

# Media Selection for Marketing Communication

- An exploratory study among marketing managers -

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## ABSTRACT

For marketing managers, decisions in media planning and consequently the media selection are becoming increasingly complex and challenging as more media options are available. This exploratory study examines the factors that guide and influence marketing managers when selecting media for their ad campaigns. The extent to which green environmental issues, advertiser-agency cooperation and the economic recession influence media selection is focused on.

The sample was chosen on the basis of a cluster analysis on annual media investments among the largest advertisers in Sweden. The results of the cluster analysis showed some correspondence with type of industry and revealed eight clusters with different portfolios of media expenditures. The results of the interviews indicated that despite companies' environmental policies, green environmental issues do not seem to be considered by the marketing managers in this study when selecting advertising media.

The results also indicated that the marketing managers spend a great amount of time on selecting and building relationships with new agencies. Rather than primarily agency performance evaluations, the marketing managers indicate personal chemistry to be a key element for good collaboration between advertisers and agencies. Compared to earlier studies on developing advertiser-agency relationships, the marketing managers in this study seem to be more similar to American than to Dutch marketing managers in the sense that they put social bonding before agency performance evaluations. The lack of personal chemistry was found to be one of the main reasons for companies to switch agencies. The interviews revealed that it is primarily the marketing manager that is involved in the media selection and that the role of agencies is to give additional secondary input on the matter.

The marketing managers in this study indicate that in times of an economic recession there is a stronger need to be flexible and to adjust marketing (communication) plans which is in line with prior research. In addition, the marketing managers perceive an economic recession to provide better negotiation opportunities with agencies and media suppliers. This study may add to previous findings by indicating that during an economic recession receiving special offers from media suppliers is popular among the marketing managers which may lead to adjustments of the marketing communication plan and thus to more ad hoc media decisions.

Furthermore, this study concludes with a discussion on the factors that may hinder marketing managers from performing more effective media selection, e.g. basing media selection on mostly previous experience, main agency appointment, short term agency collaboration and the non-use of models.

**Keywords:** Marketing Managers, Media Selection, Advertising, Marketing Communication, Green Environment, Advertiser-agency cooperation, Economic Recession

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

For marketing managers, decisions in media planning and consequently advertising media selection are becoming increasingly complex and challenging as more media options are available to consumers (Turk and Katz, 1992), for example due to the developments taking place in digital media. This has led to increasing ways in which companies can communicate with consumers (Crosier et al., 2003). At the same time, the economic consequences of media selection decisions are of great importance, since they directly affect the turnover and profits of the company.

Given the rapid developments and transformations in the media environment and the economic importance of media selection for ad campaigns this study will take a closer look at how marketing communication in general and media selection in particular is planned. The purpose of the present study is to gain a deeper understanding on how Swedish marketing managers go about in practice. In particular the aim is to explore which factors guide marketing managers when selecting advertising media.

When scanning the environment and extant literature, key issues were found and considered important to include in the current study. They are discussed hereafter.

### **1.1 Marketing Communication Planning and Media Selection**

Nowak et al (1993) showed that audience reach and targeting were the main determinants of media selection among marketing managers in the United States. A study conducted among Swedish marketing managers, advertising and media agencies found that the main factors that influence media selection were product type, target group, a medium's communication characteristics, type of ad campaign, concentrated geographical focus, budget, season and availability of media space (Sandén-Håkansson, 1994). Tapp (2005) found that among marketing managers there is not much evidence of widespread good practice of selecting media objectively, that marketing managers feel comfortable being creatures of habit and are

thereby missing out on the opportunity to differentiate by a consistent, objective reassessment of media selection.

Marketing managers and other practitioners are the ultimate intended users of models resulting from research in the field of marketing, especially as marketing is considered an applied discipline. Scientific knowledge seeks to give explanation, prediction and comprehension of phenomena. The purpose of marketing theory and models is thus to help practitioners in understanding core issues and guide key decisions in practice (Otteson and Gronhaug, 2004). Evidence suggests however that the actual use of academic theory in general by intended user groups is limited (e.g. Ankers and Brennan, 2002; Caplan et al., 1975; Gronhaug and Haukedal, 1997; Hambrick, 1994; Knorr, 1977; Lee et al., 1987). Time pressures may be one possible explanation for not using strategic models as was the case in a study on the use of advertising models among advertising agencies (Gabriel et al., 2006). Based on this, the first research question is:

*RQ1: Which factors guide marketing communication planning and media selection?*

## **1.2 Advertiser-agency Cooperation**

King et al (1997) found that it is the advertiser that plays the most powerful role in the media planning process: that of the power of the purse. Later, King et al (2004) concluded that areas that need more empirical research were the roles of advertisers as well as the involvement of the advertiser in the actual media planning process.

Today we can find many different agencies to assist advertisers in their marketing communication efforts, and the number is increasing (Soberman, 2005). Examples of such agencies are advertising, media, public relations, web and market research agencies. According to Gronhaug (1972) the degree to which marketing managers determine media decisions beforehand and the briefing that the media selector is given were among the influencing factors on media selection. Gagnard and Swartz (1988) found that companies hire

other agencies in order to integrate all types of research into the planning process because advertising agencies are perceived to be mostly up to date on creative trends than on market research methods.

Grant and McLeod (2007) have shown that working with a network of influential parties and various types of communication agencies can create complexity and fragmentation. This coincides with earlier research by Hirschman (1989) that found that while advertisers view an advertisement as a promotional tool with the main objective to change attitudes and/or behaviors, creative people tend to work according to ideas that are more intuitive, artistic and with little apparent connections to the marketing objectives. Therefore the risk for conflicts may exist as advertisers focus mainly on minimizing risks whereas creative people often attempt to maximize the ad's impact of creativity by "newness of thought" (Sternberg and Lubert, 1999).

Grimes (2004) does not share the idea of advertisers appointing a main agency among their network of agencies and advises that "Cooperation across a range of parties is at the heart of successful marketing communication campaigns." According to Grant and McLeod (2007) "A more democratic position should lead to more collaborative relationships." A consequence of appointing a main agency is that it could create a barrier for incorporating integrated marketing communication (IMC) when integration should be initiated and guided by the marketing manager (Schultz and Kitchen, 1997).

Appointing a main agency may thus create a hierarchical structure in the network of agencies and thereby cause a barrier between the other agencies and the advertiser. As a consequence, agencies are not fully willing to share crucial knowledge that could benefit the advertiser. This may include critical input on the media selection.

Wackman et al. (1987) studied advertiser-agency cooperation among advertisers in the United States and found that relationship factors were more crucial than measures of concrete

agency performance. Interestingly, Verbeke (1988) found when replicating Wackman et al.'s (1987) study in the Netherlands that evaluations of performance did not alter over time, personal relations were of no importance and that social bonding was not a concern.

According to Sandén-Håkansson (1994), advertiser-agency relationships in Sweden last about three years. Selecting and building relationships with new agencies demand a lot of time and other resources whereby much of the collaboration time may be spent on getting to know the agency. Hammarkvist et al (1982) points out that stability is the foundation for change and that long term relationships create stability, which in turn creates a strong foundation for change. In long-term relationships all parties have clear expectations of each other.

Furthermore, the 1991 Nobel laureate Coase (1937) argues that it may cost more to obtain a good/service via the market than the price of the good/service itself. Assuming that switching agencies involves a number of transaction costs such as search and information costs, bargaining costs and keeping trade secrets, long-term agency collaborations could benefit advertisers.

In addition, agencies trying to pick up early signals of advertiser dissatisfaction may benefit the advertiser-agency relationship and thereby decreasing the risk of failing to anticipate emerging crisis with the advertiser (Doyle et al., 1980). The second research question is:

*RQ2: How does advertiser-agency cooperation influence media selection?*

### **1.3 The Green Environmental Aspect**

At the same time as consumers are gaining more knowledge about and becoming more skilled in buying eco-friendly products, their attitudes toward caring for the green environment increase to grow (Stisser, 1994). Even during a weak economy, it is postulated that consumers' attitudes toward environmentally responsible products remain powerful and

the demand for environmentally low-impact products remains high (Cone, 2009). Green environmentally responsible consumption can be defined as “those consumption activities that have a less negative or more positive effect on the natural environment than substitutable activities” (Pieters, 1991). This means that consumers can choose to behave more environmentally responsible when using, acquiring and disposing products. For the marketer it is thus crucial to obtain knowledge on such consumption trends and patterns (Pieters, 1991).

Studies have shown that the green environmental aspect is also affecting advertising media consumption. For example, a study by Yougov (2009) concerning consumers’ attitudes toward advertising in various media found that about 25 percent of Swedish households prefer not to receive direct marketing through their mail boxes. A major reason given by the respondents was increased green environmental concerns. No prior research among marketing managers on media selection that includes the green environmental aspect could be found. The third research question is:

*RQ3: Are green environmental aspects considered when marketing managers select advertising media?*

#### **1.4 The Economic Recession Aspect**

The economic recession at the time of this study (2009), provided a unique opportunity to include this factor in the study. According to previous studies, during times of an economic recession marketing managers tend to adjust their marketing strategy and actions in order to remain profitable and consumer-responsive. This often means adaptations to the marketing and/or media mix and/or change of target markets. Sometimes marketing communication plans are even totally adjusted (see for example Shama, 1993; Court, 2009). The fourth research question is:

*RQ4: How does an economic recession affect marketing communication planning in general and media selection in particular?*



In sum, considering the many different advertising media that exist today, the various agencies that are available to assist the marketer, the consumers' increasing demand for environmentally responsible products and the current economic recession, I questioned which were the factors that guide and influence Swedish marketing managers when selecting media for marketing communication efforts in general and advertising efforts in particular. In addition, I aim to explore to what extent advertiser-agency cooperation, environmental issues and the economic recession influence media selection. In summary, the questions posed in this paper are:

*RQ1: Which factors guide marketing communication planning and media selection?*

*RQ2: How does advertiser-agency cooperation influence media selection?*

*RQ3: Are green environmental aspects considered when marketing managers select advertising media?*

*RQ4: How does an economic recession affect marketing communication planning in general and media selection in particular?*

## **2. HISTORICAL REVIEW OF MEDIA PLANNING**

Media selection is incorporated in media planning (Bogart, 1996). Media planning, being part of marketing communication is a process that consists of a series of decisions made to find the most optimal way(s) to deliver the message to a target audience (Sissors & Baron, 2002; Sissors and Bumba, 1996). A media plan is a document that states courses of actions on how and when the media budget is used to reach advertising and marketing objectives (Barban et al, 1993; De Pelsmacker et al., 2007, p. 224). The task of media planning incorporates defining the communication objectives, media selection, where and when to use these media and budgeting (Bogart, 1996). De Pelsmacker et al. (2007, pp. 224-225) adds two other important tasks namely an assessment of the communication environment whereby communication efforts of the competition are to be taken into consideration as well as the media behavior of the target audience.

Since the start of advertising, media planning has existed. Up until the late 1950's, media decisions were more of a tactical character. Starch (1923) for example suggested that "The intelligent selection of magazines requires a careful comparison of the available mediums and an intimate knowledge of the nature and characteristics of the various types of magazines". Starch presented a score card plan for evaluating the suitability of a medium to address a certain problem. He explained that the purpose of the score card is to assist the advertiser to evaluate the desirable and undesirable points in regards to a medium.

When using a score card, the advertiser judges on a scale from zero to one hundred on a number of points (Appendix A). The advantage of using a score-card plan is not so much in the final score that is assigned to each particular point, but rather in the care taken to assure that all of the essential points in regards to media selection are considered. Organizations have worked with variations of similar plans.

It was not until 1957 when Brown, Lessler and Weilbacher published one of the first books dealing exclusively with, in today's terms, "media planning". By viewing media planning as

an analytical area of study, Brown, Lessler and Weilbacher (1957) contributed a great deal to the development of media planning courses. A clear shift evolved in course contents from a heavy buying orientation to an approach that is more strategic in regards to media decision making and where media planning was given much more thought. For the first time advertising programs added a course in media planning because media planning was now accepted as a fundamental part of marketing.

Articles in academic journals did not start to deal with media planning until about the same time. The first and possibly one of the most influential articles was written by Agostini (1961), where the first media selection model was introduced. Research within the area of media planning has grown since (Pasadeos, Barban and Kim, 1997).

## **2.1 Media Planning Models**

The early media planning literature has been much influenced by mass communication theory such as the widespread communication models developed by Schramm (1954) and Schramm and Roberts (1971) as well as the hierarchy of effects models (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961; Colley, 1961). Media planning models have taken basic concepts into account such as reach (the number of prospects that should be exposed to the message at least once) and frequency (the number of times that the prospects are exposed to the message in a specified period).

Media planning models originate from the early 1960s when Agostini's (1961) widespread reach estimation formula was published. Many competing formulations followed that made it possible to not only estimate the reach but also the average frequency of a schedule (Bower, 1963; Caffyn and Sagovsky, 1963; Marc, 1963; Kuhn, 1963; Hofmans, 1966; Claycamp and McClelland, 1968). Reach and average frequency estimation made it possible to integrate duplicate exposures since two elements of media strategy were addressed: how many people are exposed to the ad (reach) as well as how much advertising each person receives

(frequency). Although reach and average frequency estimation is superior to the alternative of a campaign's total audience delivery (raw media weight), it is a basic planning tool.

It was not until the late 1980s that the issue of using frequency distributions instead of simple reach and average frequency analysis was heavily discussed in the popular advertising literature. Because of poor computational control, media planners found that reach and frequency analysis was inadequate and that frequency distributions analysis would be a better way. With the introduction of computers in media planning together with the corresponding drop in the cost of computations, working with frequency distributions became useful (Cannon et al, 2002).

Extensive reviews of the media schedule simulation literature have been conducted by for example Gensch (1973). Many models that estimated frequency distributions became widely accepted in daily media planning practices (Beardon, Haden, Klompmaker and Teel, 1981; Rust and Leone, 1984; Leckenby and Boyd, 1984; Leckenby and Kishi, 1984; Leckenby and Rice, 1985; Danaher, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1992). According to Wray (1985), organizations such as Foote, Cone and Belding Communications developed a more advanced planning system.

However, Naples (1979) claimed that the industry adopted the simpler notion of effective reach and frequency, namely effective frequency planning (EFP). Although estimates vary on how widespread EFP was applied in practice, EFP was the dominant media planning model in the 1980s and 90s (Kreshel et al, 1985; Leckenby and Kim, 1994). Other researchers such as Cannon and Goldring (1986) argue however that while EFP was widely used in practice in the advertising industry, it proved to have major conceptual problems. Later, researchers introduced the concept of frequency value planning (FVP), a model dealing with the main weaknesses of EFP (Cannon et al, 1996; 2002).

While the media landscape has changed to a large extent, media planning methods have not (Pilotta et al (2004). This notion is supported by Hoffman and Novak (2000) who claim

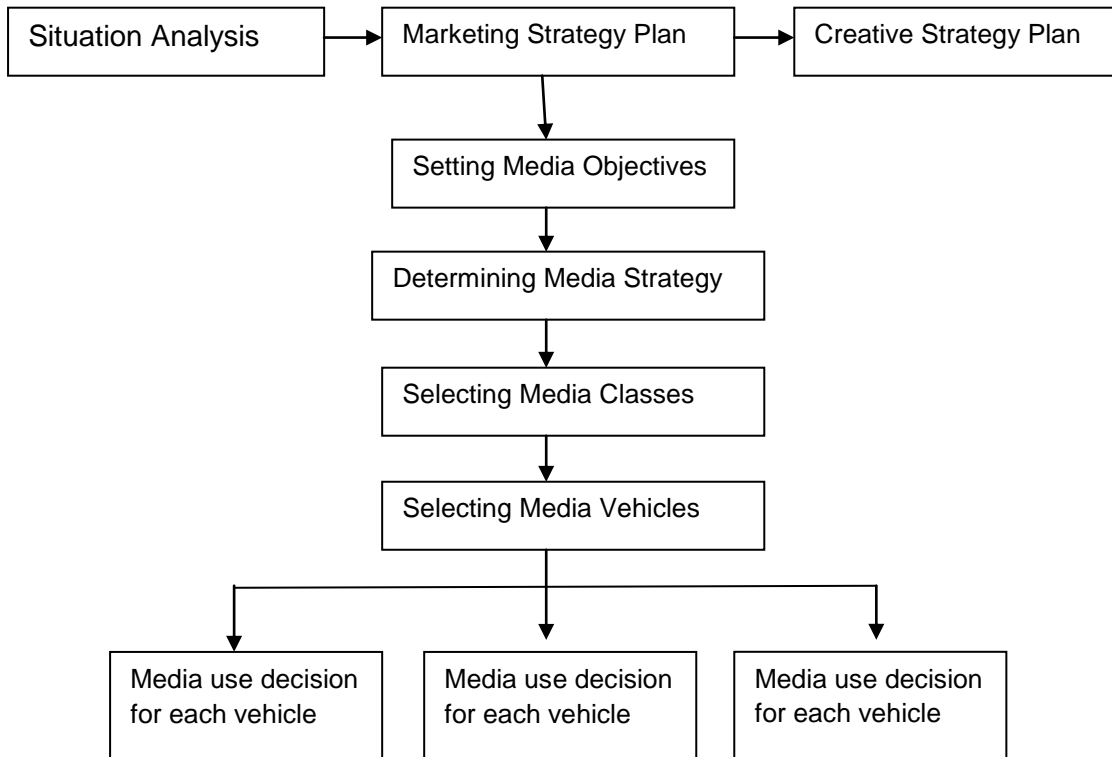
that conventional approaches to media planning cannot be applied for non-traditional media such as Internet media. They argue that traditional media models do not provide much guidance to measure results from online advertising and that the unique characteristics of Internet media also require new strategies. Cannon et al (2002) on the other hand takes a contrary view by claiming that all media can and should be held to a universal standard and thereby be put on an equal footing.

Furthermore, while Pasadeos et al (1997) speculate that the development of new technologies and new media could create new demands for media modeling, Cannon et al (2002) argue that when using integrated marketing communication (IMC) thought as an input, established models can be applied to both conventional and new media.

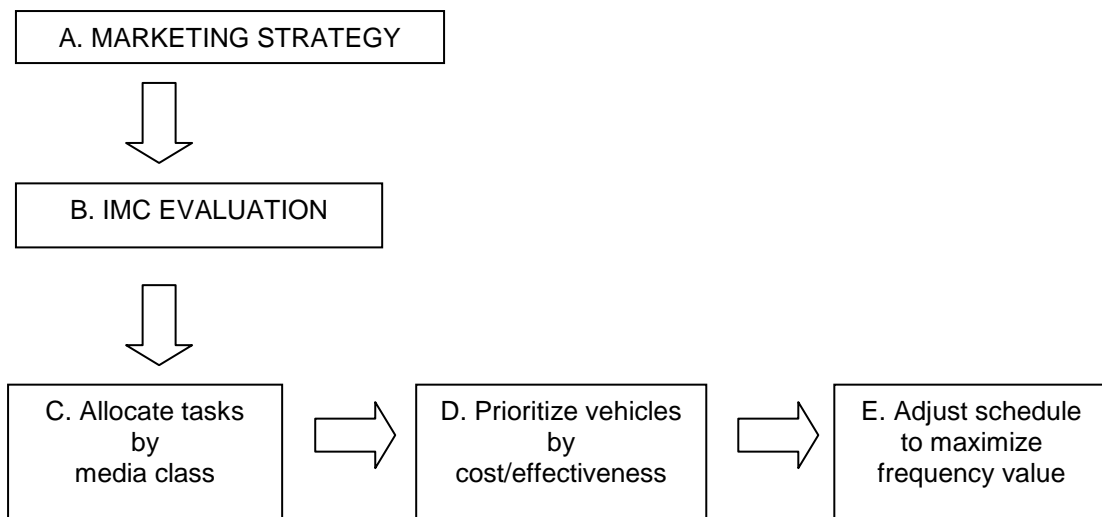
## **2.2 The Basic Media Planning Model**

For over a decade the topic of media planning fusing into the broader concept of integrated communication planning has been heavily discussed, i.e. conventional mass media, social media, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), database-marketing, customer media and other communication efforts were recognized and evaluated as a whole. Comparing Figure 2.1 and 2.2 gives an illustration of the development in media planning over the past few decades.

Both basic media planning models start off with the well accepted notion that media planning originates from marketing plans (A in Figure 2.2). Colley (1961) suggested this by the classic DAGMAR paradigm. DAGMAR is an acronym for Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results and refers to a model where objectives of an advertising campaign are set in such a way so that its success can be quantitatively measured. The main difference between the models is that integrated marketing communication (IMC) evaluation has become crucial. For this reason, the focus will be on Figure 2.2 as it is a more current model suitable for today's practice.



**Figure 2.1: The basic media planning model (Sissors and Petray, 1976)**



**Figure 2.2: The basic media planning model (Cannon et al, 2002)**

The objectives are supported by an IMC program (B). Despite the lack of a clear and common definition of the IMC concept (Schultz and Kitchen, 2000), it has developed from the growing body of literature as well as from experiences in practice such as from reactions by advertising agencies regarding the development and use of databases, requests of clients for interaction/synergy across media, and the increasing need for coordination (Kitchen and Schultz, 1999). The IMC evaluation determines the type of promotional support that is required and splits it into tasks, assigned to explicit, synergistic media programs (Cannon et al, 2002).

Duncan (2002, p. 7) defines IMC as “a cross-functional process for creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders by strategically controlling or influencing all messages sent to these groups and encouraging data-driven, purposeful dialogue with them”. Dewhirst and Davis (2005) argue that IMC is not merely a multimedia coordinated campaign and is more than just tactical consistency, also referred to as “one voice, one look” (Duncan and Mulhern, 2004). Powerful integrating forces for organizations are a customer-focused strategy and well-defined brand positioning (Dewhirst and Davis, 2005).

We have now come to the stage where the actual media decision process starts. From Figure 2.2 we can see that the first step in media strategy is to allocate promotional tasks to different types of media (C).

The next step is to identify the specific media vehicles (for example particular programs and/or magazines within each type of media) that are most cost-effective in performing each task (D).

The last step in the process consists of selecting the most efficient media vehicles in order to develop media schedules to support each task. Because of the possibility of duplicate exposures, the process attempts to adjust the schedules to maximize their frequency value (E).

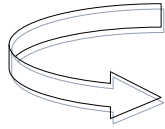
As can be seen from Figure 2.2, the first stage is to allocate the different IMC tasks to specific media classes. It can be applied to both conventional and new media, such as the Internet. Cannon et al (2002) claims that since new media has the tendency to differentiate itself to a much higher degree as opposed to traditional media, the media planning model as shown in Figure 2.2 works better for campaigns that includes both new and traditional media than for traditional campaigns only. In order to apply this, a model is necessary to guide the integration (Figure 2.3).

IMC tasks comprise advertising-based marketing support strategies that will eventually be expressed through some form of creative strategy and execution. Figure 2.3 provides a framework whereby consumers' psychological situation during advertising exposure is defined, i.e. the consumers' need for information and the capacity available to process an advertising message. For example, to what extent is the targeted consumer actively searching for or receptive to advertising information? Or, how much of the advertising information is the targeted consumer capable of processing given his/her level of involvement and number of competing mental tasks that are competing for his/her attention?

The framework as displayed in Figure 2.3 is in line with previous creative strategy models that have come forth from the Foote, Cone & Belding (FCB)-grid, developed by Vaughn (1980) and later refined by Rossiter, Percy and Donovan (1991) and Rossiter and Percy (1997). These creative strategy models are grounded upon two types of dimensions namely, 1) thinking/feeling (FCB grid), informational/transformational (Rossiter/Percy Grid), and 2) high involvement/low involvement (Cannon et al, 2002).



**IMC Planning**  
 Determine the role of each media class in the overall IMC program



		Consumer Need for Information	
		High	Low
Available Processing Capacity	High	Web Trade Shows Direct Mail Trade Magazines	Infomercials Consumer Magazines
	Low	Catalogs Classified	Newspaper Display E-mail Web Banner Outdoor
			E-commercials Long TV Spots Radio TV Spots Short TV Spots

**Figure 2.3: Allocating tasks by media class (Cannon et al, 2002)**

In order to comprehend the “need for information” dimension, it is important to grasp the logic behind the “thinking/feeling” or “informational/transformational” dimension of the creative strategy models. This knowledge and understanding is essential to media classification since it will provide the direction and orientation of the promotional message to be delivered in the appropriate media environment.

When comparing the FCB Grid to Shimp’s (1997) consumer information processing model (CIP) and the hedonic experiential model (HEM), the scale items applied in order to operationalize the thinking/feeling dimension, are different. The FCB Grid scales involve items such as “decision is based on mainly logical or objective” and “decision is based on functional facts” (Ratchford, 1987). The CIP model involves the notion that people weight the consequences when evaluating alternative benefits derived from product attributes (Fishbein

and Ajzen, 1975). The HEM, on the other hand, involves holistic evaluations that are “felt” and “experienced” as opposed to reasoned out (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982).

Different media channels have different impacts on how consumers process messages. For example, when IMC messages address hedonic motivations that are highly associative in their persuasive approach, media environments such as television are best opted for since consumers tend to process cues by association. In this type of media environment, consumers are “experiencing” as opposed to consciously “evaluating” information. On the other hand, IMC messages that require consumers to process decision-related information through logical inference, the best media environments to opt for are magazines or the Internet (Cannon et al, 2002).

We can also differentiate media within classes with regards to logical versus associative processing of advertising cues. For example, in a classic study of Aaker and Brown (1972) on vehicle source effects, it was shown that quality claims have more effect in magazines with high status since consumers associate the claim with the media environment, regardless of the logical merits of the claim. When referring to the context of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann, 1983), the framework suggests that the “peripheral processing” effect might be triggered, partly, by the context of the media rather than simply low involvement.

When consumers process advertising cues by association, they tend to avoid central processing for the simple reason that they are not psychologically predisposed to think rationally. This notion may count for the various types of media environments. For example, users of gaming sites tend to have no need for product information. Here, advertising cues tend to be processed by association, taking part of the ambience and feelings that consumers experienced while they visited these types of sites (Cannon et al, 2002). Researchers such as Loda and Coleman (2005) and Wang (2006) have shown that using publicity together with

advertising impacts message credibility positively. Placing ads in new, creative media has also proven to have a positive effect on message credibility (Dahlén and Edenius, 2007).

The “available processing capacity” dimension of the framework in Figure 2.3 is parallel to the “involvement” dimension of the FCB and Rossiter/Percy Grids. There is a large and complex literature on the topic of involvement. The media class selection model addresses how much involvement targeted consumers are willing and capable to activate for an advertisement in the media context. To a certain degree, this capacity is depending on the format and characteristics of the medium itself. For example, the Internet is a type of medium with a tremendous capacity where users are able to spend indefinitely amounts of time, searching and investigating until they have reached their usage goals.

Other factors influencing information processing capacity are the competing tasks, e.g. tasks that are competing for the users’ attention, which consumers are prone to face in a certain media environment (Webb and Ray, 1979). When taking television as a medium class as an example, problems in a television environment can be the consequences of advertising clutter (Webb and Ray, 1979) and “zapping” between television channels during commercial breaks and thereby avoiding television ads (Abernethy, 1990). Other problems faced in a television environment include visiting the bathroom, side conversations and the net-effect. The purpose of these behaviors is to decrease the processing of advertising messages within a media context (Abernethy, 1990).

The model in Figure 2.3 proposes that the classification of each media class should take into consideration the effect distractions tend to have on processing capacity. Since newspapers and television have the tendency to be cluttered consumers are left with not much excess capacity for processing advertising messages. Nonetheless, when the size of the newspaper ad or the length of the television commercial is increased, these types of media can be adapted to higher involvement messages (Cannon et al, 2002).

The media buyer's goal is to reach the target audience most efficient and effective. Quantitative, qualitative as well as technical criteria can be used to evaluate the different media. Quantitative criteria in media selection are reach, frequency, selectivity, geographic flexibility, speed of reach, message life and seasonal influence. Qualitative criteria are the image-building capability, emotional impact, medium involvement, active or passive medium, attention devoted to the medium, quality of reproduction, adding value to the message, amount of information that can be conveyed, demonstration capability, extent of memorization of the message and clutter. Technical criteria are production cost, media buying characteristics and media availability (De Pelsmacker, 2007).

According to Pickton (2005) marketing plans will not function optimal when not being adjusted to the changed technical environment of consumers. Much too often old media plans are being repeated with a main focus on conventional media while new media are not being tested. He further claims that the media planning process is also too often left to the agencies where the focus is mostly on what "reach" the various media have instead of consumer media behavior.

### **3. METHOD**

#### **3.1 Target Sample**

The target sample comprises marketing managers belonging to the top media buyers in Sweden. A main reason behind opting for this sample is that these marketing managers and their companies (advertisers) spend the most on advertising and thereby on buying media. Their behavior has thus great consequences for the Swedish media industry.

#### **3.2 Sample Design**

In the attempt of creating a sample for the interviews that consists of marketing managers or marketing managers with similar titles, representing a wide variety of industries and different types of media expenditure, a cluster analysis was conducted based on secondary data. The secondary data originated from SIFO (a Swedish research institute) which comprised the total yearly media mix expenditure of top media buyers in Sweden. Because of the economic recession that took off during 2008 and was still going on at the time of this study (spring 2009) data from 2007 were used for the cluster analysis since the aim was to obtain a sample with typical media expenditure during a stable economy.

The original amounts spent on the different advertising media, were transformed into percentages in relation to the total annual amount spent. The number of media categories was also reduced by combining the different types of newspapers and magazines into one category namely "Print". Print consisted therefore of local newspapers and magazines, big city morning and evening newspapers, popular press and specialized magazines. The other media categories were TV, Radio, In-store, Movie theatre, Outdoor and Unaddressed. From this data a total of eight clusters were attained (see Table 3.1). It could then be observed that each cluster represented a certain type (portfolio) of media expenditure.

The percentages invested in a specific media category were grouped in different categories according to the following measures: None (no expenditure), Light ( $\leq 15\%$ ), Medium ( $>15-40\%$ ), Heavy ( $>40-70\%$ ) and Extra Heavy ( $>70-100\%$ ). The eight clusters were analyzed and

labeled according to their media investment portfolio (see Table 3.1) namely, cluster A (Light TV, Heavy Print & Unaddressed) with 4 companies, cluster B (Medium TV, Heavy Print, Light Unaddressed) with 7 companies, cluster C (Extra Heavy TV, Light Print) with 9 companies, cluster D (Heavy Print, Medium Print, Light Unaddressed) with 11 companies, cluster E (Heavy TV, Medium Print, Medium Unaddressed) with 3 companies, cluster F (Medium TV, Extra Heavy Print, Light Unaddressed) with 2 companies, cluster G (Light TV, Medium Print, Heavy Unaddressed) with 2 companies and cluster H (Medium TV, Light Print and Extra Heavy Unaddressed) with 2 companies.

The results of the cluster analysis show some correspondence with type of industry, such that Cluster A is dominated by the supermarket (FMCG) industry, Cluster B is dominated by the Automobile industry, Cluster C is dominated by the production of consumer goods industry, Cluster D is dominated by the telecommunication industry, Cluster E is dominated by the home electronics industry, Cluster F is dominated by the banking industry and Cluster G is dominated by the low-price grocery retailer industry and Cluster H by the low-price home products industry (Table 3.1).

The ambition was to obtain a sample that would represent a broad variety of industries and to conduct interviews with marketing managers of companies from each cluster. However, due to no response to invitations or lack of willingness to participate in an interview, marketing managers belonging to cluster E and H could not be included in the sample. Nevertheless, to cover a broad representation of industries in the sample, a second interview was included from cluster B namely a respondent from the tele communication industry.

To facilitate gaining further insights into advertiser-agency cooperation and media selection, an interview with a senior agency consultant linked to an association of Swedish advertisers was also included. Members of this association turn to this agency consultant whenever they need help to improve the cooperation between them and their cooperating

agencies and/or with selecting new suitable agencies. A total of eight interviews were conducted. The respondents were promised anonymity and thus their names and respective companies cannot be specifically mentioned in this paper. Appendix C shows the sample characteristics.

**Table 3.1 Clusters of types of annual media expenditure in percentages**

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>TV</b>	<b>Print</b>	<b>Unaddressed</b>	<b>Outdoor</b>	<b>Radio</b>	<b>Movie Theatre</b>	<b>In Store</b>
<b>A</b>	Light	Heavy	Heavy	Light	Light	None	Light
Mean	14.75	42.53	41.40	.52	.77	.00	.015
SD	9.74	4.35	3.10	.51	.76	.00	.03
N	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
<b>B</b>	Medium	Heavy	Light	Light	Light	Light	None
Mean	34.87	54.94	1.91	4.87	3.01	.41	.00
SD	5.75	5.02	4.33	2.23	2.86	.49	.00
N	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
<b>C</b>	Extra Heavy	Light	None	Light	Light	Light	None
Mean	90.32	5.93	.00	2.71	.81	.31	.00
SD	4.75	1.37	.00	2.83	1.37	.28	.00
N	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
<b>D</b>	Heavy	Medium	Light	Light	Light	Light	Light
Mean	65.73	21.84	.34	7.94	2.93	1.00	.22
SD	7.11	4.78	.69	4.32	4.42	1.52	.44
N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
<b>E</b>	Heavy	Medium	Medium	Light	Light	None	None
Mean	46.71	16.63	32.01	1.69	2.96	.00	.00
SD	8.03	1.63	12.82	2.83	5.13	.00	.00
N	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>F</b>	Medium	Extra Heavy	Light	Light	Light	Light	None
Mean	16.79	78.86	.64	.84	2.76	.10	.00
SD	.76	1.72	.24	.61	3.69	.14	.00
N	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>G</b>	Light	Medium	Heavy	Light	Light	Light	None
Mean	2.61	28.33	57.98	10.58	.08	.04	.00
SD	3.69	1.77	4.17	12.37	.12	.06	.00
N	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>H</b>	Medium	Light	Extra Heavy	None	None	None	None
Mean	27.26	1.88	70.88	.00	.00	.00	.00
SD	1.05	1.14	1.21	.00	.00	.00	.00
N	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

### **3.3 Semi-structured Interviews**

In order to assess directly what marketing managers actually do in real life situations and to explore the factors that guide and influence media selection, semi-structured interviews were opted for in this exploratory study. Using this approach involves a basic checklist in order to make sure that all relevant topics are covered, however the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions of interest to the study at hand. Considering its aim to elicit information about specific topics this interview approach was found to be suitable for the present study (Patton, 1987, Silverman, 2006).

Compared to structured interviews, conducting semi-structured interviews require much more planning and preparation, discipline and creativity during the interview sessions (Wengraf, 2001). Yet, applying this interview style will enable the interviewer/researcher to explore new areas of importance not to his/her prior knowledge, which is the exact purpose of the study. Thus, the researcher minimizes the probability of ignoring certain questions on topics of importance (Silverman, 2006).

The interview guide (see Appendix B) was developed based on extant literature on the research topics discussed earlier as well as through observations in practice and current debates in the media. The main topics of the interview were thus 1) marketing communication, 2) media selection for ad campaigns, 3) advertiser-agency cooperation, 4) environmental aspects and 5) the economic recession. To maximize the reliability of the interviews the interview guide was pre-tested and adjustments were made in regards to certain formulations and re-wording of the questions.



## 4. FINDINGS

This chapter reports the results concerning the research questions posed in the introduction.

### 4.1 Marketing Communication Planning and Media Selection

The first research question was:

*RQ1: Which factors guide marketing communication planning and media selection?*

**4.1.1 Marketing communication planning.** According to the respondents, year based plans are used for marketing communication planning. These plans are usually preliminary planned and are adjusted throughout the year. The findings indicate that the main factors that guide respondents in their marketing communication strategy are consumers' needs, brand values, sales, objectives, a fixed media focus and budget. Table 4.1 and 4.2 give an overview of these findings.

Interestingly, none of the respondents mentioned any models or environmental policies as a guide for their marketing communication strategy, not even when the interviewer was probing for possible other factors that are guiding their work with marketing communication planning. Examples of respondents' answers to the respective questions were as follow:

***What are the factors that guide you when you are working with marketing communication planning?***

*"Normally, we work according to a one-year plan. This year and from August 2008 everything is ad-hoc!"*

*"We work according to a one-year plan, 20 percent of this is usually adjusted."*

*"We are working according to a three-year marketing plan. 45 percent of the budget is spent on fixed channels while the remaining 55 percent is flexible."*

*“Some things are fixed, 20 percent happens ad hoc and some part according to the marketing plan.”*

The senior agency-consultant added to this:

*“Often companies work with year-based plans that are preliminary planned and adjusted throughout the year.”*

***What guides the company’s marketing communication?***

*“Our core values of our brand. We work according to a three to five year brand strategy plan.”*

*“The objective, to support sales and our brand.”*

*“Consumers’ needs. For example, customers want more and more to steer their own time. Our job is to find out which are the underlying trends.”*

*“Our main focus is on advertising and mainly on TV.”*

*“New consumers’ needs, new product needs. ...the better the sales the more money there is for marketing.”*

*“Customer data, consumers’ needs”*

**Table 4.1 Marketing communication planning: time and budget aspects**

<b>Planning</b>	<b>Ad-hoc</b>	<b>Fixed</b>	<b>During recession</b>	<b>Responses</b>
One-year plan	20% of budget	80% of budget	Budget reduction	2
Three-year plan	When sales figures are not reached		More adjustments	1
Three-year plan	55% of budget	45% of budget	More adjustments and more ad-hoc	1
One-year plan	20% of budget	80% of budget	100% is ad-hoc	1
One-year plan	20% of budget	80% of budget	More ad-hoc	2

**Table 4.2 Factors guiding marketing communication**

<b>Factor guiding Marketing Communication</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Consumers' Needs /Customer data	3
Strengthen brand values	3
Increase sales	2
Objective	2
Fixed focus	1
Budget	2
Models	0
Environmental considerations	0

**4.1.2 Media selection.** As to factors guiding specifically media selection, the interviews indicate that respondents are much guided and influenced by their previous experience when they select media for ad campaigns. Because of their previous experience respondents claim to often 'know' which advertising media works best and seem to use rules of thumb.

Other factors that respondents mentioned to influence the media selection are the budget, costs, suitability of the medium, reach, target market and special offers. Comparing to earlier studies on factors influencing the media selection it appears that special offers can be added to these earlier studies.

Neither considering environmental issues nor the use of (strategic) models were mentioned among factors guiding media selection, not even when further probing the respondents for possible other factors that could guide the marketing manager in media selection. Table 4.3 below presents an overview of these findings. Examples of respondents' answers to the following question were as follow:

***When you are working with ad campaigns, what guides the media selection?***

*"Experience, that's what counts."*

*"Most often the media selection is not scientifically chosen but more based upon experience."*

*“It depends on the objectives. If we want to increase sales then we go for DM in various forms, targeted or mass.”*

*“I have fairly good knowledge about what works. I have more than twenty years of experience within marketing. I know that TV works. Our main focus is on advertising and mainly on TV.”*

*“It can happen on who contacts me. The other day, someone called me, I got a really good offer and I went for that.”*

*“Tradition (experience), a good idea that strengthens our brand and suits best in a particular medium, how do we reach our target group best?, costs: is there a cheaper alternative, special offers...”*

The senior agency-consultant stated:

*“Budget + what did we last year + needs = model for today. The budget steers the possibilities to communicate.”*

**Table 4.3 Factors guiding media selection for ad campaigns**

<b>Factor guiding media selection</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Previous experience	4
Rules of thumb	2
Target market	2
Costs	2
Suitability of the medium	2
Budget	1
Reach	1
Special offers	1
Models	0
Environmental considerations/issues	0

## 4.2 Advertiser-agency Cooperation

The second research question was:

*RQ2: How does advertiser-agency cooperation influence media selection?*

Respondents recruit various external agencies. They are mainly having collaborations with advertising, media, and PR agencies. However, respondents reported that they also collaborate with web, design, production, and market research agencies. An overview of the findings is presented in Table 4.4. Examples of respondents' answers to the respective question were as follow:

***Which types of external agencies is your company cooperating with?***

*“Advertising agency, media agency and PR agency. But we also work with X (a market research agency) and a web agency.”*

*“With an advertising agency, media agency, PR agency, web agency, production agency and various market research agencies.”*

*“...advertising agency, media agency, market research agency and web agency.”*

*“A media agency, two ad-agencies; a tactical and a strategic one, a market research agency and different PR agencies.”*

*“...an advertising agency, media agency, different PR agencies, web agency, an in-house agency in London and a market research agency. Besides these partners we are using various other tactical agencies... too many... I would gladly like to decrease the amount of agency collaborations.”*

The senior agency-consultant added further:

*“Bigger companies have bigger budgets and have a greater need to communicate. This in turn creates a greater need for partners. There is a boom of digital or web agencies after*

2001. These agencies play a greater role today and it's increasing. These actors are high on the list of trusting partners.”

**Table 4.4 Agency cooperation**

Type of agency	Responses
Advertising-	7
Media-	7
PR-	7
Market research-	5
Web-	4
Digital-	2
Production-	2
Online marketing-	1
In-house-	1
Design-	1

**4.2.1 Appointment of main agency.** Most respondents reported that they usually appoint a main agency from their agency network. According to the respondents, the agency that is appointed as the main agency is most often the advertising agency (Table 4.5).

Working with various agencies requires coordination, which is not always perceived as an easy task by the respondents. It was reported that much prestige exists among the agencies which could create difficulties and tensions in the advertiser-agency cooperation. This is in line with previous research in the sense that a consequence of working with a network of influential parties and various types of communication agencies adds complexity and fragmentation.

To the question *“Do you usually appoint a main agency among your agencies during the production of an ad campaign?”* most of the respondents answered that they did. Upon the question *“Which type of agency is usually appointed as the main agency among your agencies?”* the respondents gave answers such as the following:

*“Our advertising agency is usually appointed as the main agency.”*

*“I usually meet with all the agencies and tell what I want. Then the main agency’s job is to coordinate the project and to see to it that the cooperation works between the other agencies. The main agency reports to me directly.”*

The senior agency-consultant added the following:

*“Usually the company chooses one strategic partner from the various partners and appoints thereby this partner to become the main agency which is most often the advertising agency. The main agency plays a leading role and is responsible for the entire project and is also the main link between the marketing manager and the rest of the agency network. It also has to see to it that the cooperation between the other partners is functioning well. The main agency is considered being the company’s strategic partner and the closest contact.”*

**4.2.2 Agency cooperation issues.** Personality, trust and personal chemistry are seen as crucial factors for a good collaboration. Despite the acknowledgement that it takes quite some time to get to know the other partner, respondents mentioned a lack of personal chemistry to be a major reason for terminating agency cooperation. With the exception of one respondent, strategically motives such as price levels or disappointing agency performance evaluations were not mentioned as reasons for a change of agency. Table 4.5 presents an overview of these findings.

Examples of respondents’ answers to the respective question were as follow:

***How does the cooperation function between your company and the agencies?***

*“There is a lot of prestige among the agencies.”*

*“There is prestige among agencies but I just demand that they cooperate. They need customers during these times so they have to listen to the customer.”*

*“Relationships and trust are crucial.”*

*“...because of lack of personal chemistry we were forced to change our advertising agency. Because many of us didn’t want to or could not work with them any longer.”*

*“Personal chemistry is crucial for a partnership to work.”*

*“...it came to a point where she couldn’t stand the guy. That’s when we thought it was time to change agencies. Personal chemistry is important... but we also wanted to change our branding strategy, so that’s why we also changed agencies...”*

The senior agency-consultant stated the following:

*“Advertising agencies usually want to own the idea. They want to steer too much.*

*Everyone is fighting to own the project... PR agencies have gained strategic importance.*

*This creates even more competition among the agencies which in turn creates difficulties*

*to cooperate. PR Agencies and Advertising Agencies have the most strategic competence*

*and skills. Therefore they are rivals and strong competitors nowadays. And thus it is hard*

*for them to cooperate. They are fighting for the role of main agency that the company*

*appoints. Making sure that the cooperation between the partners works out well... this is a*

*hard thing to do but a deciding factor in order to have a successful result of*

*communicating ideas and campaigns. Good relations are everything... It takes about one*

*to one and a half year to get to know the other partner, the organization’s culture etc.”*

**Table 4.5 Agency cooperation issues**

<b>Agency cooperation issues</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Usually appoint a main agency	6
Main agency is usually the advertising agency	6
A lot of prestige exists among agencies	5
Personal chemistry and trust are crucial factors for good collaboration	4
Termination of agency collaboration because of lack of personal chemistry	2
Agencies are competing for the role of main agency	1



**4.2.3 Agency involvement.** While the respondents stated that they, to a certain extent, involve their agencies in the media selection, some stated to have good knowledge about media selection themselves and are thus not leaving this decision to the agencies. Respondents seem to involve ad agencies to a larger extent than other types of agencies when selecting media. All respondents said to have the final voice among the agencies in every decision to be made (see Table 4.6). Examples of respondents' answers to the respective question were:

*To what extent are the agencies involved in the media selection?*

*“Hmm, I would say that the agencies influence the choice of media as follow... our ad agency 10 percent, our media agency 5 percent, our PR agency 5 percent and our web agency 5 percent. So, we decide for 75 percent.”*

*“We first tell what we want... then the ad-agency presents the media mix in the creative brief. This has to be approved by us and the media agency. The brief sets the ground for the concrete objectives of the ad-campaign...”*

*“45 percent of our budget is spent on fixed media channels... the other 55 percent is flexible. For this, we invite our colleagues from within the company, agencies and other experts to, what we call a jamming-session to come up with new ideas to reach consumers.”*

*“We decide on the media mix with some advice from our media agency.”*

*“No external agencies are involved in this decision.”*

*“Since I have worked for a media agency before I have good knowledge myself. I simply tell the agencies what I want and they have to listen to me.”*

As to the question *“Who makes the final decision with media selection?”* all respondents said to have the final voice. This was based on answers such as:

*“Me.”*

*“I make all final decisions”*

*“I do”*

*“I have the last voice”*

**Table 4.6 Agency involvement in media selection**

<b>Agency involvement in media selection</b>	<b>Responses</b>
No agencies are involved	2
25% Agencies, 75% Advertiser	1
Agencies and other partners somewhat involved	3
Media agency somewhat involved	1
The marketing manager makes the final decision	7

**4.3 The Green Environmental Aspect**

The third research question was:

*RQ3: Are green environmental aspects considered when marketing managers select advertising media?*

Although the respondents reported to be aware of environmental issues in general, considering the natural environment is something that is being executed somewhere else in the organization. The respondents told that they do not consider environmental aspects when selecting advertising media (Table 4.7). To the question whether companies have environmental policies, some respondents responded that CSR issues, including an environmental policy, are usually stated on the company’s web page.

Some respondents consider the fact that they are “just a company” and thus cannot make a difference on this matter. They were of the opinion that considering green environmental issues seem to be more of a trend and/or political issue that need to be worked on and solved

on that level instead. Some respondents mentioned though that with every choice they make they would never do anything to damage the “brand”.

Surprisingly, some respondents expressed strong negative private opinions in regards to considering the environment in their daily work. One respondent even had very strong private opinions that were stated “off the record”. Examples of respondents’ answers to the respective questions were as follow:

***Does your company have an environmental policy?***

*”Yes, we have, it is stated on our webpage.”*

*“Yes. We are actively focusing on the environment. We recycle as much as we can.”*

*”I think so...we should have one.”*

*“We have a separate department that deals with these types of questions. Not just with environmental issues. I have nothing to do with these issues. My focus is on X (brand name) and that it is surviving and growing. May I ask why you are asking this question? Is it something you have to include in your study in order to be political correct?”*

*”We are worst in working with CSR including the environment. The brand prioritizes first. Our brand is the weakest on the market at the moment.”*

*“Can I speak off the record...?”*

***Are environmental aspects playing a role when choosing the specific advertising media?***

*“No, I wouldn’t know how....”*

*“Hmm... that’s a good question... I don’t think I think about these kinds of things...”*

*“It is a bigger issue for politics. A small organization such as ours cannot affect these issues.”*

*“Shall we step outside then I can tell you what I really think of this? I am not considering this; I don’t get paid to solve these issues. As I said, we have a separate department that handles these types of issues.”*

*“I think it’s more of a trend that comes and goes.”*

**Table 4.7 Environmental aspects**

<b>Environmental considerations</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Yes, we have an environmental policy	5
Environmental aspects are not playing a role when selecting media	7
Considering the environment is not my responsibility	2
Considering the environment is more of a trend that comes and goes	1
Considering the environment is more an issue for politics	1

#### **4.4 The Economic Recession Aspect**

The fourth research question was:

*RQ4: How does an economic recession affect marketing communication planning in general and media selection in particular?*

The respondents report that the economic recession at the time of this study is affecting media expenditure in the sense that their companies have cut down on media investments. Respondents find that it is also a better negotiation situation during economic recession in regards to price and agency cooperation. For example, respondents experience better prices of media offers and argue that agencies need clients and are therefore more flexible. Some respondents experienced that agencies in times of recession are more flexible and willing to listen to their clients. As a consequence, the respondents perceive agencies to act more in accordance to clients’ wishes during an economic recession.

According to the respondents, during an economic recession there is also a stronger need to be flexible and to adjust marketing (communication) plans more often (see Table 4.1). This is in line with previous findings that managers tend to make adaptations to the marketing mix and/or changes of target market(s) during an economic recession.

This study may add further to these previous findings in the sense that media selection also seems to be much influenced by special offers during economic recession. Examples of respondents' answers to the respective questions were as follow:

***To what extent has the economic recession affected your company's marketing communication efforts?***

*"Normally, we work according to a one-year plan, this year and from August 2008 everything is ad hoc!"*

*"We are getting a lot of ad hoc offers from various media. It is a better negotiation situation for us at the moment. This 20% of change in the year plan is usually spent on these types of offers."*

*"We are more price focused, budget cuts... I don't want to comment more on this."*

***To what extent has the economic recession affected the choice of advertising media?***

*"We get a lot of special offers. We are in a better negotiation situation right now."*

*"In this recession PR and Internet are cheaper now... so we invest a lot in these..."*

*"We are using more of our own media channels such as digital TV screens because it is free."*

*"It is a better negotiation situation for us now. Agencies need clients so they have to listen to what I tell them."*

*“These times are great negotiation times for us. They need us.”*

#### **4.5 Today’s Headache of the Marketer**

As a concluding question respondents were asked the question:

***In your opinion, what is the headache of today’s marketer?***

Respondents are experiencing that the role of the marketer is too broad and the responsibility for marketing communication effects is high. They also stated that advertising investments are difficult to measure which makes motivating advertising investments hard to do. This creates extra pressure from within the organization. Thus many feel that it is hard to live up to the demands of today’s role of the marketer. Examples of respondents’ answers to the concluding question were:

*“Our role has become too broad and the responsibility for marketing communication effects is high.”*

*“Measuring advertising effects is a big problem.”*

*“Effective measurements of advertising investments. This would help me argue better within the organization. One has such a great budget responsibility.”*

*“Communication is difficult to judge up front. Will this work out or not?”*

*“The biggest headache today is measurements of advertising effects.”*

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This study explored factors that may guide and influence marketing managers in media selection for marketing communication purposes. Investigating this area in an exploratory fashion opens up for the complexity that marketing managers are dealing with in practice. Investigating advertiser-agency cooperation, environmental issues, the economic recession and its' influence on media selection has brought about some further insights on the topic and into marketing managers' work with media selection.

### **Marketing Communication Planning and Media Selection**

The findings indicate that year-based plans are used for marketing communication planning. These plans are usually preliminary planned and are adjusted throughout the year. The results indicate that the main factors that guide the marketing managers in their marketing communication strategy are consumers' needs, brand values, sales, objectives, a fixed media focus and budget.

In line with previous studies on the limited use of academic theory in practice in general, the present study may add to this knowledge by indicating that this may also be the case for marketing managers and their work with marketing communication in general and advertising media selection in particular. The findings indicate that the media mix selected is usually not scientifically grounded and that the marketing managers tend not to make use of models for selecting media.

The findings also indicated that the non-use of models in practice may not be due to merely time pressures as was found in previous studies, but also to their roles that the marketing managers perceive as sometimes being too broad, their increasing responsibility for marketing communication investments and the complexity of measuring advertising effects. When marketing managers have the increasing responsibility to report advertising effects, and thereby media investments, the risk may exist that media selection are also increasingly

guided by selecting media that can be easily measured while media that are more effective for the communication objective but are more difficult to measure, are overlooked.

While the marketing managers are to some extent collaborating with market research agencies for guidance of their marketing communication efforts, they claim to be often guided by their previous experience when selecting media and are therefore applying rules of thumb. When grounding media selection on mostly previous experience and rules of thumb the risk may exist to distribute resources that are not in accordance to current trends and quick changes in consumers' media behavior. Consequently, much too often the main focus will be on conventional media. According to Pickton (2005), marketing plans will not function effectively when not being adjusted to the changed technical environment of consumers.

Some other factors that influence the media selection, found in previous studies, are the budget, costs, suitability of the medium, reach and target market. This study indicates that special offers could be added to these factors. The marketing managers reported to count on receiving special offers and are even including certain flexibility for these types of offers in their marketing communication plans. Receiving special offers on for example advertising space gives way for ad-hoc media decisions.

### **Advertiser-agency Cooperation and its Influence on Media Selection**

The marketing managers interviewed perceive that their role has become broad and their responsibility for marketing communication effects has increased much. In addition, they have to make sure that external agencies are delivering and cooperating well both with the company and within the agency network. There also seems to be much prestige among the agencies which could create tensions at times.

Many of the interviewed marketing managers perceive the number of collaborating agencies as being too many and wish for dealing with a less number of agencies in their agency network. This may thus be the reason why marketing managers appoint a main



agency within their agency network. The main agency takes on a leading role within the agency network and is responsible for the entire project. It also has to ensure that the cooperation between the agencies is functioning well. The main agency, most often an advertising agency, is considered being the company's closest contact. Appointing a main agency creates a hierarchical structure in the network of agencies which may cause a barrier between the other agencies and the client whereby they may not be fully willing to share crucial knowledge that could benefit the client. This may include critical input on the media selection.

Rather than primarily agency performance evaluations, the findings of this study suggest that personal chemistry is a key element for good collaboration between advertisers and agencies. Compared to earlier studies on developing advertiser-agency relationships, the findings indicate that the respondents in this study may be more similar to American than to Dutch marketing managers in the sense that they put social bonding before agency performance evaluations.

The findings also indicate that the marketing managers spend a great amount of time on selecting and building relationships with new agencies. Based on the interviews, it takes about one to one and a half year to get to know a new agency. Considering that Swedish agency collaborations last about two to three years, a great part of the total collaboration time is spent on getting to know the agency. Main reasons given for switching agencies were primarily the lack of personal chemistry (tensions) and secondary a change of brand strategy.

In long-term relationships all parties have clear expectations of each other. For example when a company has decided to change its brand strategy, switching agencies may not be an optimal solution. Selecting and building relationships with new agencies demands a lot of time and other resources. Long-term agency collaborations would to a greater extent benefit the task at hand (in this case a change of brand strategy), including media selection.

While some of the marketing managers stated not to involve agencies at all in the media selection process, others stated that they do involve their agencies albeit to some extent. These findings indicate that it is primarily the marketing manager that seems to be involved in the selection of media and that the agencies' role is to give additional secondary input on the matter.

### **The Green Environmental Aspect and its Influence on Media Selection**

While companies seem to have environmental policies, the findings indicate that environmental issues are not particularly considered among the marketing managers when they select media for ad campaigns. Dealing with environmental issues is perceived to be merely “a trend that comes and goes” which is dealt with elsewhere in the organization. It could be argued that at the same time as studies have shown that about 25 percent of Swedish households avoid certain types of advertising media because of environmental considerations, such as direct marketing, the marketing managers do not seem to be picking up and/or considering such changes in consumer media attitudes. Hence, the marketing managers may miss out on being on the forefront of consumer media attitudes and thereby risk posing a competitive disadvantage.

### **The Economic Recession Aspect and its Influence on Media Selection**

It was found that an economic recession may affect media selection in the sense that it creates a situation where much more ad hoc decisions are being made. The findings indicate that this is caused by changes in the marketing budget and/or an increase in competitive special offers from various media suppliers.

Most of the marketing managers in this study stated that during an economic recession marketing communication plans are adjusted to a much greater extent than during a stable economy and are in some cases even totally adjusted. This is in line with previous studies on marketing strategies under economic downturn. Under stable economic conditions, the

marketing managers usually count on a 20 to 25 percent adjustment of the marketing communication plan. This flexibility in their plans is necessary to be able to make ad hoc modifications to, for example, support and boost certain product(s) sales during a specific period. During times of economic downturn the marketing managers in this study claim to increase the use of PR because of the low costs<sup>1</sup> involved.

This study indicates that an economic recession may also provide better negotiation opportunities for the marketing managers with media suppliers. Receiving special offers from media suppliers seem to be popular among the marketing managers in this study especially during times of economic recession which can lead to adjustments of the marketing communication plan and to more ad hoc media decisions.

Additionally, an economic recession was found to affect advertising agency cooperation and the selection of advertising media. The marketing managers in this study claim to experience a better cooperation with their agencies during economic recession, whereby agencies seem to be more agreeable because of the fear of losing them as clients. Furthermore, it was found that during times of economic recession, cheaper advertising media are to a greater extent opted for such as media using the Internet and the company's own media channels for instance in-store TV and radio.

## **Discussion**

By exploring the factors that influence and guide media selection for marketing communication, this study has at the same time indicated some factors that may hinder the marketing managers from selecting media in a more effective way.

First, the marketing managers seem to have already predisposed ideas on which media to use based on their previous experience. This could make it more difficult for the agencies to influence/advise the marketing manager on the selection of media. In addition, it may also

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<sup>1</sup> When comparing to advertising and thereby buying media space.

create a barrier for implementing integrated marketing communication (IMC) since the marketing managers may not primarily adjust and integrate the selection of media to today's changing media environment. For example, by ignoring changes in consumer media attitudes and behavior regarding green environmental issues, the marketing managers may risk not being on the forefront of media consumption habits and thereby risk posing a competitive disadvantage.

Second, the appointment of a main agency can create a number of obstacles for selecting media in a more effective way. Namely, appointing a main agency creates a hierarchical structure in the agency network which in turn could create a barrier between the client and the other agencies. This barrier may block the other agencies from directly providing the marketing manager with updated information on advertising media as well as on current trends in media consumption. As a consequence, the marketing manager might be missing out on crucial information for media selection. When marketing managers appoint a main agency (most often the ad-agency) for their marketing communication efforts, one could also question whether the media selection will not be biased towards advertising whereby the choice of media may be chosen from a dominant advertising starting point. This may also create a barrier for implementing effective IMC and media selection. The marketing manager and thereby the organization would thus benefit by taking a more central role in the advertiser-agency network.

Third, in order to create more productive and solid collaborations the marketing managers should consider to shift their focus from short-term to long-term partnerships with their agencies by prioritizing measurement of agency performance evaluations over social bonding. By doing so, the marketing managers will not have to spend a great deal of time on selecting and building relationships with new agencies. Rather, the time saved on these types of

activities could be spent on gaining updated knowledge on for example changes in consumer media habits because of continuous technical advances.

Fourth, the non-use of academic models in media selection by the marketing managers may also hinder more effective media selection. Media selection for marketing communication based on mostly past experience and rules of thumb may not function most advantageous as the risk exists that mostly conventional media will be selected whereby the media selection is not fully adjusted to consumers' changing media habits and preferences.

## **6. FUTURE RESEARCH**

The contribution of the study presented here is mainly exploratory and its primary purpose was to gain insights into the proposed research problems among Swedish advertisers. Whether the consequences suggested in the discussion above is a general problem or not, remains thus to be settled. Future studies should therefore consider investigating to what extent marketing managers have knowledge about consumers' attitudes toward various advertising media and its consequences for consumer media behavior. Furthermore, to what extent different criteria, in particular models, for media selection are used by marketing managers should be further investigated. On the topic of environmental issues in relation to media selection, future research should consider exploring to what extent green environmental aspects are considered by consumers in relation to their attitudes toward advertising media and to what extent a medium's impact on the green environment is considered by marketing managers.

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## APPENDIX A

Example of a Score-card plan (Starch, 1923, pp. 798 – 799)

### SCALE OF POINTS

<b>General:</b>	5
Appearance, stock, make-up, printing, color, illustrations, etc	3.0
Age, financial soundness, general reputation, ethics	2.0
<b>Appeal:</b>	40
Appeal to women consumers	30.0
Appeal to men consumers	4.0
Dealer influence	6.0
<b>Circulation Distribution Territorial:</b>	5
Per cent eastern	0.5
Per cent southern	2.0
Per cent central	1.0
Per cent mountain and coast	1.5
<b>Circulation Distribution Community:</b>	5
Over 10,000 population	1.0
Under 10,000 population	4.0
<b>Circulation Volume:</b>	10
Rate per line per thousand of net paid circulation	6.0
Proportion of market covered	4.0
<b>Circulation Quality Editorial:</b>	5
Fiction, news, features	2.0
Service departments	3.0
<b>Circulation Quality Investigations:</b>	5
Investigations among readers	5.0
<b>Circulation Quality Subscription Methods:</b>	10
Price of subscription	2.0
Percentage of mail subscribers	2.0
Percentage of married women	1.0
Percentage of renewals	2.0
Percentage of arrears	0.5
Percentage of installment subscriptions	0.5
Percentage clubs with others	0.5
Percentage premiums with subscriptions	0.5
Percentage premiums for subscriptions	0.5
Percentage bulk circulation	0.5
<b>Class of Advertising Carried:</b>	7
High-class mail order	2.0
High-class publicity	2.0
Long-term “repeats”	3.0
<b>Special Considerations:</b>	8
Previous advertising	2.0
Inquiry costs	2.0
Acceptance of size space	4.0
<hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/>	
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Guide

Date, place, company, respondent's name, respondent's title

#### *Introduction*

Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of the study is to explore how Swedish companies work with marketing communication in general and advertising media selection in particular. The results of this study will be presented in my PhD thesis and I will use the information for scientific purposes only. The conversation will be recorded. You have the possibility to be anonymous and I will treat all information confidentially.

#### *A. Marketing communication*

1. At your company, do you plan for marketing communication or does it happen ad hoc?
2. What guides the company's marketing communication?
3. To what extent has the economic recession affected your company's marketing communication efforts?

#### *B. Advertiser-agency cooperation*

1. Which types of external agencies are your company cooperating with?
2. How does the cooperation function between your company and the agencies?
3. Do you usually appoint a main agency during the production of an ad campaign?
4. Which type of agency is usually appointed as the main agency?

#### *C. Media selection*

1. When you are working with ad campaigns, what guides the media mix selection?
2. To what extent are the agencies involved in the media selection?
3. Who makes the final decision?
4. To what extent has the economic recession affected the choice of advertising media?

#### *D. Environmental issues*

1. Does your company have an environmental policy?
2. Are environmental aspects playing a role when choosing the specific media?

#### *E. Miscellaneous*

1. In your opinion, what is the headache of today's marketer?
2. Is there anything else that you would like to add to this interview?

## APPENDIX C

### Sample Characteristics

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#### Sample characteristics

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##### Respondent One

Cluster	A
Title	Director of Marketing
Gender	Female
Industry	FMCG, supermarket

##### Respondent Two

Cluster	B
Title	Director of PR and Marketing
Gender	Female
Industry	Automobile

##### Respondent Three

Cluster	C
Title	Director of Marketing
Gender	Male
Industry	TV broadcasting

##### Respondent Four

Cluster	D
Title	Senior Marketing Manager
Gender	Male
Industry	Fast food restaurant

##### Respondent Five

Cluster	F
Title	Director of Marketing
Gender	Female
Industry	Banking

##### Respondent Six

Cluster	G
Title	Head of Marketing
Gender	Female
Industry	FMCG, Supermarket

##### Respondent Seven

Cluster	B
Title	Director of Marketing Communication
Gender	Female
Industry	Tele communication

##### Respondent Eight

Cluster	-
Title	Senior Agency Consultant
Gender	Male
Industry	Agency consultancy

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