"Gender and perceptual dimensions of TV-advertising"

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Gender and perceptual dimensions of TV-advertising

Abstract

Previous research has shown that gender differences in advertising response do exist and that these can be quite relevant to marketers. The previous research was primarily based on verbal print messages with elaborate product information as stimulus and a cognitive processing perspective. These procedures do not compare well with state of the art advertising and branding strategy that include audio-visual communication and symbolic and emotionally engaging creative strategy. This paper investigates gender differences of advertising experiences. To this end, the authors present and evaluate the usefulness of an ad perception framework, composed of three perceptual dimensions developed from advertising execution theory, genre theory and cognitive film theory. A small empirical study aimed at demonstrating whether the framework is capable of measuring gender differences in advertising perception is presented.

Main findings are that the scales based on the suggested framework capture gender differences in ad perception, suggesting that there may be subtle but significant differences in how men and women perceive advertising. The results are discussed in relation to theoretical and pragmatic implications.

Keywords: advertising, gender, advertising effects, branding strategy.
JEL Classification: M37.

Introduction

Message strategy has always been considered important in explaining the variance in advertising effects (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Lord et al., 1995; Stone et al., 2000; Heath & Stipp, 2011). There is even evidence to support that the message strategy (and the related advertising perception) is more important than media spending when evaluating advertising campaigns (Van den Putte, 2009; Aaker & Carman, 1982).

Previous research has evidenced that women and men tend to differ in their responses to advertising messages (Cramphorn, 2011; Wolin, 2002; Darley and Smith, 1995; Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran, 1991). These differences are mostly explained not only as a difference in cognitive information processing strategy (e.g., Darley and Smith, 1995), but also stereotype-congruency and social desirability has been suggested as causes for gender differences in reactions to advertising (Fisher and Dubé, 2005). The vast majority of the research on gender and advertising response is based oncognitive responses to *verbal* presentation of *product information* in *print media* (Wolin, 2002; Fisher and Dubé, 2005), which seems quite anachronistic compared to the strategies of contemporary advertising and the importance of symbolic value, emotional engagement, playfulness and pleasure in branding strategy (Heath and Stipp, 2011; Teixaira, 2012; Holt, 2004). Consequently, it is pertinent with research into gender differences of advertising perceptions that measure the advertising perception more broadly (as

integrative experience) and on advertising comparable with current branding practices.

This paper has two main purposes: (1) to conceptualize the perceptual dimensions and to present scales aimed at measuring these in responses to audio-visual advertising (video spot); (2) to determine whether it is possible to identify significant gender differences in ad perceptions of audio-visual advertising with the proposed framework.

1. Theoretical background

1.1. Gender differences in advertising response. A significant part of the advertising research on gender and advertising is on gender role stereotyping and on the responses to sexual themes/'sexiness' of the advertising messages (Wolin, 2002), and, while there is a need for political and ethical discussions on these issues, it is not the focus of this paper. According to Fisher and Dubé (2005, p. 851), the majority of the studies of gender differences in advertising response is conducted within an information processing perspective (e.g., Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran, 1991; Darley and Smith, 1995; Chang, 2007). According to this research, men are "selective processors" that are more likely to overlook subtle cues and mainly use heuristics in their reaction to advertising. In contrast, women are found to be more careful processors that engage in *"effortful, comprehensive, itemized analysis of all available information"* (Darley and Smith, 1995, p. 43, emphasis in original). The stimulus material in these studies involved a predominantly verbal 'information processing': Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran (1991) asked respondents to read a rather lengthy 'print ad' for a new (fictional) in-depth news program, detailing eight scheduled issues to be discussed in the program; Darley and Smith (1995) used lab constructed radio ads verbalizing highly

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detailed technical information of two electrical appliances; Chang (2007) used constructed print ads for an 'electronic dictionary product' detailing and comparing the product attributes. The three studies mentioned above are symptomatic of the general approach in the research on gender and advertising, in the orientation towards printed, verbal, highly technical product information. Supporting this, Wolin (2002) found that 76.9% of all research papers on gender and advertising was based on print media (of 19 studies on gender and ad responses, 17 studies were based on print advertising, one on radio and one on TV advertising). These studies point to relevant gender differences in male and female response to communication, but it is very important to consider that contemporary advertising and branding is dependent on more complex and experientially diverse advertising to get the attention of consumers. Adding to the constraints of current advertising is the increasing use of 'second screens' (iPads, mobile phones) while watching TV, and the importance of online video on YouTube and Facebook, that let consumers choose to ignore, block, skip, watch or even (as a bonus for the advertiser) share the advertising.

1.2. Advertising execution theory. An attempt to understand gender differences in advertising perceptions needs conceptual foundation: How do we conceptualize audio-visual advertising with regard to the very broad and dynamic variance in the appeals of the advertising executions?

Advertising execution literature offers different perspectives focusing on specific dimensions: for example 'structure' (Shimp, 1976; Hefzallah and Maloney, 1979; Rossiter and Percy, 1996), 'style' (Laskey et al., 1994) or 'main message strategy' (Laskey et al., 1989; Laskey et al., 1995). All these 'types', 'strategies' and 'scripts' seem to have similarities, but are only brief general descriptions. For example, the "script" of "Lifestyle (user-as-hero)" (Rossiter and Percy, 1996), the "message structure" of "Personality" (Shimp, 1976), the "structural design" of "The Staged Plan" (Hefzallah and Maloney, 1979), and the "main message strategy" of "User Image" (Laskey et al., 1989; Laskey et al., 1995) all have similar broad descriptions of an ad glorifying a user of the product advertised, but not much is said on the ads experiential potentials (e.g., it may or may not be based on narrative transportation as defined by Green and Brock, 2000).

In some cases, the dichotomy of informational/transformational, a purchase motivation distinction, is used to order the types accordingly (Rossiter and Percy, 1996; Laskey et al., 1989; Laskey et al., 1995). The idea is that these different types of advertising are best suited for, and appeal to, either a positive or negative purchase motivation. Terms such as "Comedy", "Drama", "Lecture", or "Mood" are also used but without a larger context, or without much discussion about what sort of concept is used. In sum, it might be fair to say that advertising research often ends up with a dichotomy of two types of advertising: the emotional or informative (e.g., Janssens & Pelsmacker, 2005), the drama or the lecture (e.g., Wells, 1988; Deighton et al., 1989). If presented as the first, it seems to be a false dichotomy, as all advertising must be said to aim at invoking emotions at some level, e.g., the 'informational' types of advertising (Rossiter and Percy, 1996, p. 283) which not only involves product information but also aims to invoke negative emotions related to consumer problems and anxieties (to be solved and relieved by the advertised product/service).

The second distinction of drama/lecture is dependent on a more complex distinction of structure and aesthetics which is rarely found in mainstream advertising research (Scott, 2008), though it has been treated extensively in fields of rhetorical-, communication- and media studies. In recent years, these fields have also developed multimodal approaches highly appropriate for audio-visual communications (e.g., Pennock-Speck and Saz-Rubio, 2013), some inspired by cognitive theory and neurological perspectives (Grodal, 2009, Skov and Vartanian, 2009).

Grodal (1997; 2006; 2009) presents a theory on cognitive responses and processes of audio-visual scalled the PECMA-flow model (Perception, Emotion, Cognition, Motor, Action). His main interest is not in advertising but in the audience responses of feature films and TV. The theory involves prototypical "modes of perception" (Grodal, 1997) with emotional and cognitive responses related to the aesthetics of form and structure. Rather than simply 'decoding fixed signs and discrete meanings' ('information'), film & TV provides "a range of perceptual, cognitive and emotional experiences cued by the playful activation of our embodied brains" (Grodal, 2006, p. 5). Grodal's theory is based on involvement into narratives, identification and complex symbolic representations. It is the latter part that differs the most from mainstream advertising research: Grodal suggests a lyrical mode of perception which is invoking a "symbiotic fusion between viewer and the viewed". The resulting mode of perception would be one "…by which the space loses it qualities of 'space of acts' and becomes 'space of purposeless subjective perception" (Grodal, 1997, p. 164). This is an important mode to integrate in advertising research, because it may generate attention through 'oversaturated aesthetics' while communicating the desired associations, by activating

"'lyrical' associative networks in consciousness, in which the objects are linked at feature level (say, roundness)" (Grodal, 1997, p. 165). This is not to be considered a 'new' form of advertising; advertisers have very likely been integrating some form of lyrical appeals in the advertising since the beginning of marketing (e.g., Stern and Gallagher, 1991), but in the research on responses of advertising there has been a tendency to 'information processing' reductionism, particularly as rational/emotional dichotomies (e.g., Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999).

1.3. A three-dimensional model of advertising perceptions. Building on Grodal (1997), Højbjerg (2000) presents system of three 'modes of representation', including a Didactic mode. Andersen (2003; 2006) has further developed this as a three dimensional model of experiential qualities of TV-advertising and discussed how to define genres of TV advertising related to this model. The defining characteristics of the dimensions (also termed 'modality' or 'meta-genres') are closely tied to the 'the feeling of being addressed' (see Table 1) and these dimensions are comparable to the conceptualization of persuasive modes of appeal in rhetoric.
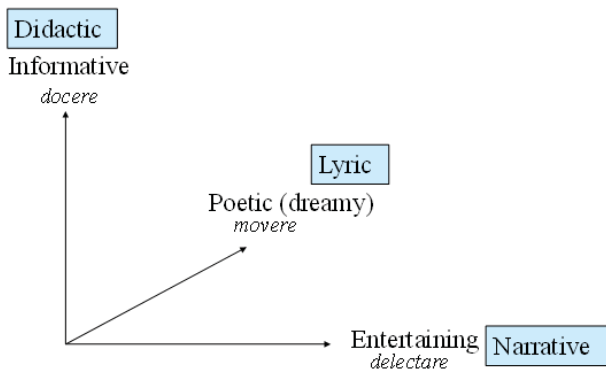

Fig. 1. Perceptual dimensions of advertising experiences

As visualized in Figure 1, the model is not a typology with discreet categories, and, therefore, hybridization or 'blending' is possible and expected, for example, through Lyrical montage with a discreet Narrative frame or the use of a Narrative slice of life 'encapsulated' in a Didactic spot. The Narrative meta-genre is placed in the middle as this blends more easily with the other two, than Didactic/Lyric blends with each other (Højbjerg, 2000; Andersen, 2003; 2006).

Table 1. Overview of communicational properties and perceptual dimensions

	Didactic	Narrative	Lyric
Address	Direct	Indirect	No address or meditative self-address
Receivers experience of media/ Mode of reception	Media as simple transmission of direct address (media as glass/window) Cognitive evaluation of explicit claims	Media as stage (fourth wall convention) Transportation into narrative Lean-back entertainment	Media as art Augmented, syn-aesthetic representation Immersive, saturated experience, meditation
Representational mode/ Expression (style)	Transparent Deliberative argumentation	Discreet, transparent narrative realism	(Syn-)Aesthetic, opaque, symbolic, expressionistic
Verbalism	High reliance on verbal content	High reliance on verbal content *as dialogue*	Low reliance on verbal content

The Didactic mode is one of conscious deliberation of persuasive arguments, claims and factual information presented in the ad. This mode compares well with the form of stimuli used in the research on gender and responses to advertising (e.g., Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran, 1991; Darley and Smith, 1995). The prototypical cue for the Didactic mode in TV advertising is an on-screen presenter addressing the camera with direct eye-contact as if speaking directly to the viewer (Højbjerg 2000; Andersen, 2006). In contemporary use of the Didactic mode the address often contains 'scientific proof' through illustrations, such as computer animated visuals and the use of voice-over. The information presented may be truly rational arguments and what Darley and Smith (1995) define as "objective claims", but in reality Didactic modes of appeal also make use of pseudoscientific proof e.g., trademarked 'magic ingredients' or ingeniously complex acronyms (Andersen, 2006).

While the Didactic is the most direct of addresses, the Lyrical in its purest forms seems hardly 'an address' at all, but more of a meditative mode of music and lyricism (Grodal, 1997; Andersen, 2006). The Lyrical mode of address is based on saturated aesthetics, synaesthetic overlap of senses, mood and 'atmosphere', appeals with *invitations* for mental elaboration and symbolic play with meaning. The Lyric is also about the mood and musicality (e.g., Coulson, 1989), but is not confined to the stereotypical 'jingle' or 'sing it' ad. In its purest forms the Lyrical 'gripping' and involving experience is 'oversaturated' to the extent of the dreamlike and surreal (Grodal, 1997). Typical techniques are manipulations to create startling or subtle effects, such as: time (slow-motion/fast-motion/ freeze-frame), space (unusual camera angles/ bullet time 'The Matrix'-like effects), colour (grading/filter/ tint/monochromes) and morphology (CG morphing), often combined with rhetorical tropes such as visual metaphor (e.g., Forceville, 2008). An attempt to make definite lists of 'special effects' would be defied by the very dynamic and evolving nature of advertising aesthetics: creating successful Lyric appeals is very difficult and often relies on state-of-the art technology for invoking striking visual imagery.

The Narrative mode is also an indirect mode of address, but one performed through a dialogue of fiction-

al characters, with specific aesthetics of narrative sequence and a convention of non-address – also known as the 'fourth wall convention' (in contrast to the Didactic address, characters do not look into the camera). The perceptual dimension rests on a feeling of being *transported* into the narrative world (Grodal, 1997; Green et al., 2000; Green et al., 2004). Viewers need to willingly immerse themselves into the narrative, to enjoy the narrative they have to adhere to the principle of 'suspension of disbelief'. The narrative mode follows the same principles of plot structure as 'drama' and 'slice of life' in the classic advertising formats, with its many forms of embedded demonstrations of products and their (more or less emotional) benefits (Wells, 1988; Deighton et al., 1989; Stern and Gallagher, 1991). Comedy and humor are potential elements in the Narrative mode with well-established relations to emotional responses and AdLiking (Weinberger and Gulas, 1992).

Theories of narrative transportation have already been widely integrated in the advertising research, though most studies have used short written texts or lab constructed print advertising as stimulus in the research on narrative transportation (e.g., Escalas, 2004; 2007). It is suggested that the condensed and complex audio/visual communications of TV advertising (used in the present study) have a better potential for looking into the experiential potential of narrative transportation and lyrical appeal, and, thus, compare better to the stimulus material used in the original studies by Green and associates (2000; 2004). Consequently, both the stimulus material and suggested model of advertising perception are highly appropriate for capturing potential gender differences in responses to contemporary TV advertising.

2. The study

From a pool of 110 TV spots of (which media plans spending were known) ten TV-spots were selected for inclusion in the study. These ads had been aired on the largest national network, which indicates both quality and broad relevance (as compared to local TV and niche channels). In order to minimize influence from previous exposures the selected ads were not being aired at the time of the study, and had been aired approximately two years prior to the study. The criteria used for selection was to cover each of the three dimensions of perception (see Table 2 for an overview of the selected ads/advertisers/products and the expected dominant perceptual dimension).

Perceived product relevance may influence the respondents' involvement in the advertising message, and, consequently, the resulting advertising experience. Therefore, an additional criterion was that the advertised products and services were deemed potentially relevant and interesting for the sample of respon-

dents (students in their early twenties), e.g., soft drinks, mobile services, cheap convenience food, transportation. As a further control measure, the respondents rated the product relevance in the survey, and all ads but one rated above average.

No ads for product categories that could be considered highly gendered (e.g., female hygiene products, detergents, cars, sport related goods or services, beer) were included. Some of the ads chosen contained mild forms of humor (e.g. a comic 'puppet' character), but none of the humor could be considered very 'coarse', 'dark' or 'sarcastic' (forms of humor that may be considered stereotypically 'male').

Table 2. The selected ads and hypothesized dominant perceptual dimensions

Product (advertiser)	Didactic	Narrative	Lyric
Electronics (TV) (Expert)	+	-	-
Telecom (mobile contract) (Telia)	+	-	-
OTC medicine (Orifarm)	+	-	-
Cable/Sat. TV (Viasat)	+	-	-
Convenience food (Tulip)	+	+	-
Public transport (DSB)	+	+	-
Travel (Spies)	-	+	-
Soft drink (Pepsi)	-	+	-
Travel, package (Apollo)	-	-	+
Airtravel (SAS)	-	+	+

Notes: + = anticipated perceptual dimension strong; - = anticipated perceptual dimension neutral or weak.
Please note that the theory allows for overlapping categories and hybrid combinations (e.g., lyric and narrative).

3. Construct measurement

The absence of previously validated scales for the three dimensions suggested by Andersen (2003; 2006) prevented a strictly confirmatory methodology. We began our study, therefore, in an explorative direction by including a larger pool of potential statements assessing the three suggested dimensions of advertising experience and the constructs of 'Liking'. Inspired from the literature mentioned above and supplemented by author's own suggestions judged to meet face validity, 15 statements were selected as candidates for measuring the three dimensions. The construct of Liking was measured on three items derived from our literature review and adapted to the context of this study (Muehling and McCann, 1993). The initial pool of 18 potential scale items was submitted to a pretest with the aim of trimming the scales by selecting, for each of the three perceptual dimensions, the three items that most reliably measured the constructs they were intended to measure. 32 undergraduate students from a media research class in a Danish University were asked to participate in the pilot study. A web-based questionnaire was

developed with video of TV-ads integrated. After watching the ads, students were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = to a very high degree) to what extent they experienced the perceptual 'content' of the 15 statements and overall AdLiking. With the data from the pilot study we trimmed the scales down to three items for each dimension by assessing Cronbach's Alpha for each scale and eliminating items based on the 'Alpha if item was removed' statistic. Following this procedure, all of the purified scales as well as the liking scales exceeded the recommended reliability threshold of .70 (Nunnally, 1978). With the aim at controlling for product relevance when we inspect the relationship between the three perceptual dimensions and liking we added an extra item to the final questionnaire asking the respondents about their perceived relevance of the product/issue in the commercial. The final items included in the questionnaire are displayed in Appendix A.

Respondents. Around 150 students from two bachelor programs on a large university (one from the humanities and one form the faculty of social science) were invited to participate in the study. The students were informed about the study in class and, subsequently, send an email with a link to the questionnaire. A total of 55 usable responses (response rate 30%), 23 were male and 32 were female.

4. Results

4.1. Scale construction and inspection of scale means. As can be seen in the first row in Table 3, coefficient Alpha estimates for each of the five constructs (ranges 0.820 to 0.938 indicate good scale reliability, according to Nunnally (1978)). For each construct, a summated scale score was created by simply summing the appropriate items and dividing the sum by the number of items. Mean scores and accompanying standard deviations across the ten TV-ads are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Coefficient alpha estimates for each of the five construct

	Didactic		Narrative		Lyric		Liking	
Coefficient alpha	.938		.916		.868		.901	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Total	3.96	1.61	4.12	2.00	3.43	1.79	4.72	1.76
Expert	5.24[A]	1.32	1.91[d]	.91	1.51[d]	.85	3.01[c]	1.47
Telia	4.78[A,B]	1.29	2.09[d]	.94	1.72[d]	.96	3.67[b,c]	1.35
Orifarm	3.88[B,C]	1.53	2.34[d]	1.20	2.35[c,d]	1.05	3.04[c]	1.37
Viasat	4.99[A]	1.31	2.76[d]	1.05	2.28[c,d]	1.10	4.08[b]	1.32
Tulip	4.23[A,B]	1.30	3.91[c]	1.30	2.76[c]	1.30	4.20[b]	1.55
DSB	4.92[A]	1.29	5.55[b]	1.26	4.23[b]	1.03	5.61[a]	1.33
Spies	2.88[C,D]	1.25	5.78[a,b]	.97	3.91[b]	1.11	5.64[a]	1.14
Pepsi	2.79[D]	1.23	6.50[a]	.91	4.35[b]	1.07	6.45[a]	.99
Apollo	2.86[D]	1.31	4.62[c]	1.39	5.70[a]	1.23	5.55[a]	1.20
SAS	2.98[C,D]	1.19	5.70[a,b]	1.23	5.54[a]	1.79	5.95[a]	1.18
F(9,540)	32.70**		130.06**		112.57**		51.79**	

Note: For each construct scale values were computed by summing the appropriate items and dividing the sum by the number of items. ** $p < .01$ based on an ANOVA test. Means with different superscripts are significant from one another ($p < .05$). Superscripts with capital letters are based on Scheffes post-hoc test, superscripts with small letters are based on Dunnet T3.

Mean scores for the didactic, narrative and lyric scales indicate that the respondents' perceptions of the ten ads are overall in accordance with the authors' expectations as displayed in Table 2. Thus, our suggested scales for measuring the didactic, narrative and lyric dimension of ad perception seem both reliable and valid. The mean scores for liking are highest for the five ads displayed in the lower half, indicating that

respondents react more favorably to TV-ads perceived as narrative and lyric when compared to more didactic TV-ads. Large standard deviations within all five constructs indicate that the perceptions of TV-ads are, indeed, a very dynamic and subjective matter. Independent t-tests were used to determine if significant gender-related differences existed between scale means for each of the four constructs (Table 5).

Table 4. Scale means across gender and corresponding t-test

	Didactic		Narrative		Lyric		Liking	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Total	3.96	1.61	4.12	2.00	3.43	1.79	4.72	1.76
Male ($n = 230$)	3.76	1.62	3.89	1.94	3.29	1.72	4.40	1.76
Female ($n = 320$)	4.08	1.58	4.27	2.02	3.54	1.82	4.95	1.72
t ($df = 548$)	-2.313*		-2.240*		-1.651		-3.633**	

Note: Summated mean values were used for each construct. Independent t-test used to test mean differences. ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed). * $p < .05$ (2-tailed).

Table 5. Pearsons correlations testing the relationship between the didactic, narrative and lyric dimensions and AdLiking

	Didactic	Narrative	Lyric
Liking (total sample)	-.067	.840**	.703**
Liking (males)	.060	.840**	.719**
Liking (females)	-.150**	.839**	.692**

Note: ** $p < .01$ (1-tailed). * $p < .05$ (1-tailed).

Interestingly, it turns out that females' perception of the didactic and narrative dimensions on the average are significantly higher when compared to males' perception, whereas the difference with respect to the lyric dimension was not significant. Likewise, females on the average show significantly higher AdLiking than males, whereas no difference was found with respect to the overall perceived personal relevance of the advertised brands/information. Thus, females' higher liking of the didactic ads is not explained by higher perceived product relevance. Assuming the didactic dimension corresponds to explicit 'information rich' content, this with previous research on the informational content (e.g., Berney-Reddish and Areni, 2006).

Table 6. Partial correlations, controlling for perceived product/information relevance

	Didactic	Narrative	Lyric
Liking (total sample)	-167**	.814**	.678**
Liking (males)	-.115*	.816**	.709**
Liking (females)	-.240**	.813**	.655**

Note: ** $p < .01$ (1-tailed). * $p < .05$ (1-tailed).

Table 7. Cluster means and corresponding ANOVA-tests

	Low on all	Purely didactic	Mainly didactic	Narrative	Narrative/lyric	High on all	F (5,544)
Cluster size	10.0%	**19.3%**	**22.4%**	12.2%	10.7%	**25.5%**	
Didactic	1.93A	**5.02A**	**5.15** A	2.27B	2.33B	**4.36B**	**183.92****
Narrative	2.37D	1.62E	3.34C	**6.03A**	4.90B	**6.12A**	**426.71****
Lyric	2.04E	1.39F	2.60D	3.81C	**5.96A**	**5.00B**	**376.87****
Liking	2,96C	2,98C	**4,20B**	**5,94A**	**5,67A**	**6,21A**	**151.42****

Note: ** $p < .01$ based on an ANOVA test. Means in bold are above the scale mid-point (4). Means with different superscripts are significant from one another ($p < .05$). Superscripts with capital letters are based on Dunnet T3.

4.2. Clustering of ad perceptions based on the three dimensions. Another way to investigate the difference in ad perceptions is identifying clusters of advertising perceptions. To achieve this aim, a hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted on the 550 ad perceptions using the three summated variables: didactic, narrative and lyric (Table 7). Distances between the clusters were calculated with the squared Euclidean distance measure, and the aggregation of clusters was performed with Ward's procedure to minimize the within-cluster differences and to maximize the between-cluster differences. A two-step procedure were used to establish an appropriate number of clusters. First, the agglomeration schedule (displaying the heterogeneity between the clusters to be merged at each clustering stage) was utilized to examine incremental changes in the agglomeration coefficient. Small coefficients indicate that fairly homogeneous clusters are being merged. Joining two very distinct clusters results in a large coefficient or a large percentage change in the coefficient (Hair et al., 2006). An inspection of the percentage change in agglomeration coefficients shows a 15 percent increase from six to five clusters compared to less than 10 percent increases in the prior stages. Hence, a six-cluster solution was selected as a potential solution and, in the next step, further evaluated based on theoretical foundations and practical judgements.

The means of the three cluster variables for each cluster are shown in Table 7 along with the results of an ANOVA test. Significant differences were found between clusters across the three clustering variables. An inspection of the last row show that the ads that are perceived as low on all dimensions and the purely didactic ads are the least liked ads whereas ads with more lyric and/or narrative contend are liked better. The results also support that it is possible to create liking in informative ads as long as it is accomplished with narrative and/or lyric modes.

Table 8. Percentage of respondents in each cluster across gender

	Low	Purely didactic	Mainly didactic	Narrative	Narrative/lyric	High on all	
All	10.0%	19.3%	22.4%	12.2%	10.7%	25.5%	100.0%
Male	15.2%	18.7%	21.3%	11.7%	10.0%	23.0%	100.0%
Female	6.3%	19.7%	23.1%	12.5%	11.3%	27.2%	100.0%

Note: Chi-square = 12,189, $df = 5$, $p < .05$; Cramers $V = .149$.

Table 8 shows significant gender-related differences (Chi-square = 12,189, $df = 5$, $p < .0$). Although, the relationship is not very strong (Cramers $V = .149$), males are more likely to perceive TV-ads as low on all dimensions opposed to females being more likely to classify TV-ads as high on all dimensions. These

results are in line with the above mentioned patterns found in Table 4.

4.3. The relationship between the three dimensions and AdLiking. In order to test how each of the three perceptual dimensions relates to commercial liking a series of bi-variate correlation analysis were conducted on the pooled sample, including all ads. The results are shown in Table 5. Correlation coefficients in the uppermost row clearly show that, whereas the didactic dimension is not correlated with AdLiking ($r = -.067$, $p > .05$), the narrative and lyric dimensions both have a strong relationship with the respondents AdLiking ($r = .840$, $p < .01$ and $r = .703$, $p < .01$, respectively). From the two lower rows, it is interesting that the didactic dimension seems to be negatively correlated when it comes to females' perception, whereas the male perceptions stay the same. There are no gender-related differences for the narrative and lyric dimensions. In order to control for the influence of product relevance on the abovementioned relationships, a series of partial correlations were made, controlling for the respondents perceived relevance of the ads brands/information. The results are displayed in Table 6. Interestingly, while controlling for perceived relevance has no direct influence on the narrative or lyric dimensions, it turns out that when controlling for relevance, the didactic dimension has a significant negative influence on AdLiking. From the two lower rows in the Table it is seen, that this negative correlation is significant for both genders, and for females it is even stronger when controlling for relevance.

5. Discussion and implications

This study has both theoretical and managerial implications. The results show that the suggested framework and scales are both reliable and valid. The diversity in the respondents' perceptions with respect to the didactic, narrative and lyric dimensions indicates that the ad perceptions are, indeed, very dynamic, still, the high internal reliability in the scales indicates that they are measureable. An important difference in this study and most other advertising research on gender differences, is the focus on AdLiking in perception in this study, where most previous research focuses on *persuasion scores* (claim acceptance) as dependent variable and on a cognitive processing perspective. While some may consider persuasion scores a more relevant and valuable measure for marketers, we will argue that AdLiking is even more important in contemporary branding and advertising strategy as fewer market categories are driven by purely functional product positioning. The results emphasize the importance of considering gender when investigating advertising effects as *ad perceptions*. The results show that

the narrative and lyric dimensions both have a strong positive influence on the respondents liking of the commercial. In contrast, the didactic dimension even seems to be negatively related to AdLiking regardless of the level of respondents' perceived relevance of advertised brand/information. Some advertisers would probably still find this negative relation irrelevant to their strategy, and it is arguably the case that the product category has very important influence on what is considered the appropriate message strategy within the category, and whether AdLiking should be a strategic communication objective or not (e.g., negative motivational strategy) (Rossiter and Percy, 1996). However, it could be inferred that in the current media context, there are several reasons to consider the subtle differences in the advertising perception to be strategically relevant to all brand positioning, thus to be concerned with low levels of AdLiking. The competition for the attention and involvement of the TV viewer has only increased with the development in media use, such as the constant distraction of 'second screens' (e.g., mobiles, tablets) and streaming on-line media, such as Youtube, where skipping uninvolving ads are easy (Teixeira, 2012).

This study points to the importance of considering gender when designing and testing advertising executions. It shows that not only may there be different emotional responses, *the perceptions and experiences* of the advertising may differ. The results have implications for communications and brand managers, especially with respect to strategic decisions on brand attitude advertising, where subtle differences in perception of the advertising can be critical.

Limitations and future research directions

In the present study, it is not possible to differentiate between biological basis of gender as *sex,* and the cultural or sociologically embedded notions of *gender.* In other words, we cannot claim to distinguish between culturally appropriated differences, and 'hard wired' differences, supposedly caused by in-utero hormonal flows (Cramphorn, 2011). It is, therefore, relevant to note that the respondents in this study are situated in an egalitarian Nordic cultural context with very high gender parity, and gender differences related to factors, such as stereotype-congruency and social desirability, may, therefore, vary greatly compared to other cultural settings (e.g. Italy, UK). Also, the reception context of this study was an on-line survey with embedded video, thus most likely to be viewed in a private situation at home. Consequently, the social desirability effects should not influence the responses (Fisher and Dubé, 2005). Even so, these factors were not controlled in the experimental design.

The present study has a number of limitations which should be taken into account when interpreting the results. First and foremost, the data in the present study were collected from a convenience sample which questions the generalizability of the findings. Second, using a varied, real, current sample of TV ads is considered a definite advantage in this study, particularly as the object of study is the responses of perception and experiential qualities, but it also implicates potential problems of confounding effects of previous brand communications and brand attitudes. Using 'real' advertising also means that elements, such as spokespersons or humor, are not controlled for separately, but make up part of the perceptual dimensions, e.g., Narrative (entertaining story with humorous characters). This is part of the approach, and we have taken great care in selecting the sample as to choose ads that represent 'average' mainstream advertising from large advertisers, which in a Danish context commonly rely on mild use of humor (Stigel, 2001). To yield more conclusive results, future research could replicate this study on a more representative population of respondents, ideally also with a larger sample of advertising.

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Tables and Figures

Appendix A

Measurement scales (Please note: translated from Danish)

AdLiking (Likert scale: 1 = totally disagree, 7 = disagree):

This was a good ad

This ad was absolutely not interesting (inverted)

This was one of those ads one can bear to watch several times

Perceptual dimensions: (scale: 1 = not at all, 7 = to a very high degree)

To what extend did you experience the ad as…

Lyric   -Poetic/dreamy

            -Emotionally gripping [difficult to translate]

            -Atmospheric

Narrative   -Tells an engaging story

            -Entertaining

            -Dull/boring [inverted]

Didactic -Informative

            -Presenting relevant information

            -Enlightening/educating