

Advertising in the eye of the time-constrained beholder

J Poalses

*Researcher
University of South Africa*

poalsj@unisa.ac.za

JPR Joubert

*Professor Research
Director
University of South Africa*

joubejpr@unisa.ac.za

ABSTRACT

The magnetism of the advertising media may not only stimulate customers' satisfaction and interest in an advertisement but it may create purchase intention. However, in the process of advertising, consumers take time to view and engage with advertisements. In this regard the question can be asked whether a single advertisement can have the desired impact on a diverse audience's lived experience of the advertising in the light of perceived time constraints. An exploratory study was conducted to investigate this question, in which 52 diverse socioeconomic South African participants contributed to focus group discussions. The findings confirm disparate perceptions in the way consumers from the affluent, middle and mass economic markets engage, utilise and interpret various forms of new and traditional advertising media as a result of profound differing dynamics encapsulating the lived experience of time. By understanding consumers' attitude towards advertising and the media in which it features, marketers can better strategise their advertising designs.

Keywords: Advertisement; media; time constraint; consumer; attitude, purchase intention, socioeconomic markets

Time. A scarce commodity in advertising. With advertising being notoriously costly it is essential for marketers to target the intended audience in the right space of time and for consumers to take time to view and interpret the advertisement, research the advertised message, engage in discussion about the viewed advertisement and act on the message as intended by the advertisement. Time and timing are of the essence.

Consumers evaluate their world in terms of 'time, space and possessions' (Kaynak, Kara, Chow, & Apil 2013: 632). In this regard, do diverse consumers perceive an advertisement to be equally persuasive during the time taken to create product awareness? The manner in which advertising is perceived is mostly

subjective. Attitudes and feelings towards different media can be derived from personal and psychological factors (Idris, Yajid, & Khatibi 2009). Consumer attitude to time (Okazaki 2004) and personal experience of time (Rosa 2003; Jacobs & Gerson 2004; Licoppe 2004) usually determine the relationship between consumer and advertising media (Hirschman & Thompson 1997) given consumers' daily time constraints. Advertising effort, usually judged according to the presumed advertising expense, results in the reciprocal advertising exchange between advertised brand and consumer. Since consumers spend time, also mental effort, in viewing, analysing and discussing advertisements, they generally expect a well presented advertisement (Dahlén, Granlund, &

Grenros 2009). Suri and Monroe's (2003: 100) research indicates that having to make consumer decisions, especially under time pressure, involves 'perceived sacrifice to arrive at their judgements of value'. This implies that 'perceptions of value will increase with increases in perceived quality or decrease in perceived sacrifice'. The opposite also holds true. These authors also state that consumers' 'motivation to process information' has an effect on 'systematic processing...irrespective of the level of time pressure'. For advertising, this could suggest that consumers would be more willing to 'sacrifice' personal time to not only view an advertisement, but conscientiously 'process' the content thereof if they feel motivated by either the advertising message of advertised product to do so, regardless of their time schedules. In other words, advertising needs to appear beneficial and address a need. In an increasingly cluttered advertising landscape consumers are somehow able to criticise and question advertising messages. Advertising persuasion theory therefore needs to acknowledge both the advertisers' goals and the purpose for which consumers utilise advertisements (Ducoffe 1996).

In line with this study's focus on socioeconomic markets' perceptions of advertising, Zarantonello, Jedidi and Schmitt (2013: 52) established whether advertising should be approached differently in emerging and developed markets. It was found that persuasive advertising in developed markets require both 'experiential' (feeling based) and 'functional' (cognition based) elements, with a somewhat stronger focus on experiential messages with elements that 'stimulate sensations, feelings, imagination, behaviours and lifestyles' as these affective responses that will ultimately motivate purchase intention. On the contrary, 'functional advertising plays a more important role in persuasion' within emerging markets. Disparate findings can be expected from different socioeconomic consumer markets. Underlying cultural values, under which 'time orientation' is categorised, 'differ significantly from one market to another', yet are considered 'one of the most influential factors in consumer behaviour' (Kaynak et al 2013: 632). For this reason, exploring perceptions to advertising and advertising media from different

socioeconomic consumer markets is relevant to the study on which this article is based.

Against the background that time pressure has been identified as a variable capable of influencing consumer behaviour, much of the available literature on the topic of time constraints during advertising is rather dated and recent insights proved to be scarce to source. Equally scarce is literature on time constraints during advertising from socioeconomic markets' perspective. Moreover, the unavailability of literature from the South African consumer context is also evident. This article reports on research conducted on the role that advertising plays in consumers from different socioeconomic markets' time-constrained lives and contributes to the perceived gap in the contemporary body of knowledge. Against this background, this article presents the qualitative findings based on data generated from consumers representing the affluent, middle and mass socioeconomic markets.

CONSUMERS' TIME AND ADVERTISING: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Perceived attitude towards advertising in different media contexts, given consumers' availability of time, was the focal point of this research. The magnetism of the advertising media may not only stimulate customers' satisfaction with, and interest in an advertisement but it may create the intention to purchase the advertised product or service. Cost effective advertising could be accomplished by deciding on the most viable media for advertising products and services, and may make it more useful and helpful, not only to the marketer, but also to consumers.

The literature review sets out to identify how marketers can better understand consumers, given the audience's availability of time. The review presents a valuable point of departure from which consumer behaviour in relation to advertising media can be established in the context of perceived time constraints. The overview of the body of knowledge presented in the review is subsequently substantiated with findings from the empirical research.

Consumer attitude towards advertising

Perceived informativeness and entertainment, referred to as *infotainment*, and perceived irritation are the two psychological motives that determine consumer attitude in the adoption of new advertising media (Okazaki 2004: 448). Leiss, Kline, Jhally and Botterill (2013: 5) argue that 'advertising is not just a business expenditure undertaken in the hope of moving some merchandise off the store shelves, but is rather an integral part of modern culture'. An attitude as such. The value that consumers place on advertising differs due to personal factors (such as gender and age) and psychological factors (for example, personality), which may also affect the choice of advertising medium. Understanding consumers is a basic precept of marketing and advertising. With consumers being generally inundated by new and traditional media advertising initiatives, a key assumption in the adoption of advertising media is that audiences have individual needs. The assumption that consumers are in possession of adequate product information, or alternatively, providing inconsistent or repetitive advertising information, may lead to consumer confusion or annoyance and compromise trust (Walsh & Mitchell 2010). Furthermore, viewing and utilising advertising media requires time, most often personal time. Mobile advertisers should especially be mindful not to invade consumers' privacy and risk trust (Rau, Zhou, Chen & Lu 2013). For this reason the concept of time becomes important when attempting to understand consumers' attitude towards advertising.

Consumers' lived experience of time

'Time' is one of the most commonly used nouns in the English language, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (BBC News 2006). The widespread preoccupation with the speeding up of everyday life in modern societies is noted by Gleick (1999) as the rate of change has accelerated. Advanced technology enables the simultaneity and instantaneity in which life events take place (Lash 2002). Consequently, modern citizens tend to feel so increasingly time harassed with limited personal time (Nowotny 1994), that Rosa (2003: 10) refers to an *acceleration society*. Time pressure is characterised by a perceived unavailability of time within which to weigh alternate consumer decisions (Suri &

Monroe 2003). The emergence of new media technologies, such as the mobile phone and the Internet, creates new kinds of sociotechnical relationships and practices. Urry (2000: 129) refers to *instantaneous time*. The distinction between private and public time has become indistinct (Katz & Aakhus 2002; Ling 2004), and as such, interpersonal correspondence has also become transformed (Licoppe 2004).

Despite these perceived time constraints, television seems to be a preferred form of social media. Shirky (in Kinash & Brand 2014: 57) is of the opinion that approximately 100 million hours have been spent on creating the content of Wikipedia, which is considerably 'much less time than the amount of time people spend watching television'. Nevertheless, time pressure has been shown to be a barrier to consumers' purchasing behaviour. This is evidently seen in studies that examine the effect of time pressure on consumers' healthy food choices (van Herpen & van Trijp 2011: 155), finding that consumers under time pressure speed up the process of knowledge acquisition by avoiding advertising elements they believe will not benefit them, and in this process 'alter their attention process'. Thorough, in-depth processing of information becomes prevented (Rau et al 2013).

Consumer-media relationship

According to Tsang, Ho and Liang (2004), consumers generally have negative attitudes toward mobile advertising unless they have consented to it. A direct relationship between consumer attitudes towards advertisements and consumer behaviour was noted where a positive attitude would inadvertently result in ideal purchasing behaviour, and vice versa. Advertising media provide a frame of reference from which consumers interpret their expected consumption patterns (Hirschman & Thompson 1997). In this regard, consumers position the image of themselves in relation to the images portrayed in advertisements. It is proposed that consumers' interpretation of the media is an intrinsically social and interactive process in which audiences do not react as passive consumers of media persuasion, but rather actively engage in 'exercise[ing] informed inference' to create meaning (Scott 1994: 466). Consumers' preferred choice of advertising media will therefore be dictated by

their availability of time to engage with advertising media respectively. With the advancement of social media, Kinash & Brand (2014: 57) also shares this sentiment in more recent literature, stating that 'we are doing more creating and less passive consuming'.

Hirschman and Thompson (1997: 47-55) conclude that three types of relationships are formed between consumers and media, namely *inspiring* and *aspiring* relationships, which are emulating relationships focused on constructing a desired self-concept or attainable lifestyle; *deconstructing* and *rejecting* relationships, which are accompanied by consumer scepticism and focused on insulating the self-concept from threatening or unrealistic images. Lastly, *identifying* and *individualising* relationships, which are empathetic in nature and focused on affirming self-concept and current consumption patterns in relation to media images, and icons are viewed as a reflection of one's better qualities.

Value versus attitude

Ducoffe (1996) is of the opinion that the distinction between advertising value and attitude is not clear. However, Liu (2002) identifies a four-dimensional interactivity structure, which requires consumers to make voluntary and active decisions as opposed to most traditional media where consumers rely on what media display with minimal control over the advertising message. In addition, barriers of physical, spatial and temporal distance experienced during traditional interpersonal communication are eliminated with the use of new media interactivity. Advertisements that address consumers' current cognitive and affective needs for information, or psychological motives, would determine how involved the consumer would be, and as such, be an indication of the perceived value of an advertisement to the consumer (Blumler 1979; Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch 1974; Rubin 1981, 1983).

Another framework of consumer perception on advertising is proposed by Wang, Zhang, Choi and D'Eredita (2002: 1147) who identified six factors that contribute to consumers' attitudes towards traditional and new advertising: entertainment, informativeness, irritation, credibility, interactivity, demographics, attitude and motive. They are of the opinion

that the Internet holds much advertising promise in reaching affluent 'goal-oriented consumers' who are pressured for time. However, mobile advertising during high time pressure has been found to cause a negative attitude (Rau et al 2013). The experience of having limited time has manifested as a universal phenomenon. Consumers' respective time-constraints present marketers with the difficult task of determining the most acceptable form in which to advertise to reach the desired target audience in such a way that their advertising and choice of media do not negatively influence the preconceived attitudes and values that already exist towards advertising.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to address the role of traditional and new media advertising in consumers' time-constrained lives in the study on which this article is based, the consumer market was categorised according to mass, middle and affluent economic consumer markets to establish whether these consumer segments share similar attitudes and values towards advertising in relation to their respective daily diaries and accompanied time constraints.

Research design and sample

An explorative qualitative approach among adult South African consumers from the general public ranging from the affluent, middle (both emerging and realised markets) and mass socioeconomic segments was applied. Participant criteria for six focus group discussions, each involving 8-12 participants, in the Gauteng region, inclusive of the greater City of Tshwane and Johannesburg, comprised the metropolitan area, household segment and income group due to approximately 34% of South African economic activity being generated from this region's consumers (Masemola, Van Aardt & Coetzee 2010). Household segments were determined based on income group, where mass market consumers earn R0 to R50 000 per annum per household, middle market consumers earn R50 000 to R750 000 per annum per household and affluent market consumers earn R750 000 and higher per annum per household. Each household segment participated in two focus groups.

A random sample of demarcated suburbs in Tshwane and Johannesburg was selected for each household income cluster. These selected areas were used to select a stratified purposeful sample from individual households within specific areas representing different income segments in Gauteng to allow information-rich cases to be included for in-depth study. In essence, the sampled suburbs served as income classifier in selecting individuals for participation in the focus group discussions. Local telephone directories were used as a sample frame to recruit consumers residing within a specific demarcated income area to participate.

The sample structure is reflected in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Sample structure

Recruitment criteria	Mass market sample		Middle market sample		Affluent market sample	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Johannesburg	8	15.3	8	15.3	8	15.3
R0-50 000*	18	34.6	-	-	-	-
R50 000-R750 000*	-	-	18	34.6	-	-
R750 000 +*	-	-	-	-	16	30.7
Total						

Notes: *income group per annum

Table 1 reflects the total sample ($n=52$) for the mass market ($n_1 = 18$), the middle market ($n_2 = 18$) and the affluent market ($n_3 = 16$).

Data collection, research instrument and analysis

Participants were screened telephonically and briefed that the purpose of the discussions was simply to understand the ways in which consumers use and regard various advertising media in the time they have available respectively prior to being recruited to focus groups according to the screening criteria in Table 1. Participation in the focus groups was voluntary and anonymous. One central location each in the suburbs of Tshwane and Johannesburg was used. Target consumers were randomly assigned to either one of the two focus groups held for each income segment respectively. A minimum of two researchers facilitated each discussion group

and all discussions were electronically recorded and transcribed for ethical and analysis purposes. The discussion guide was designed to address this study's main objective, namely to understand the three consumer segments' underlying behavioural motivations, values and attitudes towards traditional and new media advertising within the context of the changing role of advertising media in South African consumers' time-constrained lives, with specific reference to low and high reputation brands, low and high involvement, preferred usage, perceptions, attitudes, trust, perceived value, appropriateness and challenges. Discussions allowed for considerable scope within the discussion for exploring issues as they arose.

Transcribed verbatim responses per income segment were collated and thematically analysed. The credibility and quality of this study was strengthened by applying a triangulation cross-examination approach inclusive of both secondary insights and primary sources. This entailed substantiating

the quality of the research instrument and acquired data through the implementation of data, theory, investigator and methodological triangulation.

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Each main topic of discussion is presented below and categorised according the findings from the affluent, middle and mass consumer market groups.

Current advertising behaviour

For consumers from the *affluent market* the role of advertising media is threefold as it serves to inform, communicate and entertain. Advertising focuses on satisfying both needs and wants. Affluent participants are prone to being analytical in their comments by challenging information presented to them and not merely accepting advertising media at face value. Awareness of the latent economic role of advertising to generate sales is evident and the effect that advertising could potentially have on consumer demand is implicitly understood within this segment. In addition, this awareness assists these consumers to

appraise the value and benefits of the advertised products, services and ideas and to weigh up the expected benefit against the price that they are offered. This behaviour promotes efficient, rational decision making for purchase intent.

The societal role of advertising has become apparent in so far as advertising influences and contributes to social trends. For example, neighbours who tend to purchase similar items display the notion that they are 'keeping up with the Joneses', which is indicative of conspicuous consumption. Furthermore, parents in affluent households act as role models in terms of purchasing behaviour while browsing advertisements in different ways. Economically literate parents, to whom saving is an important value, may inspire their children to view advertisements with the view of purchasing in the same light. Alternatively, wealthy parents who are not particularly focused on saving behaviour could directly or indirectly convey the message to their children that advertisements can be viewed as a shopper's paradise with no limits in terms of spending. The affluent groups expressed the need for small indulgences as a personal reward and advertising is often seen as an appetiser for this need.

Personal time is valued. As such, higher irritability was voiced with advertising than within the other consumer segment groups. The affluent groups indicated that they often 'zap' through television advertisements making use of their HD PVR (high definition personal video recorder) facility in an attempt to avoid irrelevant advertisements and time wastage. In addition, they felt that mainstream advertising in traditional media underestimates consumers' intelligence and is aimed at divergent lifestyles. It also became quite clear that overtly intellectual advertisements or advertisements that had complicated story lines where viewers were expected to make their own deductions were highly irritating and made them resist the particular products. Responses, such as the following, reproduced verbatim, were expressed:

My daughter just recently bought a cell phone. She saw it on television and she made a choice from there and then only she saw what the cell phone can do.

... for the younger generation, because they're very brand conscious. To the youngsters it's important to impress by having the right brands, everything's got to be just right.

One needs to buy something pleasurable every now and again...but keep the advertising short and factual.

Cellphone...I get hundreds of sms's. Even from my butcher. Sometimes it can be irritating though...it's the middle of the night...here comes the 'ping'...they have no time limit.

It is evident from discussions with the emerging and established middle market groups that the role of advertising media is first and foremost aspirational. Advertisements that display an ideal lifestyle, featuring characteristics consumers aspire to seem to be more noticeable, informative, entertaining and persuasive. In theory, consumers that aspire to the portrayed lifestyle expect materialistic freedom from perceived current constraints. Thus, advertised products and services pitched at affluent consumers may actually appeal to a much broader target market, such as the emerging and realised middle market. The so-called 'Peter Pan syndrome', a pop-psychology term, is particularly applicable to this market as it describes seemingly unattainable aspirational goals, needs and wants. These consumers appear to be less aware of the latent economic role of advertising to generate sales with groups indicating a dichotomy in economic literacy. The role of feelings and emotions in consumer decisions seems to be more apparent in this segment with aspirations and expectations being omnipresent.

For the middle market groups the societal role of advertising media is as evident as in the affluent segment in so far as advertising influences and contributes to social trends. Conspicuous consumption and the influence of role models also define much of the advertising media usage. The middle market consumer appears to be somewhat less rationally discerning with advertising media than the affluent group. There seems to be a stronger preference for advertising media with humorous appeals and high entertainment

value to which these consumers would be willing to dedicate more time. However, these consumers need to be able to exercise choice and control in terms of the time of day they would be willing to afford advertising time to enjoy the content of advertisements. The use of metaphors, symbols, humorous appeals and high entertainment value at an almost subliminal level of cognition is particularly relevant to this market as they appreciate the use of clever concepts, humour and ideas that require indirect thought processes 'between the lines'. The findings from the middle market are represented by the following selected verbatim recordings:

Yes I will look at advertising if I find it interesting or entertaining...like that ad with the Daddy Cool, or what's it?...brilliant...good entertainment, but no I won't run over and buy the product. Because honestly I couldn't even remember for which one of the cell [mobile phone] companies the ad was. But I loved the ad.

I hate those Clientele adverts. If I switch the channel and that's on, I would immediately change the channel again...not bother going back to that channel for some time...very repetitive ...saying the same thing, maybe with a little bit of a different message. But I don't find it entertaining at all.

We know we have germs, we know we have many diseases, but you don't have to throw it in our face that you need to check your house every single day and that you need to sterilise everything that is in your house.

I do not like advertising over cell phones because they contact or sms you any time throughout the day.

The mass market appears to perceive advertising media differently. Literal interpretations of advertising messages emerge as an underlying theme throughout the group discussions. Furthermore, discussions on the relevance of advertising revealed that the proverbs, sayings, people, symbols, metaphors and quotes through which a particular product or service is communicated, are reflective of a particular mind set and personal value set. Advertisers should be mindful of how the value sets of different markets could influence

the interpretation of the same message in a particular advertisement. Reference was made to various literal interpretations of advertisements, which, in their opinions, diminish the credibility of the advertised product or service. Scepticism abounds in this market due to the literal takeout of advertising messages. The use of unrealistic visual stimuli is noticed and visuals demonstrating the actual use of products and services are required to provide justification for usage. Mention was also made that the product needs to be personally experienced in order to establish credibility. Scant evidence regarding the economic role of advertising to generate sales manifested during discussions. High repetition of advertisements that seem single-minded, straightforward and literal are valued and seem to have a higher persuasive impact as opposed to advertisements portraying symbolic messages. The societal role of advertising is also viewed in a different light when compared to the middle and affluent markets. For this segment the concept of conspicuous consumption is not as evident. Rather, groups of like-minded consumers are inclined to discuss and compare advertisements in terms of price and quality offered for products and services at various stores and are consulted during job-searching excursions. Consequently collectivism, as societal value, underpins much consumer decision making and finds expression in a form of herding behaviour. As such, this consumer market tends to be more willing to spend time viewing and discussing advertisements, followed by protracted purchasing behaviour in search of the advertised product, which is often first personally tested prior to purchasing. Once again, the following selected verbatim recordings emerged from the mass market focus group discussions:

The drink in the advertisement that says 'it gives you wings' can't be true.

Hippopotamuses can't eat chocolate. It is now another job to explain to the youth.

Fridges are advertised full of food and drinks but it is empty when you buy it in the shops.

Look out for pamphlets...go from store to store to see products.

I first hear from my friends if they know this product. I will not just buy it if I do not know it.

The evolution of changing advertising media

The affluent consumer has entered a stage of convenience with expanded usage of media devices and content, which are fully embraced by this market. In addition to traditional media exposure, content is increasingly and swiftly available on multiple electronic screens, such as television, personal computer and cell phone, almost anywhere a consumer could possibly require it. The mobility of media devices allows for accessibility of media advertising content to be viewed almost anywhere. ACNielsen (2009) concurs that affluent consumers are spending more time viewing television, their personal computers and cell phones. Greater exposure to evolving technology implies that these consumers are generally also more exposed to both traditional and new media advertising. However, the consumer is also provided with options to feel more in control of this exposure and time allocated to it. Consumer electronic devices, such as digital video recorders (DVR) and personal video recorders (PVR), allow the digital recording, playback and fast-tracking of television viewing. Most of these functionalities were introduced as recently as 2007. Consumers who prefer not to be exposed to television advertisements are now in a position to skip these advertisements. Many households from this segment have various televisions, radios, personal computers and cell phones with Internet accessibility, which allows each family member the opportunity of exercising control over individual audio and visual media needs and devices as opposed to the other economic consumer markets. Some selected verbatim recordings from the affluent market discussions are presented below.

A strong word-of-mouth is something like 'Hello peter', an anonymous, digital form of word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth used to be more informal, now it is a more formal way of advertising...people now pay to hear other's word-of-mouth.

I think a few years ago word-of-mouth used to be utilised more as you did not have the

Internet and e-mail, and having to ask someone what they think about something was almost the only resource you used.

I am very happy to have PVR as I can flash through these things [advertisements].

As mentioned previously, the middle market generally aspires to a sought-after lifestyle characterised by affluent convenience. They may therefore also own technologically advanced gadgets, albeit not always to the extent of the affluent consumer. While this market is increasingly embracing digital devices, they are not opposed to traditional media and media advertising. Some households are in a position where they can exercise control over their advertising viewing preferences due to the acquisition of technological devices. However, for most of these families the media viewing control resides mainly in one family member. Some selected verbatim recordings from the middle market discussions are the following:

The Toyota ad is my favourite, I love that! I don't watch the fox terrier because I've got PVR, so I just fast-forward it.

Billboards are ideal as you do not need to buy, or subscribe or give out money to have it. Only those who have DSTV, web-enabled cell phones, Internet and those things can see the new media. Billboards are something that everybody can see as you pass it by, the greatest majority.

The StaySoft and washing powder ads are not aimed at me...South Africa is so diverse, consumers will have an issue with this. It is just something that passes time...however, we are advancing in life, people are becoming more dynamic.

The majority of participants from the mass market segment seem to have a high preference for traditional media advertising. Consumers in this segment that are exposed to digital advertising are apparently in the minority, as their cell phones are limited to the basic contacting functions, and they seldom refer to Internet accessibility. Therefore, their views on the evolution of media advertising are unique. To them, the evolution of advertising entails being able to view

television advertisements in colour as opposed to the black-and-white era of television. Some of them seem aware of the role of modern technology, although to them it means that advertisements are able to convey the same message in a shorter time. Some participants found it difficult to express their views on technology and rather mentioned the improvement of products. The television medium was specifically mentioned in so far as it portrays the benefits and uses of products more visually, which is interpreted as being more realistic, as opposed to the static display of advertisements of the past era. Personal time used to view advertisements was not identified as a concern to these consumers. A pertinent verbatim recording from the mass market discussions highlights this point:

That time when TV was black and white, it was like a thing is bright, you see it's written bright, but you're not sure what colour it is. Now you see, oh, it's bright, you see its colour. So it has changed from the past, from black and white to colour. It's better in colour.

I can say it changes. Like the Aromat one, now they're using the Cheese Aromat. Before they were using the Chilli Aromat or the Original Aromat.

Trust in traditional and new media

Trust is a subjective judgement made by the consumer, based on knowledge from past experience and from the overall image and perception of the particular advertiser or product. In order to place trust in an advertisement, the consumer needs to be able to believe that the advertising message is truthful and factual. In order for an advertisement to be rendered trustworthy, consumers expect both the advertisement and the advertised product or service to adhere to certain subjective criteria, as part of a validation process, after which it can be trusted to be true and factual. The same applies to advertising media, as consumers would tend to prefer viewing advertisements presented in a particular medium if the advertisements presented in that medium has in the past proved to be truthful and trustworthy.

Differences in opinion were expressed by the three segments on the issue of perceived confidence in and trustworthiness of both

traditional and new media advertising. Participants revealed that the product category did not influence the trust placed in various advertising media. Table 2 reflects advertising media ranked from most to less trusted by consumer market segment.

Table 2 indicates that *affluent consumers* view new electronic media and specifically the Internet and television as being trustworthy. Cell phones are also perceived as being trustworthy and were mentioned as important media informing word-of-mouth advertising. New media offer these consumers greater flexibility and the benefit of multi-tasking with other time-consuming work and lifestyle activities. The concept of trust should, however, be interpreted with caution, given the associated advertising scepticism which characterises these consumers. To a certain extent, traditional media are either being replaced by or incorporated into new media, such as the electronic viewing of newspapers as opposed to reading the actual printed version. The affluent participants displayed a need to feel in control of the media types informing them in their purchasing decisions, and as a result thereof, they tended to prefer independently browsing the Internet to find what they are looking for prior to engaging in word-of-mouth. This seems to be indicative of an individualistic consumer mind set, which differs somewhat from the middle and substantially from the mass markets. The use of various media when confronted with high- and low-involvement purchase decisions was also investigated. The trust in various new media and word-of-mouth reflects strongly in high-involvement decisions, with the Internet widely consulted in decisions of this nature. However, the value of word-of-mouth is less social and more individualistic compared to the middle and mass markets.

A noteworthy dualism emerged within the *middle market* consumer groups. Among the mature participants (established middle market), a stronger preference for traditional media advertising was expressed. Although participants utilised new media devices on almost a daily basis, the reasons given ranged from being more conventional in nature to a general annoyance with new media, which tends to be omnipresent. These participants, however, often made reference to their teenage

TABLE 2
Trust in advertising media

Ranked trust	ADVERTISING MEDIA		
	Affluent market	Middle market	Mass market
1	Internet	Word-of-mouth	Word-of-mouth
2	Television	Billboards	Television
3	Word-of-mouth	Pamphlets/flyers	Radio
4	Cell phones	Internet	Pamphlets/flyers
5	Billboards	Television	Newspapers
6	Radio	Cell phones	Billboards
7	Magazines	Radio	Advertising in/on transport
8	Pamphlets/flyers	Magazines	Internet
9	Demonstrations	Demonstrations	Magazines
10	Newspapers	Newspaper	Cell phones
11	<i>Insufficient reference made to 'advertising in/on transport'</i>	<i>Insufficient reference made to 'advertising in/on transport'</i>	Posters (A3) <i>Insufficient reference made to 'demonstrations'</i>
	<i>Insufficient reference made to 'posters'</i>	<i>Insufficient reference made to 'posters'</i>	

and young adult children (emerging middle market) who demonstrate a greater affinity for new media, especially cell phones, due to their mobility and accessibility, as well as the social status such technology appears to afford them. The younger participants in these groups agreed with this perception. It would seem that conspicuous consumption is more evident among the emerging middle market consumers as opposed to the established middle market and affluent participants. Yet, in the case of reliable advertising sources, all participants agreed that word-of-mouth advertising remains the most effective. When participants were confronted with high-involvement decisions, word-of-mouth, billboards and pamphlets seem to be of greater importance and influence.

Consumers from the *mass market* revealed a strong affinity for traditional media advertising. The majority of mass market consumers have either not been exposed to a variety of new media devices yet, or they are unable to access the Internet regularly enough to make informed purchasing decisions. Consequently, they rely on word-of-mouth advertising to a greater extent. Many of these participants seem to duplicate their peers'

purchasing decisions with ease, while others would validate word-of-mouth advice with other printed confirmations, especially if visually realistic in nature such as readily available pamphlets and television advertisements. This dynamic confirms the importance of social acceptance and influence on consumer decision making. In comparison to the affluent and middle markets, the mass market mentioned radio advertising as a more prominent medium, which is both accessible and trustworthy. However, the auditory nature of radio broadcasting is overshadowed by the audio-visual impact of television advertising. High-involvement decisions are largely dependent on the social structures in which consumers function, and therefore word-of-mouth plays a vital role in this regard. In addition, these participants find newspaper advertising more trustworthy than magazine advertising, since advertisements in daily newspapers appear regularly and without major time lapses. Advertisements in weekly or monthly magazines, in contrast, lose their impact because of the longer intervals between them. As far as time is concerned, it became clear that these consumers prefer viewing printed advertisements on a daily basis as a means to stay abreast of latest products and

special offerings, however, they are not of the opinion that personal time is wasted during this endeavour.

Challenges facing the advertising media industry

Arguably, as a consequence of having more options to choose from, the *affluent market* tends to become increasingly more discerning, both regarding personal time and what they would like to receive in media advertising. Increasing flexibility and speed have become salient concerns. These consumers are bombarded with an increasing array of advertising messages per day. Modern technological devices do, however, allow consumers to simply switch off or tune out. An assortment of product options is available, which underlines the need for concise, informative, creative and thought-provoking advertising messages to be effective. Participants were given the opportunity to mention what they believe could be challenges currently faced by the advertising media industry. Three of the relevant responses are provided below.

... Especially these days where we have a variety of brands. Unless you know of someone who has already tested it ... or else you go for the old brand that everybody's known for years.

I think it's not advertising as such in a crisis. Because at the end of the day I think those people who do advertising sometimes lose the point of the advertising.

I don't trust what just any person tells me. After listening to five people I will remain critical in the questions I'll ask.

Advertisements are required to present product offerings that will fulfil the *middle market's* need for conspicuous consumption in such a manner that the message is entertaining, yet intellectually considerate. Social media will need to become more predominant in establishing product awareness and commercialising brands to better support traditional advertising or text-based advertisements. Increased use of more creative advertising and content for greater online interactivity seems imperative. The generational divide between younger and more

mature consumers is evident in this segment. Younger middle market consumers appear to be much more open to mobile advertising, such as via cell phones, whereas the more mature generations express a stronger inclination towards traditional media advertising, such as pamphlets, television and billboards. Targeting the middle market therefore implies that advertisers will need to be certain of the age group at whom the advertising campaign is aimed. The following are excerpts from representatives of the middle market:

The issue of competitiveness between brands ... And advertisements are getting more expensive, making it difficult for the smaller companies.

Target market ... I think it is difficult making an advertisement which targets everybody, something everybody can associate with.

It [advertising] is expensive and people are discerning.

The *mass market* expresses a need for media advertising that involves some form of educational value. The manner in which the youth could interpret the symbolic content of media advertisements seems to be of concern to many participants from this segment, and as such, advertisements conveying the realistic 'truth' are more credible. Advertisements should ideally be informative, and in many cases, step-by-step directions or benefits need to be explicated. This market understands the challenge the advertising industry is facing due to Internet inaccessibility to a great majority of South Africans. Furthermore, due to the high illiteracy rate in South Africa, traditional print media advertising also faces the challenge of not reaching the desired target market. Some verbatim responses in this regard are the following:

There are challenges...advertising a product without teaching us people.

You can tell them about your product but at the end of the day what do you want to know is that ... what do I pay for the product? What will I get from it?

Do not advertise on the Internet. You are not

going to reach a lot of people, especially those poor people who don't have access to Internet.

Usually they make them [advertisements] difficult to understand.

SYNTHESIS

Figure 1 conceptualises the outcome of the study on the role of traditional and new media advertising in consumers' time-constrained lives. The focal themes explored in this qualitative research and displayed in the figure involve the perceptions of the affluent, middle and mass markets pertaining to current advertising behaviour, evolution of changing media advertising, trust in traditional and new media as well as the perceived challenges facing the advertising media industry. The concentric circles denote the intensity level of each of the four focal themes.

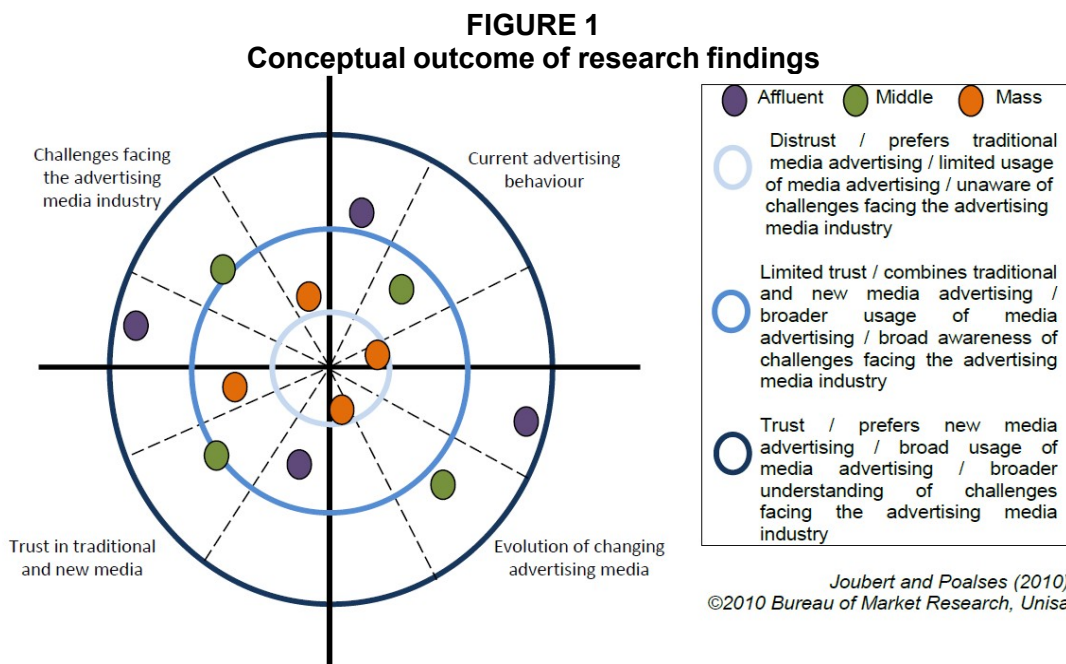
Against the theoretical framework of Hirschman and Thompson's (1997) consumer-media relationship and how the different relationships influence consumers' self-concept, presented earlier in this paper, the empirical research findings confirm affluent, middle and mass market consumers' media relationship fit the theoretical descriptions. *Affluent consumers* maintain an *identifying* and *individualising* relationship as they utilise new media advertising to affirm their self-concept and current consumption patterns in relation to

media images which are viewed as a reflection of their better qualities. It also seems that *middle market consumers'* relationship with advertising media can be categorised as *inspiring* and *aspiring* given the evident concept of conspicuous consumption behaviour, which are emulating relationships focused on constructing a desired self-concept or attainable lifestyle. Conversely, *mass market consumers* rather seem to uphold a *deconstructing* and *rejecting* relationship characterised by scepticism and focused on insulating the self-concept from perceived threatening or unrealistic images.

CONCLUSION

Time is indeed a scarce commodity in advertising as the manner in which advertising is perceived is undeniably mostly subjective. Time scarcity is especially evident among middle- and affluent consumer market groups as opposed to the mass market who did not denote the concept of time. The aim of this article was to debate whether diverse affluent, middle and mass socioeconomic consumers have comparable perceptions about the persuasiveness of an advertisement during the time taken to create product awareness. Our findings offer several key contributions which have implications for research and marketing practice.

It seems that the perceived pace of life and



related technological innovations have accelerated during the past few years. This notion is particularly relevant in the affluent market and less so among the middle and mass markets because it is less persuasive there. As a result of this dynamic, consumers' lived experience of time plays a profound role in the way they feel towards and ultimately approach media advertising. Technological advancements aid modernised consumers in being able to choose whether or not to view advertising, specifically new media advertising. The extent to which consumers from various markets extend their trust towards traditional and new advertising media differs. Although word-of-mouth communication is collectively considered to be a trustworthy medium, differentiation was evident in the manner in which the content is sourced by various consumers. The affluent market obtains information idiosyncratically from, among others, the Internet and television, while the mass market's sourcing occurs in a largely collectivist manner by means of discussions about traditional advertising media between like-minded groups of consumers. Television and radio advertising is also discussed as social platforms and distilled into trustworthy information. The middle market's word-of-mouth communication is, in contrast, mainly informed by outdoor advertising, pamphlets, flyers and, to a lesser extent, the Internet and television. Cell phones serve as an Internet substitute among the emerging middle market for the distribution of marketing messages, and also inform this segment's word-of-mouth communication. In the affluent market they fulfil a complementary function to the Internet. Depending on the value, quality, longer-term investment and associated risk involved in the purchase of the product or service, different purchasing behaviours are evident among the various segments. A consumer's choice in advertising medium from which information is gathered is predominantly derived from a convenience perspective, mainly driven by availability of time.

A key assumption that emanated from this study is that audiences from various markets have different cognitive, affective and interactive needs when engaging and adopting various advertising media. It can be concluded that the post-modern perception of time has

influenced advertising media preferences, engagement with various advertising media as well as attitude towards and usage of these media. It is furthermore evident that associated digital technological media advancements have contributed to the changing perception of advertising media. Increased access to information is evident among all segments, but the current economic climate appears to have resulted in a move back to reliance on word-of-mouth advertising and testimonials from family, friends and role models. The pace of life has accelerated for most consumers from the middle and affluent markets, which evidently results in a preference for electronic and/or mobile media advertising which offers the self-regulatory control of viewing time and viewing length. The mass markets' contrasting lifestyle leans more towards a slower, unhurried perspective, with less need to attend to multiple timelines, and as such, verbal word-of-mouth discussions and traditional media advertising appeals more to them. By understanding consumers' feelings, attitudes and behaviour towards advertising and the media in which it features, marketers can better strategise their advertising designs.

Implications, limitations and recommendations

Advertising campaigns relying on the Internet as an integral component will miss a large section of the emerging middle and mass South African markets. With broadband becoming a fact of life, the following few years are bound to change the Internet accessibility landscape dramatically. For the majority of users, limited access is still a reality, dictated by limited computer and Internet browsing access. Regardless of the age of the middle and affluent participants spoken to and/or their access to new media such as cell phones and the Internet, consumers maintain that for any product or service to be taken seriously, a traditional media presence is a prerequisite. It is therefore suggested that the majority of any marketing support should still be allocated to the appropriate relevant traditional media channel. A combination of television and the Internet can produce effective advertising, enhanced by the addition of the emerging mobile platform. Internet diffusion will in all probability remain relatively low with the minority South Africans having access to the Internet. For new

media the biggest migration is towards the Internet and cell phones, which in the long run, could pose a serious threat to print media, whether newspapers or magazines. During the focus groups, very few of the younger generation admitted to ever buying magazines or newspapers. Instead, they indicated that they accessed whatever information they required via the Internet.

It is suggested that radio and outdoor advertising media will still continue to play an important role in reaching consumers. To do justice to their budget allocation, messages should be short and concise to ensure that the majority of consumers and customers actually understand the message, find it credible, a little entertaining, likeable and therefore memorable. Often clients or creative directors insist on so-called 'clever' or intellectual advertisements without realising that viewers are bombarded with countless messages per day and that these 'clever' messages are more often than not lost and advertising spend therefore wasted. The tenets of the ideal strategy and execution of advertising should constitute simple, concise and to the point communication with some entertainment value without undermining consumers' intelligence and time constraints.

The research on which this article is based was not without *limitations*. Exploration focused on understanding how different socioeconomic consumers perceive advertising and advertising media given their respective time constraints. There may be other factors that could have influenced the outcome of the study that has not been explored or addressed in this article, such as consumer values and lifestyles. Although the empirical research provided space to discuss all types of traditional and new media advertising, discussions naturally tended to gravitate towards television, Internet and cellphone marketing with only some reference to other advertising media. Reference was also made to word-of-mouth as a marketing channel. In addition, although it was not the main objective of the study, the research also attempted to differentiate between perceptions regarding advertisements depending on product category or service provided. Findings revealed that consumers tend to be creatures of habit, following habitual approaches

regardless of type of product or service. Lastly, In view of exploratory nature of the study, the findings cannot be generalised. Nevertheless, the richness of the findings retrospectively challenge understanding of the general advertising media usage in so far as different perspectives of time and advertising are apparent within the various socioeconomic segments in the consumer market.

It is *recommended* that this research be expanded to be inclusive of a larger proportion of South African consumers. The conceptual framework reflected raises several hypotheses which could be quantified in subsequent quantitative research. Additional variables could be tested for, such as generational cohort and gender, as age group and gender may also perceive advertising differently given their respective life roles that impact on time availability. Underlying consumer values and lifestyles could also be considered. Quantitative capturing of consumers' time diaries when viewing and utilising certain types of advertising media and content can also be included. It is not advisable to conduct more focus groups per household segment as the findings already indicate that a level of response saturation has been reached during the two focus group sessions by household segment. Future research could, however, consider scheduling one dedicated focus group per identified advertising media to ensure a more in-depth understanding of consumers' usage behaviour and attitudes toward each type of advertising medium. Lastly, future research could also pertinently explore choice of advertising medium depending on product category or service provided.

REFERENCES

- ACNielsen. 2009. 'Big-screen-smart-screen-small-screen', accessed 6 December 2010, <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile>.
- BBC News. 2006. 'The popularity of 'time' unveiled', *One-minute world news*, accessed 14 April 2013, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5104778.stm>>.
- Blumler, J. 1979. 'The role of theory in uses and gratifications studies', *Communication Research*, 6: 9-36.
- Dahlén, M., Granlund, A. & Grenros, M.

2009. 'The consumer-perceived value of non-traditional media: effects of brand reputation, appropriateness and expense', *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 26 (3): 155-163.
- Ducoffe, RH. 1996. 'Advertising value and advertising on the Web', *Journal of Advertising Research*, 36 (5): 21-35.
- Gleick, J. 1999. *Faster: the acceleration of just about everything*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Hirschman, EC. & Thompson, CJ. 1997. 'Why media matter: toward a richer understanding of consumers' relationships with advertising and mass media', *Journal of Advertising*, 26 (1): 43-60.
- Idris, I., Yajid, MSA. & Khatibi, A. 2009. 'Personal and psychological factors – does it impact the choice of advertising medium?', *Journal of Social Sciences*, 5 (2): 104-111.
- Jacobs, JA. & Gerson, K. 2004. *The time divide: work, family, and gender inequality*. USA: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.
- Katz, J. & Aakhus, M. 2002. *Perpetual contact: mobile communication, private talk, public performance*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Katz, E., Blumler, JG. & Gurevitch, M. 1974. *Utilization of mass communication by the individual. The uses of mass communications: current perspectives on gratifications research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kaynak, E., Kara, A., Chow, CSF. & Apil, AR. 2013. 'Pattern similarities/differences in time orientation and advertising attitudes: a cross-cultural comparison of Georgian and Macau consumers', *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 25(4): 631-654.
- Lash, S. 2002. *Critique of information*. London: Sage.
- Leiss, W., Kline, S., Jhally, S. & Botterill, J. 2013. *Social communication in advertising consumption in the mediated marketplace* (3rd ed). New York: Routledge.
- Licoppe, C. 2004. 'Connected presence: the emergence of a new repertoire for managing social relationships in a changing communication technospace, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2: 135-56.
- Ling, R. 2004. *The mobile connection: the cell phone's impact on society*. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.
- Liu, Y. 2002. 'What is interactivity and is it always such a good thing? Implications of definition, person, and situation for the influence of interactivity on advertising effectiveness', *Journal of Advertising*, 31 (4): 53-64.
- Masemola, E., Van Aardt, CJ. & Coetzee, MC. 2010. *Income and expenditure of households in South Africa, 2008-2009*. Pretoria: University of South Africa, Bureau of Market Research.
- Nowotny, H. 1994. *Time: the modern and postmodern experience*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Okazaki, S. 2004. 'How do Japanese consumers perceive wireless ads? A multivariate analysis', *International Journal of Advertising*, 23: 429-454.
- Rau, PLP., Zhou, J., Chen, D. & Lu, TP. 2013. 'The influence of repetition and time pressure on effectiveness of mobile advertising messages', *Telematics and Informatics*, 31: 463-476.
- Rosa, H. 2003. 'Social acceleration: Ethical and political consequences of a desynchronized high-speed society', *Constellations*, 10 (1): 3-33.
- Rubin, A. 1981. 'An examination of television viewing motivations', *Communication Research*, 8: 141-165.
- Rubin, A. 1983. 'Television uses and gratifications: the interactions of viewing patterns and motivations', *Journal of Broadcasting*, 27: 37-51.
- Scott, LM. 1994. 'The bridge from text to mind: adapting reader-response theory to consumer research', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (3): 461-480.
- Suri, R. & Monroe, KB. 2003. 'The effect of time constraints on consumers' judgment of prices and products', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30 (June): 92-104.
- Tsang, MM., Ho, SC. & Liang, TP. 2004. 'Consumer attitudes toward mobile advertising: an empirical study', *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 8 (3): 65-78.
- Urry, J. 2000. *Sociology beyond societies:*

- mobilities for the twenty-first century. London: Routledge.
- Van Herpen, E. & Van Trijp, HCM. 2011. 'Front-of-pack nutrition labels. Their effect on attention and choices when consumers have varying goals and time constraints', *Appetite*, 57: 148-160.
- Walsh, G. & Mitchell, VM. 2010. 'The effect of consumer confusion proneness on word of mouth, trust, and customer satisfaction', *European Journal of Marketing*, 44(6): 838-859.
- Wang, C., Zhang, P., Choi, R. & D'Eredita, M. 2002. Understanding consumers' attitude toward advertising. Eighth Americas Conference on Information Systems. New York: Syracuse University.
- Zarantonello, L., Jedidi, K. & Schmitt, BH. 2013. 'Functional and experiential routes to persuasion: An analysis of advertising in emerging versus developed markets', *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 30: 46-56.