluated differently depending on whether subjects were told that there had been a fashion store at the same location previously (assimilation) or another restaurant (contrast; Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1993).

In this thesis I apply this theory to investigate the influence of the spatial receiver context on advertising effectiveness. In the same way as being exposed to a given brand in a context of other brands results in an assimilation or contrast effect on the evaluation of the focal brand (Yang, Cutright, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, 2014), the physical context around the receiver

plays a role in the interpretation of advertising. For example, if a consumer is acting in a multichannel environment, he or she may be exposed to advertising concerning either the same retail channel where he or she is shopping or concerning a different channel. Offline and online channels are considered dissimilar (Avery, Steenburgh, Deighton, & Caravella, 2012) thus creating an assimilating context that affects the evaluation of the advertising.

### 3.2.3 The Extended Effects of Receiver Context

Prior context-related research has described receiver context as if the subject is at home, at work, or in the company of others when receiving advertising (Moorman, 2003; Rosengren, 2008). Building on the reasoning, with regard to media context, that the medium can prime the receiver to evaluate advertising in different ways (Dahlén, 2005; Yi, 1990, 1993), it is in this thesis suggested that not only can the receiver context influence the effects of advertising, but also that different receiver contexts can lead to other extended effects of the advertising.

Research has found that stakeholders other than consumers are interpreting marketing signals in advertising differently from consumers, hence leading to other effects on the evaluation of the advertising (Fehle, Tsyplakov, & Zdorovtsov, 2005; Joshi & Hanssens, 2010; Rosengren & Bondesson, 2014). For example, the positive effect of advertising targeting consumers in a Super Bowl ad also has positive effects on investor behavior, resulting in stock price increases shortly after the event (Fehle et al., 2005). Similarly, potential employees have been found to interpret signals of advertising creativity as signs of development potential, thereby affecting the company's overall attractiveness as an employer (Rosengren & Bondesson, 2014). Joshi and Hanssens (2010) also found positive effects from advertising on stock returns due to the direct effects on investors. Although this study used long-term data, it is inferred that investors interpret the signals of advertising as a general signal of brand ability, with positive effects on the inclination to invest (Joshi & Hanssens, 2010).

In this thesis, I suggest that these extended effects of advertising can be attributed to the effects of receiver context. People are malleable (Aaker,

1999), and the receiver context can prime a subject to activate different mindsets, such as that of an investor or an employee, thereby affecting how the ad is evaluated (Aaker, 1999; Rosengren & Bondesson, 2014). Therefore, different receiver contexts can have *different* effects due to the contextual prime.

### 3.3. Moderators

To better understand receiver context and apply the reasoning in this thesis in practical advertising decisions, it is not sufficient to map how different receiver contexts impact advertising effectiveness. Rather, it is also important to investigate the boundary conditions within which the contextual influence has a greater impact and, conversely, when the effect is attenuated—in other words, what variables are moderating the effects of the receiver context.

#### 3.3.1 Product Type

In this regard, one important potential moderator to explore is the characteristics of the advertised product, and especially its social and emotional aspects. Traditionally, products can be positioned on a continuum from highly emotional, hedonic, transformational “feel-products” to unemotional, utilitarian, informational “think-products” (Ratchford, 1987; Rossiter, Percy, & Donovan, 1991; Shavitt, 1990). Products on the emotional side of the spectrum have been shown to be value-expressive and associated with high levels of ego gratification and social acceptance. Since the effects of the receiver context on advertising effectiveness are driven by social and emotional mechanisms, products more imbued with social and emotional features should be affected to a greater extent by the receiver context. Thus, for example when advertising is perceived as also being viewed by others, a product with higher transformational characteristics should evoke greater impact of the third-person effects.

### 3.3.2 Product Relatedness

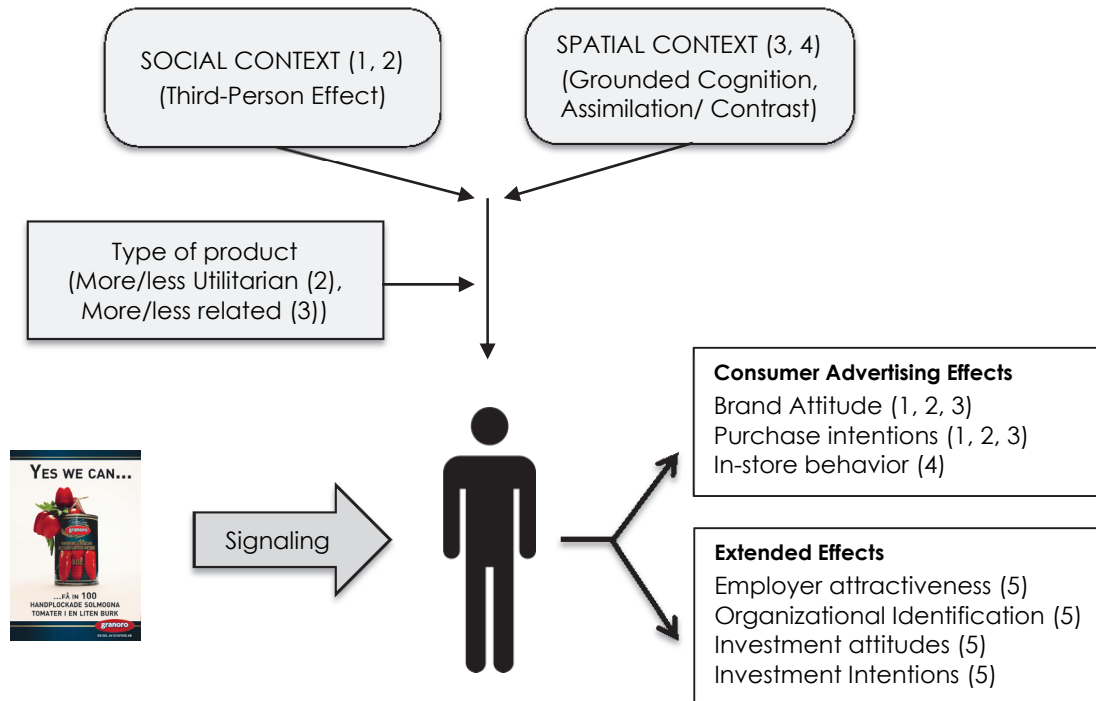
The characteristics of products are many times given, which calls for additional variables that an advertiser can work with to strengthen or attenuate the effects of receiver context on advertising effectiveness. According to excitation transfer theory (Cantor et al., 1975; Duff & Sar, 2015), the effect of grounded cognition will be attenuated if the subject is reminded about the real reason for the excitation. This finding should be applicable to the effects of receiver context on advertising effectiveness as well; for instance, if a product or advertisement is closely related to the context, the impact should decrease or vanish completely. For advertisers, this suggests an opportunity, apart from the effect of the product itself, to design the advertising in such a way as to control the effect of receiver context on advertising effectiveness. For example, if creating an ad for placement in a gymnasium, one might want to make the ad itself less sporty, thus not interfering with the potential positive effect of arousal from the physical activity itself.

# Chapter 4

## Introducing the articles

The main part of this thesis consists of the five articles in which I empirically test my theoretical reasoning. Each article individually probes how the receiver context affects advertising effectiveness; as a group, the five articles test the framework described in the previous chapter. The first article involves an examination of the framework as a whole; the following three articles describe and test the dimensions of receiver context and its moderators. The fifth article takes a step back again and studies the dimensions of different receiver contexts that have different effects on how the advertising is evaluated. Figure 2 shows how the individual articles relate to and examine the different parts of the overall conceptual model.

Figure 2. The theoretical framework, including the respective contribution of each of the five articles in the thesis.



The first article tests the overarching hypothesis of this thesis that receiver context can impact advertising effectiveness. I apply signaling theory to explain the effects of advertising and then suggest that the effect is moderated by the notion that other people are also influenced by the advertising. The second article also investigates how the social context impacts advertising effectiveness, but it explores a situation in which the social context can have a negative impact and considers whether product type moderates the effect. The third article investigates whether the way in which the advertising is consumed has an effect; specifically, it suggests that consumers who are physically active are more positively impacted. Here, the advertised product and the ad itself are thought to influence the effect. The fourth article examines the effects of receiver context on the categorization of advertising, i.e., whether it has an assimilating or contrasting effect on how the advertising is evaluated, along with the resulting effects on consumer shopping behavior. Finally, the fifth article compares the context-induced

effects themselves, showing that the receiver context can prime the subject to evaluate advertising in different ways. In this regard, it differs from the previous four studies, all of which explore differences in the level of the same effects rather than contrasting effects. The five articles will be introduced individually below.

## 4.1. Article 1

**Title: The Signal of Perceived Cognitive Effort (PCE) in Advertising and the Effect of Social Context**

**Submitted for possible publication in *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising* (in second round of reviews)**

**Single-authored manuscript**

In this first article, I investigate the impact of the social receiver context on advertising effectiveness. In two experimental studies, I find that the presence of other people influences the signaling effects of perceived effort in advertising.

Signaling theory has been used to show that a high level of perceived effort in advertising sends signals that are interpreted as positive and thus generate positive attitudes and intentions toward the brand (Ambler & Hollier, 2004; Dahlén, Rosengren, & Törn, 2008; Modig, Dahlén, & Colliander, 2014). Marketing signals have been used in advertising research to show not only that the actual content of advertising has an effect on the evaluations of the ad and the brand, but also that how a commercial message is conveyed has bearing on the evaluation of the ad (Dahlén et al., 2008a). As observed above, a larger advertisement (Kirmani & Wright, 1989) or a higher paper quality (Ambler & Hollier, 2004) signals that the company has spent more money on the advertisement, thus leading to positive perceptions of product quality; also, advertising perceived as more creative hints that the brand is more confident in its product, more competent, and more capable as a marketer (Dahlén et al., 2008; Modig et al., 2014). This article builds on signaling theory to show that the perceived brand ability conveyed by the signal of perceived cognitive effort (PCE) has positive effects on brand attitudes and purchase intentions.

Furthermore, the article establishes that the traditional effect of advertising on the consumer is influenced by the receiver's social context. The influence of perceived influence (IPI)—i.e., the perceived influence of the ad on other people—is shown to enhance the positive effects of perceived cognitive effort. IPI posits that the social context can prime a subject to view his or her own reaction to advertising in light of what it signals to others, such as whether it makes him or her look smart (Eisend, 2008; Sharma & Roy, 2016) or stupid (Dahlén, Rosengren, & Smit, 2015). Since being able to decipher an implicit signal of PCE is perceived as smart, the presence of others will inflate the subject's own brand ratings to seem smart(er).

The article contributes to research on advertising effectiveness both by extending signaling theory to incorporate the signal of PCE and by showing that the receiver's social context is impacting the effects. It also contributes to advertising practice by suggesting that the social context should be taken into consideration when planning, pretesting, executing, and following up on advertising initiatives.

## 4.2. Article 2

**Title: Could It Be Better Not to Advertise? How the Third-Person Effect Impacts Consumer Reactions to Information That a Brand Does Not Use Advertising**

**Submitted for possible publication in *Journal of Advertising Research* (in second round of reviews)**

**First author, manuscript co-authored with Micael Dahlén and Sara Rosengren**

This article examines how the receiver's social context, in the form of the perceived presence of other people, influences the impact of advertising on evaluations of a brand. Building on the Third-Person Effect (Dahlén et al., 2013; Davison, 1983) it concludes that a brand that communicates that it does not advertise is impacted positively, since the perception of the average customer of the brand is positively affected. The Third-Person Effect posits that people in general perceive other people to be less smart and sophisticated than themselves and thus more affected by advertising.



More specifically, the three studies reported in this article find that consumers believe that if a brand does not use advertising to attract attention and reach customers, that practice will result in fewer other persons (who are viewed as less smart and sophisticated) being attracted to the brand. This in turn leads to positive perceptions of the brand's customer base, which spills over to a higher perception of brand quality and thus to more favorable brand attitudes and purchase intentions. In addition, it is found that the characteristics of the product influence the effect of social context. Products perceived as more utilitarian or characterized by lower levels of ego gratification and social acceptance (Ratchford, 1987) are influenced less by a no-advertising strategy.

The article clearly points to the potential effects of the receiver context on advertising effectiveness, and it explicitly illustrates the impact of other consumers on the subject's own perceptions of a brand. Its findings can help to explain the popularity and show the initially counter-intuitive potential of alternative advertising strategies in which brands point out that they are not engaged (at least, not very much) in advertising.

### 4.3. Article 3

**Title: Are Moving Consumers More Moved by Advertising?**

**Submitted for possible publication in *Journal of Advertising Research* (in first round of reviews)**

**First author, manuscript co-authored with Micael Dahlén and Sofie Sagfossen**

As advertising is spreading throughout both our physical and digital surroundings and as consumers are increasingly exposed to advertising while in motion, the question posed in the title of this third article is becoming increasingly relevant. This article describes two field experiments demonstrating that the spatial receiver context, in the form of how the consumer receives the advertising, is influencing advertising effectiveness.

The article is theoretically based on grounded cognition (Barsalou, 1999, 2008; Krishna & Schwarz, 2014), which posits that the body influences the brain. This concept has been applied in advertising research to

explain, for example, that directing the handle of a cup in an ad toward the dominant hand of the viewer facilitates the mental simulation of using the cup and therefore has positive effects on the evaluation of the ad and the brand (Elder & Krishna, 2012).

Prior research has shown that movement in the advertising itself can cause emotional responses that spill over to the evaluation of subsequent advertising and brands (Day, Shyi, & Wang, 2006; Duff & Sar, 2015), but I believe that this is the first study to test the actual effects of consumer movement on advertising effectiveness, and it thus contributes in a novel way to the research on receiver context effects in advertising. The article suggests that consumers who are in motion (walking up a set of stairs or working out in a gym) evaluate advertising more positively through the (mis)attribution of their arousal. More specifically, the increased arousal caused by the physical movement is not attributed to the context inducing the arousal, but instead to the subsequently viewed advertising. Hence, the movement has a positive impact on subjects' attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intentions. Attitude toward the ad is here included as a dependent variable due to the affective nature of the process of grounded cognition.

The article also shows that the perceived relatedness of the product and the ad (for example, the presence of a sporty ad in a gym context) influences the effect of movement, since the subject is then reminded about the real reason for the arousal, thereby nullifying the (mis)attribution (cf. Cantor et al., 1975). This finding suggests that making the connection between the context and the advertising less evident for the consumer can, in the context of consumer movement, actually have positive implications.

For advertisers, the article's findings suggest an opportunity to discriminate between media space due to anticipated presence of consumer movement. This understanding is especially useful in view of the booming interest in physical activity. Also, digital advertisers and media operations have the opportunity to synchronize advertising on portable devices with consumer movement.

## 4.4. Article 4

**Title: The Point of Advertising About Other Stores to the In-store Audience**

**Submitted for possible publication in *Journal of Advertising Research* (in first round of reviews)**

**Third author, manuscript co-authored with Angelica Blom, Fredrik Lange and Micael Dahlén**

In this paper, we investigate the effects of the spatial receiver context on advertising effectiveness. More specifically, we investigate how the relation between the shopping context (receiver context) and the advertised context affects how the ad is evaluated and thus the consumer's shopping behavior. We find that the consumer's location affects how he or she categorizes the advertising, hence influencing whether the ad is contrasted with or assimilated to the context. As such, this fourth article interprets the effect of the receiver context in the form of priming clues in the context against what the advertising is benchmarked.

Increased consumer mobility in modern today's society is taking two forms: both (a) how the consumer personally is moving and (b) the increased mobile use of media, along with the context effects that accompany the multichannel shopping environment. Multi- or omni-channel shopping is rapidly increasing in importance for retailers. In the increasingly seamless relation with the consumer, communication is often received through one channel while the consumer is browsing or shopping in another channel, through the combination of physical and digital advertising (Verhoef, Kannan and Inman, 2015). In two experimental studies, this article shows that the receiver context impacts in-store behavior and the perceptions of store image. In line with previous arguments regarding the effect of the receiver context on advertising effectiveness, it is concluded that being in one context (for example, a brick-and-mortar store) and getting advertising relating to the same context (a brick-and-mortar store extension) leads to the categorization of the two as similar (Stapel et al., 1998). Thus the evaluation of the advertising is contrasted to the context and thereby evaluated less favorably (since the new store is perceived as better in a direct comparison).

Conversely, categorizing the context and the ad as different (e.g., if the ad is promoting an online store extension) leads to an assimilation effect, which in turn will cause spillover effects, causing the existing store to be perceived as better based on positive associations from the ad. Effects on store movement and action as well as purchase behavior (study 1) and perceived store image (study 2) were measured.

Furthermore, in line with prior research on marketing signaling (Dahlén, Rosengren, & Törn, 2008a), when the advertising is signaling higher perceived advertiser effort, this feature will enhance the positive effect of assimilation, thereby further strengthening consumer approach behavior.

The article contributes to research on the effects of context on advertising effectiveness by investigating the influence of where the consumer is exposed to the advertising, in relation to the advertised message itself. Furthermore, it can be practically useful to advertisers and practitioners of omni-channel retailing by suggesting that it is not always optimal to create seamless communication across different channels.

## 4.5. Article 5

**Title: Advertiser Effort Goes a Long Way: The Positive Effects of Perceived Effort in Advertising on B2B, Recruitment, and Investments**

**Submitted for possible publication in *Journal of Advertising Research* (in first round of reviews)**

**Second author, manuscript co-authored with Micael Dahlén and Sara Rosengren**

Another important aspect of the receiver context is its potential to prime the subject to receive the advertising from a different perspective, which in turn affects how the advertising is evaluated. This fifth article builds on marketing signal theory to demonstrate that the receiver context not only influences the effects of advertising on the consumer, but can also lead to other extended effects that vary depending on the particular context.

Advertisements are sending out signals to consumers that may be perceived as an indication of the brand's business performance. In doing so, they may trigger a favorable evaluation of the ad from an investor's perspective, thus affecting one's attitude toward investing in the company whose product is advertised.

Signaling theory has been used to explain that the level of perceived expense and effort in advertising sends clues (signals) that impact other aspects of perceptions of the sponsor (Ambler & Hollier, 2004; Dahlén et al., 2008a; Modig et al., 2014). For example, advertising that is perceived as more creative hints that the brand is also more capable in general (Dahlén et al., 2008a; Modig et al., 2014).

In four experimental studies, the article investigates the effects of advertising that signals more or less advertiser effort in a B2B context, a recruitment context, and an investor context. The article suggests that perceived advertiser effort can have significant effects that go beyond consumer attitudes and intentions to also influence the company's attractiveness as an employer, organizational identification, and investor attitudes and intentions, depending on the receiver context.

The article thus contributes to research on advertising context by suggesting that the receiver context can perform a priming function, leading to extended effects of the advertising. The article also extends current research on marketing signals, finding that signaling theory can be applied to various receiver contexts and that signals have measurable effects on stakeholders other than consumers.

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Table 1 summarizes the contents of the five articles described in chapter 5

Table 1: Overview of the Five Articles Included in the Thesis

#	Article	Receiver context	Explanatory mechanism	Dependent variables	Moderator	Studies	Study design	Stimuli	Sample
1	<b>The signal of perceived cognitive effort (PCE) in advertising and the effect of social context</b>	Social	Signaling Theory	Brand Attitude, Purchase intentions	Influence of Perceived Influence (PII)	2 experimental studies	Study 1 & 2: 2 (High vs Low Perceived Cognitive Effort) x 2 (High vs Low Perceived Social Context)	Advertisements for mock brands, scenarios	Study 1, students, n = 101, Study 2, students, n = 183
2	<b>Could it be better not to advertise? How the third-person effect impacts consumer reactions to information that a brand does not use advertising</b>	Social	Third-Person Effect (TPE)	Brand Attitude, Purchase intentions	Product type (more or less utilitarian product)	3 experimental studies	Pilot Study: target brand uses/ not uses advertising Study 1: target brand uses a lot of/uses/ does not use advertising (low prestige products) Study 2: 2 (brand uses vs does not use advertising x 2 (more or less utilitarian product))	Scenarios	Pilot study, convenience sample, online and central station, n = 469, Study 1, online representative panel, n = 479, Study 2, online representative panel, n = 313
3	<b>Are Moving Consumers More Moved by Advertising?</b>	Spatial	Grounded Cognition	Ad Attitude, Brand Attitude, Purchase intentions	Product relatedness	2 experimental field-studies	Study 1: More vs Less Physical Activity, Study 2: 2 (More vs Less Physical Activity) x 2 (More or Less related Product)	Advertisements for mock brands, Physical activity	Study 1, people in the subway, n = 124, Study 2, gym-customers, n = 193

4	<b>An Omnichannel Advertising Strategy and its Effect on Consumer In-Store Shopping Behavior</b>	Spatial	Assimilation and Contrast	Customer in-store behavior (movement and purchase data)	Advertising Execution (more or less effort)	2 experimental studies, Study 1 field-study	Study 1 & 2: 2 (digital vs physical store extension) x 2 (High vs Low Communication Effort)	Communication for existing brands, scenarios	Study 1, retail-customers, n = 155, Study 2, online representative panel, n = 227
5	<b>Advertiser effort goes a long way: The positive effects of perceived effort in advertising on B2B, recruitment, and investments</b>	Different receiver contexts primed	Signaling Theory	Brand Quality, Employer Attractiveness, Organizational Identification, Investment Attitudes, Investment Intentions		4 experimental studies.	All 4 studies manipulated advertiser effort (high versus low)	Study 1: Mock B2B-ads Study 2: Company presentation booklet Study 3: Real ads Study 4: Mock ads	Study 1, School-staff, n = 137, Study 2, Students, n = 199, Study 3, Retail employees, n = 314 Study 4, Bank customers, n = 175





# Chapter 5

## Academic Contributions

The effects of the surroundings of the receiver of advertising have been sparsely considered in both research and practice (Puntoni & Tavassoli, 2007; Ritson & Elliott, 1999). This thesis investigates how the context of the receiver is influencing advertising effectiveness. As such, it responds to the need for advertising to become more focused on the consumer and more integrated into consumers' lives and experiences (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2016; Rayport, 2013; Rosengren & Dahlén, 2015) and thus to consider the receiver context when investigating the effects of advertising. Furthermore, the increasing mobility and use of social media by receivers of advertising highlights the importance of understanding the influence of the receiver context. If the predominant concept in advertising context research up to this point has been "location, location, location" (cf. Shamdasani et al., 2001), this thesis points out that "reception, reception, reception" must also be considered influential. Receiver context has been defined in prior research (Moorman, 2003), but dimensions included in the concept have not been conceptually investigated. In this thesis I have begun a conceptual development of receiver context by excluding the antecedent mental state and by limiting the suggested scope of the temporal context.

Advertising effectiveness is concerned with both whether and to what degree advertising influences consumers, as well as with what consumer reactions advertising can evoke (Eisend, 2016). This thesis makes important contributions to research on advertising effectiveness in all three of those

dimensions. First, it investigates whether the receiver context of advertising influences consumers and, through the empirical findings, clearly establishes that it does. The thesis thus makes an important theoretical contribution by adding the social receiver context (who else is exposed to the ad) and the spatial receiver context (how and where the subject is exposed to the ad) to the list of variables that can explain how advertising affects consumers' attitudes and intentions. Second, this thesis also provides new insights regarding the degree to which advertising influences consumers, since its findings contribute to increasing the explanatory power of advertising effectiveness, a research goal recommended by Eisend (2015). Third, it not only investigates the most common consumer responses to advertising (attitudes and intentions), but also responds to the call by previous researchers to take actual purchase behavior into account as well (Baumeister et al., 2007). Furthermore, the extended effects of advertising are investigated, establishing that advertising can have effects that go beyond the consumer to impact employer attractiveness, organizational identification, and investment attitudes and intentions as well.

The thesis also contributes to research on social influence (Dahlén et al., 2013; Puntoni & Tavassoli, 2007) by investigating the effects of the perceived views of other people in general on how one interprets noncontroversial advertising, which is the bulk of all advertising. As social media are growing in importance and as media consumption increasingly takes place on portable devices in the presence of other people, the influence of other nonspecific people and the subject's own perceptions of what those people think also become more important. Beyond establishing that the social receiver context has an influence on advertising effectiveness, the thesis also suggests that this influence can be either positive or negative, depending on how the consumer perceives the influence of the advertising on others.

Furthermore, the thesis contributes to research on grounded cognition and on the effects of mood on advertising effectiveness (Krishna & Schwarz, 2014; Duff & Sar, 2015). The thesis empirically extends grounded cognition theory by testing it on the contextual effects induced by the receiver's surroundings (e.g., a subway or a gym). Using grounded cognition to explain the effects of receiver context on advertising effectiveness also contributes to advertising research both theoretically (by extending prior

theoretical understanding of receiver context) and empirically. It extends prior laboratory research (e.g., Duff & Sar, 2015) by demonstrating that the findings also hold in a more ecologically valid setting with actual consumer behavior as the arousal stimulus.

In addition, the thesis contributes to research on the effects on advertising effectiveness of where a consumer is exposed to advertising. Prior research has concluded that contextual advertising is influential, but it has used in-ad contexts (such as different background settings) to test the effects (Chun et al., 2014). Also, it has been noted that the context itself can communicate its own message, thereby priming the consumer for associations that spill over to the advertisement (Dahlén, 2005). This thesis extends that research by investigating whether the receiver context, not the effect of the medium in itself, can also prime associations that lead to an evaluation of the ad in light of the context, ultimately resulting in effects on shopping behavior.

Still further, the thesis contributes to research on advertising context by showing that different receiver contexts not only influence advertising's effects on a consumer but can also prime the subject to interpret advertising signals differently, with consequent differences in practical impact. As such, the thesis contributes both to theory on marketing signals (Dahlén et al., 2008a; Modig et al., 2014; Rosengren & Bondesson, 2014) and to the growing literature on the extended effects of advertising (Rosengren & Bondesson, 2014).

Finally, the thesis addresses the call for more ecologically valid field studies investigating the effects of context in advertising (Moorman, 2003) and for the use of behaviorally related independent and dependent variables (Baumeister et al., 2007). The studies in this thesis are all experimental in nature, but three of the experiments were conducted in the field (both studies in article 3 and the first study in article 4). In article 3, the independent variable is nonmanipulated physical activity, and in article 4 the dependent variables are actual in-store movement, action, and actual purchase behavior. Furthermore, the participants in the 13 studies contained in this thesis encompass many groups of people, from students and representative panels to real shoppers, gym-goers, investors, and employees, suggesting that the

effects of receiver context on advertising effectiveness are generalizable to many situations and receivers.

# Chapter 6

## Contributions to Advertising Practice

Just as it is among academics, understanding of the effects of receiver context on advertising effectiveness is also rather poor in marketing practice. With increasingly fierce competition for consumers' attention and increasingly mobile and social media-influenced consumers, understanding the influence of receiver context can give companies a valuable competitive edge. Furthermore, emphasizing the receiver context and its potential positive effects on advertising effectiveness, as highlighted in this thesis, reinforces the importance of shifting from media-centered to customer-centered advertising (Rayport, 2013).

Gaining a fuller understanding of the influence of the receiver context on advertising gives advertisers new and better tools. This knowledge might not help them to expand their reach, but it may enable them to target receivers in more effective ways, thus achieving a higher return on their advertising investment (cf. Lull & Bushman, 2015). Improving targeting is extremely important today, given the increased competition for people's attention and new technological developments. Targeting is undergoing rapid refinement, but mostly with high-tech methods that can cause advertisers to over-target consumers with questionable results. Today, even big companies are moving away from advanced algorithm-based targeting because it is too expensive and does not seem to deliver much benefit over more traditional advertising to a wider audience (Sloane, 2016). This thesis

can assist companies in using additional, more relevant variables to target consumers. Measurements of position, movement, social context, and even arousal (through physical training applications available on portable media devices) are now available. The findings contained in this thesis could lead to better and smarter use of these variables, reducing the risk of alienating customers because of “too good” targeting (due to intrusive technological algorithms) and instead increasing the positive outcomes.

The extended effects of advertising due to the receiver context can also have important implications for advertisers. For example, the impacts on investor intentions and employer attractiveness highlighted in this thesis widen the potential impact of consumer advertising. By identifying additional forms of positive value that advertising can deliver, this thesis can be used to argue for the strategic impact of the marketing department on business performance, something that is currently under dispute (Germann, Ebbes, & Grewal, 2015; Verhoef & Leeflang, 2009). Furthermore, using the same message for consumers, employees, and investors and then letting the receiver context evoke different effects could lead to increased clarity and control of the brand’s core associations. It could also mean needing to create fewer distinct campaigns directed at many different stakeholders and instead reaching multiple groups more efficiently through a single large campaign.

This thesis also offers important information to media owners. Digital media owners can perfect their offers by using the contextual data already available today (positioning, social situation, etc.) in ways that take the receiver context into consideration. Media owners can thus engage in more effective price discrimination among forms of media, giving their clients a better value for their money and attaining a higher share of sold media space. This would apply to both digital and physical media, but given the difficulties that physical media is facing today, the findings of this thesis may be even more crucial for purveyors of this format. Also, the findings will hold both for large media companies like JCDecaux, which can individualize their offers in a smarter way depending on the product and customer, and the individual gym owner, who can improve his or her ability to sell different ad space.

The evidence of the receiver context's influence also suggests that advertisers should take this factor into consideration when pretesting advertising. Researchers have frequently called for better and more ecologically based pretesting (e.g., Poncin & Derbaix, 2009; Puntoni, de Hooge, & Verbeke, 2014). This thesis recommends that advertisers should become just as conscious of the influence of the receiver context as they are of that of the media context.

This thesis suggests that considering the receiver context could yield significant gains in advertising effectiveness, but this will require substantial insight and understanding with regard to consumer behavior. Receiver context alters the way in which an ad is perceived, but these effects are not easily controlled and predicted since they depend partly on external factors. Hence, the need for better planning and pretesting becomes evident. Also, although advertising woven into the receiver context is less disruptive than traditional advertising, it is also more constant (Rayport, 2013), and this feature can, be perceived as intrusive and have negative effects on advertising effectiveness. But considering the receiver context in a smart way can greatly enhance return on advertising investment.

The findings of this thesis also carry implications for consumers and policymakers. As observed above, today's advertising must become increasingly consumer-centric and integrated into people's lives and experiences in order to be relevant (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2016; Rayport; 2013); it must also motivate people to interact voluntarily with the ad (Rosengren & Dahlén, 2015). As such, a better understanding of advertising effectiveness also benefits the consumer, who will appreciate more effective advertising better suited to his or her interests and will perceive it as more relevant. The findings of this thesis can also be useful to policymakers, as recognizing how the receiver context impacts advertising effectiveness could guide policy decisions on advertising regulation and legislation.

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# Chapter 7

## Limitations and suggestions for further research

In this thesis, I have aimed to contribute to the academic literature on advertising effectiveness in general and on research on the advertising context in particular by showing how the receiver context influences advertising effectiveness.

The five studies in this thesis are all experiments, consistent with most research on advertising effectiveness and consumer behavior. However, future research could apply other methods to the topic of receiver context. The somewhat unclear conceptual description of receiver context calls for applications of a more qualitative approach to identify contexts not already captured. Some research has examined social influence in people's homes (Brodin, 2007; Jayasinghe & Ritson, 2013; Ritson & Elliott, 1999); other contexts could also be explored ethnographically.

The receiver context can induce an affective response that influences the evaluation of subsequent advertising. The application of grounded cognition is particularly thought-provoking, since it opens up possibilities to study how the receiver context can induce subtle, subconscious forms of arousal with previously unrecognized impact on advertising effectiveness. Future research should further explore the effect of these responses. Most prior research, as has also been the case in the field of media context, has explored positive and negative emotions without widely investigating non-valenced moods.

Also, the findings discussed in this thesis should be examined using other dependent variables. Given the emotional nature of many of the effects induced by receiver context and the difficulty of fully capturing these effects (e.g., arousal; Puntoni et al., 2014) with self-reported measurements, the use of more refined methods, such as psychophysical measurements or combining multiple data sources, would be useful and may make it possible to detect relatively small effects.

Future studies could draw on prior research on media context to extend the existing research on receiver context and its effects on advertising effectiveness. One example could be to use limited capacity theory as a mediator to investigate whether the various stimuli and stresses to which subjects are exposed may impact advertising effectiveness, in the same way as clutter and the media context have been shown to do (Angell et al., 2016; Soldow & Principe, 1981; Smit et al., 2015). Also, the moderators of effects on receiver context could be investigated. Product involvement could be particularly interesting as a moderator since (a) it has been used as a boundary condition in prior research on advertisement context (de Pelsmacker et al., 2002) and (b) as an emotional moderator, it could be especially applicable to research on the affect-intensive social and spatial receiver contexts.

Apart from these various aspects of the influence of receiver context on consumers, the more extended effects of receiver context could also be further explored. I have argued in this thesis that the receiver context can prime the receiver of the advertising to evaluate advertising in different ways. Previous research (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2016) has called for increased attention to the extended social effects of advertising. Future research could investigate if receiver context can prime associations or social contexts or induce emotions that might affect, for example, one's social comparisons, creativity or general trust in advertising.

# Chapter 8

## Onwards

The primary message of this thesis is that the receiver context indeed has an effect on advertising effectiveness and that we should accordingly extend the way in which we look at the effects of advertising. Regardless of whether you are a researcher, a marketing or advertising practitioner, or a consumer, I hope that the thesis has provided insights, tools and inspiration relevant to your work and/or to everyday life. For additional details, please read the actual articles, which follow in the second part of this thesis.



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