The Influence of Advertising on People’s Autonomy

Should Advertisements Be Restricted?

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to answer the following research question: *Does advertising negatively affect people’s autonomy and if so, should advertisements then be restricted?* This question is relevant since previous authors on this subject have not used the correct assumptions, furthermore, if advertising does indeed negatively influence people’s autonomy, governments have the moral obligation to prevent this. The question is answered by first explaining self-determination theory, which provides a definition of autonomy. The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion is described to provide insight in how attitudes can be changed by advertisements. Combining these two theories, the conclusion is that advertising will not have a negative effect on autonomy when the advertisement is processed via the central route, but advertising will have a negative effect on autonomy when the advertisement is processed via the peripheral route to persuasion. A research is proposed to find empirical evidence to back up this conclusion. If the results of this research indicate that advertising does indeed negatively influence people’s autonomy, the argument is made that governments should restrict advertisements to protect people’s autonomy.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Imagine the following situation: on television and in magazines you see very glamorous advertisements for a particular perfume, for instance Chanel no. 5. In this commercial, the famous actress Nicole Kidman leads a very glamorous life, wearing elegant dresses and being chased by paparazzi. The whole world knows who she is, except for one man with whom she flees and escapes the paparazzi. He is the only one who truly loves her for who she is. When she returns to her life of fame, the man still remembers her and her perfume: Chanel no. 5. When watching this commercial, you like the idea of feeling glamorous but you do, however, not pay much attention to these advertisements because you are still using perfume of another brand. When this bottle is empty, you go to the store to buy new perfume and you return home with a bottle of Chanel no. 5 because you liked the look of it. When trying the perfume, you realize that you do not really like it because you feel it does not represent you and you ask yourself why you bought it in the first place. Did you really want to buy the perfume or did the feelings of glamour and luxury that you got from the advertisement actually incite your decision to buy the perfume? In other words, was the desire to buy the perfume really your own desire or was this desire created through the advertisement?

Situations like this are likely to happen in the case of perfume since the scent is the only characteristic of the product and advertisements try to translate this scent into visuals. However, by seeing the advertisement, you still have no idea how the perfume really smells so how can you then decide that it is the one you want to buy? Similar issues may also arise with more tangible products. For example an advertisement for a certain bike may inform you about the characteristics of the bike and show you what it looks like. It may also try to translate the feeling of actually riding the bike. However, since you have not tried the bike yourself, you do not know what it really feels like to ride it but you may still decide to buy it based on the advertisement. Can you really say that the decision to buy the bike, or any other product, is your own decision, since you do not even know for sure if the bike is exactly what you want since you have not tried it before? Advertisements are created to convince us to buy certain products so we need to ask ourselves if the decisions to buy certain products are our own decisions or do advertisers decide what we want to buy?
1.1 ADVERTISING AND AUTONOMY

Advertisements are encountered everywhere: on the radio, in the streets, on television, and on the internet and the advertising business continues to grow. This is illustrated by the forecast that in 2013, global advertising expenditure will reach $505 billion, which means a growth of 3.5% with respect to 2012 (Zenith Optimedia Group Limited, 2013). The ultimate goal of advertising is to change people’s attitude in order to guide their behavior (Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983), in other words, to change the way people think about a certain product so that they will in the end buy the product. Since the goal is to persuade people to think differently about a product so that eventually they will buy it, it is not always clear, as the example at the start of this chapter illustrates, whether the decision to buy a product comes from within a person, and is thus one’s own, or if advertisements induce decisions that are not one’s own. This has resulted in some moral issues about advertising in relation to people’s autonomy (Sneddon, 2001).

An understanding of autonomy needs to exist in order to examine this issue any further. Autonomy entails experiencing one’s actions as originating from the self and can also be called self-determination since it involves determining one’s own behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; 1990). The two sides in the debate on the moral issues that advertising poses in relation to people’s autonomy entail on the one hand people who do not believe that advertising exercises any effect on autonomy and on the other hand people who believe that advertising in fact has a negative effect on autonomy.

Arrington (1982), for instance, supports advertisers by stating that advertising does not negatively affect autonomy. He thinks that advertising may control behavior if people act on the statements made in advertisements without truly believing these statements. However, he argues that almost everyone will only act on statements that they truly believe, and are therefore their own. Since advertising, according to Arrington, not intrinsically produces compulsive behavior or irrational wants, he thinks that it should not be considered a bad thing.

Crisp (1987), on the other hand, is critical of advertising. He argues that advertisements influence people’s evaluation of products and therefore also the willingness to buy these products. Because of this, people lose their autonomy, which he considers a great cost to pay for advertisements.

We live in a world of plenty which is full of choices in which advertising plays an important part. The issue at hand is the question if advertising is simply an expression and a reinforcement of human’s freedom or that it is exactly the opposite, taking away freedom by removing people’s
ability to make autonomous choices and decisions. If advertising indeed compromises autonomy, a solution might involve controlling or even restricting advertisements. Restrictions on advertisements are already in place for products that were not considered as decent, such as cigarettes and alcohol (Shao, 1993). Research shows that consumption of alcohol and tobacco diminishes when advertisements for these products are completely banned (Saffer, 1991; Saffer & Chaloupka, 2000). Advertising is thus capable of influencing people’s decisions since without any advertisements on alcohol and tobacco, the consumption of these products is lower than when there are still advertisements for alcohol and tobacco in place. Hence, restricting advertising might be a solution to prevent advertising from affecting people’s autonomy.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The main question that will be answered in the course of this thesis is the following: *Does advertising negatively affect people’s autonomy and if so, should advertisements then be restricted?* To answer this question, the following research questions need to be answered.

1. What is the definition of autonomy and when are people acting autonomously?
2. What are the goals of advertising and what are the processes that lead to persuasion?
3. What is the relationship between advertising and autonomy?
4. What effect does the restriction of advertisements have?

The research questions will be answered in the following chapters. In chapter 2, self-determination theory will be explained to provide a definition of autonomy and empirical research that illustrates the practical significance of the theory will be examined. In chapter 3 the goals of advertising will be discussed after which an explanation of attitudes is provided in order to describe the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. The explanation of this model will give some insight into how attitudes are changed due to persuasive advertisements. Chapter 4 will highlight the important statements of the two opposing positions in the issue on the relationship between advertising and autonomy. The relationship between advertising and autonomy, according to the self-determination theory will also be examined in this chapter after which can be concluded if advertising does indeed negatively influence autonomy. Chapter 5 contains an empirical research proposal that provides an experimental design so that in the future the theoretical conclusions of chapter 4 can be tested. Chapter 6 will deal with the consequences of restricting advertising and examines if it would be possible to completely restrict advertisements according to the U.S. constitution after which can be concluded if advertising should indeed be restricted. Finally, chapter 7 entails the conclusion of this thesis.
1.3 RELEVANCE

The questions asked in this thesis are relevant on an academic and a practical level. Other authors have already written on the relationship between advertising and autonomy. Although many different definitions have been used, the definition posed by self-determination theory will make its first appearance in this discussion. The theory of Deci & Ryan (1985b; 1990) is, however, very relevant since it does not only describes autonomy but also the other two basic psychological needs, namely the need for competence and the need for relatedness. Autonomy is in this theory thus examined in the correct context and not as a separate entity which provides a good basis to examine the relationship between advertising and autonomy.

Furthermore, both sides of the ongoing debate pose arguments that are based on the wrong assumptions. The assumption is being made that people can live in a world where perfect autonomy exists, however, one can never be totally independent from the environment. This will become clear in chapter 2 on self-determination theory. Another assumption that forms the basis of the arguments is that people think deeply about every advertisement that they encounter. However, people can also be influenced without paying very much attention to a message which will be illustrated in chapter 3 on attitudes and the elaboration likelihood model. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a more complete analysis of the relationship between advertising and autonomy by using a relevant definition of autonomy and the correct assumptions according to self-determination theory and the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion.

The results of this research are also of practical relevance to all people that come into contact with advertisements, hence everyone. If people’s autonomy is affected through advertising, this happens unknowingly. People should be made aware that they may not be exercising their own decisions but that they are being influenced by more factors than they know of. Also, the satisfaction of the need for autonomy influences people’s well-being (Sheldon, Ryan, & Reis, 1996; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000). If autonomy is compromised by advertising this results in people leading unhappier lives than they would lead without advertisements. Furthermore, the results are relevant to, for instance, governments. It is their responsibility to protect people. If people lose their autonomy because of advertising, governments have the moral obligation to solve this through firm restrictions.
Chapter 2: Autonomy

Autonomy is a widely discussed concept, however, a lot of different definitions exist. All definitions do revolve around the concept of self-governance (Cunningham, 2003), or rule by the self. This can be seen as ruling oneself and making one’s own decisions, opposite of being regulated or controlled from the outside (Ryan & Deci, 2006). In yet other words, self-governance entails the ability to determine one’s own life (Bratman, 2009). For the purpose of this thesis, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; 1990) will be used to explain autonomy. The theory does not only give a definition of autonomy but describes it as one of the basic psychological needs along with competence and relatedness. Self-determination theory therefore provides the context in which the concept of autonomy operates. This chapter describes the concept of needs along with self-determination theory and examines how self-determined behavior is formed. Furthermore it provides empirical research that illustrates the practical significance of the theory.

2.1 THE SELF

According to Deci & Ryan (1990), an important feature of human beings is the self, which consists of someone’s interests and capacities along with one’s body. One’s self consists thus of its own interests and capacities, however, it is not immune to influences from the environment. Self-determination theory deals with the interaction between the active part of the self, one’s interests and capacities, and the influence that a person encounters from the environment. People are always surrounded by their environment and therefore they constantly encounter influences from this environment. Even when one would find him- or herself in an empty space, the decisions that he or she makes are still being influenced by the environment. One can, for instance, not decide to go watch television or play the piano, since there is no television or piano present. A person can make his or her decision on what to do only based on the things that are provided by his or her environment. Since there is no thinkable situation where one would be completely independent from the environment, one’s interests and capacities can only develop when a person interacts with his or her environment. Integrating new experiences and the rules of the environment with the interests and capacities of one’s self contributes to one’s development. Self-determined behavior is said to occur when this integration of experiences and influences from the environment takes place (Deci & Ryan, 1990). Behaviors are then thus regulated, or determined, within one’s self. Non-self-determined behavior arises from events that
are stored in people’s memory which can be used as a guide in similar situations and are called scripts (Wilson & Capitman, 1982). These scripts are experiences or processes that are not fully integrated and therefore not determined within one’s self (Deci & Ryan, 1990).

2.2 NEEDS

Deci & Ryan (1985b) have identified three basic psychological needs present in every human being. Needs can, on the one hand, be described, as desires or motives, and on the other hand as necessities for growth and health, whether this is physiological or psychological (Deci & Ryan, 1985b).

2.2.1 Basic Psychological Needs

Deci and Ryan thus describe three basic psychological which are the need for competence, the need for autonomy, and the need for relatedness. As the satisfaction of the physiological needs results in physiological growth and health, the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs described in self-determination theory is considered to be a necessity for psychological growth and health (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004).

The first of the three basic psychological needs, the need for competence, entails people’s desire for control. People feel competent when they are able to control situations (Williams, McGregor, King, Nelson, & Glasgow, 2005) and in order to do so, they need to understand which means lead to the outcome that they desire. If they can make use of these means, people can control situations and the need for competence is satisfied. Secondly, the need for autonomy is the need to experience one’s own actions as originating from the self. People have a desire to feel that the decisions to perform certain actions or to exercise a certain behavior are internally made and do not depend on the environment. People want to determine their own behavior, hence the term self-determination. Third, the need for relatedness entails people’s desire to be involved with others. People have a need to relate to and care for others and to feel that those others are relating to one’s self (Deci & Ryan, 1985b).

2.2.2 Hierarchy of Needs

To illustrate the concept of needs a little further, the well-known hierarchy of needs theory will be examined. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is a theory of motivation that hypothesizes that within a
human being, a hierarchy of five needs exists. According to Maslow, lower-order needs consist of physiological needs, such as hunger and thirst, and safety needs, such as protection from harm. Higher-order needs consist of social needs, such as affection and friendship, esteem needs, such as self-respect, autonomy, and attention, and self-actualization needs, such as achieving one’s potential and self-fulfillment. In order for a person to feel the desire, or to be motivated, to satisfy the higher-order needs, he or she first needs to take care of the lower-order needs. The satisfaction of the lower-order needs yields rewards from within the person, internal rewards, for example a feeling of safety and no feeling of hunger. The satisfaction of the higher-order needs yields rewards from outside the person, external rewards, which entail, for instance a salary or a feeling of belonging to a group (Robbins & Judge, 2009).

The need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness can be related to the hierarchy of needs. The three basic psychological needs of self-determination theory are similar to the higher-order needs as described by Maslow. The need for relatedness, which entails the involvement of significant others can be paired with social needs, which entail affection and friendship. The need for autonomy can be seen as a part of esteem needs, and the need for competence shares similarities with the need for self-actualization, both having to do with control and achieving one’s potential. Figure 1 illustrates the hierarchy of needs and ads the basic psychological needs in order to demonstrate the relationship between the two theories.
2.2.3 Development of the self

In order to develop one’s self, a person should integrate the experiences and the rules of the environment, which allow the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness to be satisfied. The need for competence can be satisfied when the environment provides a clear structure in that people can understand what they need to do to produce a certain outcome, or in other words, to be in control. The need for autonomy can be satisfied when the environment provides choice and encourages initiation, for instance in a classroom where the teacher teaches children but he also promotes them to take initiative and to make their own choices. The need for relatedness can be satisfied in an environment where there is involvement from significant others, for instance when one comes home to his or her partner after a hard day at work and the partner takes the time to listen about the problems that the other one had to deal with that day. Development can thus only take place when a person identifies with the rules of the environment and makes sure they are in accordance with the self (Deci & Ryan, 1990). In other words, one must gain a sense of being involved with the environment and not remain passive to the external influences and events. One must make sure that the rules of the environment that allow for the three needs to be satisfied are in line with one’s own rules. The integration that is a necessity for development should not be seen as only altering oneself in accordance with the environment, but it also involves acting on, and thus changing, the environment to make it more compatible with oneself (Deci & Ryan, 1985b).

2.3 INTEGRATION

People do not act without a reason; they need to be motivated which means that they need to be moved to do something (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As was illustrated at the beginning of this chapter, the satisfaction of needs is a necessity for growth and health. People are motivated to grow and stay healthy and therefore they are motivated to satisfy their needs.

2.3.1 Motivation

There are two types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from within one’s self and offers internal rewards. For instance, a child might draw a picture because he thinks it is fun to draw. When someone is extrinsically motivated, he or she acts on the promise of external rewards and not simply for the fun of it (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For
instance, a lawyer might be motivated to go to work every day not for the fun of it, but for the monetary rewards with which he can support his family or the feeling of achievement that he gets when he wins a case.

2.3.1.1 *Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation*

“Intrinsic motivation is the prototypical form of self-determination: with a full sense of choice, with the experience of doing what one wants, and without the feeling of coercion or compulsion, one spontaneously engages in an activity that interests one. The action [originates] from oneself and is thus self-determined” (Deci & Ryan, 1990, p. 253). Behavior that follows from intrinsic motivation is thus the only form of autonomous behavior since people then act purely from within, without any external influence. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, cannot be seen as autonomous since a person is then motivated by external rewards, which means that the motivation comes not from the inside but from the outside. The decision to do something comes not from within which means that it is not autonomous (Deci & Ryan, 1990).

2.3.2 *Internalization*

While for children it is true that they can act purely for the fun of it, being intrinsically motivated, for adults this changes and they become more motivated, for instance, by rewards such as a feeling of achievement or success which are external rewards. *True self-determination*, which is thus acting simply for the fun of it, does not exist beyond childhood since people do not live in a vacuum and can never be totally independent from their environment. According to the rules that are established in our environment, people cannot only do things because they think it is fun, they also have to work, for instance, which is something that they might not like much but they are motivated to do this by the monetary reward they get with which they can support their family. Intrinsic motivation does thus not extend beyond childhood which means that adults act on extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation can, however, be transformed to be more compatible with one’s view through a process called *internalization*. Since true self-determination does not exist, we evaluate autonomy to the extent that integration takes place via the process of internalization. Three different levels can be identified, ranging from least integrated to most integrated, or self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 1990).
2.3.2.1 Levels of integration

The first level of integration is *introjected regulation* which is the least integrated and hence the least self-determined. A person introjects, or takes in, a value from the environment but he or she does not fully accept this value as his or her own. Although the value is not accepted as one’s own, one acts in order to get other people’s approval and is afraid of disapproval when acting not according to the value. An example entails buying an environmentally friendly car, not because you are especially committed to saving the environment but because you know that others will approve of this and think better of you than they would have done would you have bought another car. People act according to introjected values because they think they should according to others (Deci & Ryan, 1990).

The second level of integration is *identified regulation* and is deemed more self-determined than introjected regulation. This occurs when one keeps acting in accordance with the introjected value and after a while starts to see the importance of this activity and identifies with it. There may, however, still be inconsistencies with the identified value and other values one might have (Deci & Ryan, 1990). For instance, after buying the environmentally friendly car, you start to realize the importance of driving a car that has less impact on the environment than other cars. However, you still do not bother to recycle.

The third level of integration is the most self-determined and is referred to as *integrated regulation*. This happens when one organizes all identified values in a way that they are coherent with one another so that they can fit together in the self without contradicting each other. Taking the examples mentioned before, this happens when you also start recycling because this is better for the environment, as is your car. Values that are well integrated result in actions that are personally valued and that one experiences as freely done (Deci & Ryan, 1990).

2.4 SELF-DETERMINATION AND WELL-BEING

Self-determination theory does not only have theoretical but also practical implications. Empirical research has been done on the effects of the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs. An important finding was that need satisfaction influences a person’s well-being. Sheldon, Ryan, & Reis (1996) found that people who are more competent or autonomous than other people experience more well-being than people who are not competent or autonomous. They also found that when people feel more competent or autonomous than in their normal state, their well-being improves. Hence, it is important for people to feel autonomous since it makes them feel better.
2.5 CONCLUSION

Self-determined behavior thus arises when one integrates the rules of the environment that satisfy the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness with the self. Since people are more motivated by external than by internal rewards, true self-determination or autonomy does not exist, however, there can be three levels of integration identified, varying from least self-determined to most self-determined, namely introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. When integrated regulation takes place, the actions that will result are experienced as being freely done and therefore resemble autonomous behavior the closest. The satisfaction of the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness is not only necessary for people’s development, but on a daily basis it is also responsible for people’s well-being.
Chapter 3: Attitude formation

Advertising is everywhere: on the radio, on television, in the streets, on the internet, and even on our mobile phones. These advertisements are usually for products that companies want us to buy and they help us to choose between different products since it would take an enormous amount of time to try every product first before deciding which one to buy. Information provided in advertisements simplifies the consumer’s search since this makes it easier to compare products and to check whether products meet the consumer’s needs without having to buy everything first (Nelson, 1974). The goal of advertising is to positively change consumer’s attitudes, which are, simply put, people’s evaluations about a particular product. Eventually the hopes are that through the attitude change towards a product consumers’ behavior will also change and they will buy the product (Haugtvedt, Schumann, Schneier, & Warren, 1994). This chapter entails an explanation of attitudes and the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion in order to examine how attitudes can be formed and changed through advertisements.

3.1 ATTITUDES

An attitude can be described as the positive or negative evaluation of a particular entity, or attitude object. In the case of consumers evaluating a product, the product is the attitude object. People form an attitude the first time that they encounter the attitude object and have the tendency to evaluate the object. When the attitude is formed, a presentation of it will be formed in one’s mind and it will be stored in memory. An attitude consists of two structures; an internal structure and a structure between different attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1995).

3.1.1 Intra-attitudinal structure

Figure 2 represents the internal structure of an attitude which is called the intra-attitudinal structure and contains the presentation of the attitude in one’s mind. The overall evaluation of the attitude object is not the only thing that is stored in people’s memory when an attitude is formed. Next to the evaluation, the experiences that lead a person to having the tendency to evaluate an attitude object in the first place are also stored. These experiences form associations between the attitude object and the relevant aspects of one’s prior experience. The internal structure of the attitude includes one’s beliefs about the characteristics of the attitude object which is the cognitive content of the intra-attitudinal structure. Beliefs about the
characteristics of the attitude object may reflect more specific images, and thus be more concrete. The image of a particular tennis game is an example of a concrete image. Beliefs can also be more abstract, for instance when one thinks of tennis in general. When beliefs summarize many experiences they tend to be more abstract. People can also experience feelings, moods, and emotions in relation to an attitude object and therefore they associate these affective reactions with the attitude object. An attitude’s internal structure furthermore contains behavioral reactions which entails people’s actions toward the attitude object. The intra-attitudinal structure consists of the entire set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions that become associated with an attitude object (Eagly & Chaiken, 1995).

![Intra-attitudinal structure](image)

**3.1.2 Inter-attitudinal structure**

The linkages between attitudes which may be established on diverse bases entail the inter-attitudinal structure. Logical analyses can form relations between attitudes, or a person sees can combine two attitude objects because there is a connection between them (Eagly & Chaiken, 1995), for instance when someone holds a positive attitude towards healthy food and a negative attitude towards McDonalds a linkage between the attitude objects will be formed. More abstract and general attitudes are people’s values which are core concepts of one’s self. Values entail
evaluations of broad concepts such as freedom (Ajzen, 2001). These values are linked to more concrete and particular attitudes and therefore inter-attitudinal structures are often hierarchical (Eagly & Chaiken, 1995). When a person holds a positive attitude towards, for instance, animal rights, this may imply that he or she also holds a positive attitude towards vegetarianism. Figure 3 represents an example of a hierarchical inter-attitudinal structure.

![Hierarchical inter-attitudinal structure](image)

**Figure 3: Hierarchical inter-attitudinal structure**

### 3.1.3 Attitudes resistance to change

As mentioned before, the goal of advertising is to change people’s attitudes towards the product that is being advertised with the hope that consumers will eventually buy the product. However, it is not that easy to change someone’s attitude because attitudes are prone to resist change.

#### 3.1.3.1 Inter-attitudinal structure’s resistance to change

It can happen that a certain attitude in the inter-attitudinal structure changes. This means that the attitudes that are related to this attitude also need to change in order to maintain the relation to the attitude that changes. Although it is possible for this change to take place, it will often be prevented due to the *domino principle* which states that connections between attitudes create resistance to change the attitude that would initially change. According to the domino principle, if one attitude that is linked to other attitudes changes, this should cause a reaction of all related
attitudes that also need to change. Changing all these attitudes would be very effortful and unpleasant for someone and therefore the change is being resisted (Eagly & Chaiken, 1995).

3.1.3.2 Intra-attitudinal structure’s resistance to change

Attitudes in inter-attitudinal structures are thus resistant to change because when one attitude changes, all linked attitudes also need to change and this requires too much effort. To prevent effort, the intra-attitudinal structure of attitudes is also resistant to change. When a person holds an attitude towards an attitude object that he or she has encountered often in prior experience, this means that the structure is *extensive* and more resistant to change than new inputs. An intra-attitudinal structure is also more resistant to change when there is consistency between the attitude and the evaluation of the beliefs about the attitude object. This consistency is called *evaluative-cognitive contingency* and high levels of this contingency predict resistance to persuasion and a high correspondence between a person’s attitude and his or her behavior. Thus, when the positive evaluation of the beliefs about, for instance, a television are consistent with the attitude that is formed of that television, this might very well mean that a person is inclined to buy that television (Eagly & Chaiken, 1995).

3.2 ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL OF PERSUASION

Thus, the ultimate goal of advertising is to positively change people’s attitudes towards particular products and in the end also changing behavior. However, as mentioned before, attitudes cannot be changed very easily because of their resistance to change. The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion explains how this attitude change can take place. The model postulates that there are two different routes that lead to persuasion which are the central and the peripheral route (Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983).

3.2.1 Central Route to Persuasion

In the *central route to persuasion*, a person tries to determine the most important statements that are made in a message, such as information on the characteristics of a product. When someone wants to buy a new shampoo, he or she is, for instance, interested to know whether the shampoo makes your hair shine, that it gives your hair more volume, or that it does both. In order to accomplish this, a person needs to actively think about the message and draw upon prior experience or knowledge. Whether someone will take the central route to persuasion
depends on the person’s motivation, ability (Petty, Briñol, & Priester, 2009), and opportunity to process a message (Hallahan, 2000).

3.2.1.1 Motivation, ability, and opportunity to process a message

One’s motivation to process a message will be higher if the personal relevance with the subject is high. A teenager who likes to play videogames, for instance, will be interested in an advertisement for the latest Grand Theft Auto videogame but his grandmother, who knows nothing about game consoles, will not be motivated to process the advertisement. Motivation will also arise when an individual is inclined to engage in cognitive activity and therefore to process information which means that the need for cognition is high. Someone with a high need for cognition wants to actively think about information, whereas someone with a low need for cognition rather avoids this (Petty, Briñol, & Priester, 2009).

One’s ability to process a message depends on the prior knowledge of a person since information that is not entirely new is easier to understand. Repetition of an advertisement also increases the ability to process the message. If a message is complicated because it contains only new information or difficult terminology, it might not be understood the first time. When one encounters the message more often, it might become easier to understand. (Petty, Briñol, & Priester, 2009).

The opportunity to process a message refers to the characteristics of the message that make it easier for a person to process. Opportunity is thus not affected by the individual watching the message but by the characteristics of the message itself. Characteristics of messages include the exposure time, the number of arguments, and the message length (Hallahan, 2000). When, for instance, you are watching a car advertisement that gives no information about the characteristics of the car, only a pretty picture of someone driving it, the opportunity to process the advertisement will be very low since there are no arguments to process. Furthermore, the environment in which a person encounters a particular message is also important for the opportunity to process the message. One’s ability to process an advertisement is higher when there are no distractions (Petty, Briñol, & Priester, 2009), for instance, when the phone rings while watching an advertisement on television, one will not be able to pay full attention to the advertisement anymore. In their research, Harkins & Petty (1981) examined the effects of distraction on persuasiveness of a message. Participants had to do a distraction task which consisted of adding the letters of problems like ‘eight plus six = x’ while watching a video containing a message with multiple arguments. The results showed that while distracted, people are still processing the message, however, they are not able to form deep thoughts about the
message. When opportunity to process is low, people are thus not able to process a message via the central route.

3.2.1.2 Attitudes formed via the central route

Simply creating thoughts about a message is not enough to change an attitude; the new thoughts need to be related to other attitudes and integrated in the inter-attitudinal structure. This is likely to happen if the thoughts are held with confidence or if they are rehearsed. One of the characteristics of attitudes changed through the central route to persuasion is that people can access the attitudes relatively easy from memory, even over a long period of time since they are resistant to change. Furthermore, the attitudes are held with high confidence and since they are integrated in a person’s inter-attitudinal structure, they are predictive of behavior (Petty, Briñol, & Priester, 2009).

3.2.2 Peripheral Route to Persuasion

Since advertisements help consumers to compare different products and check whether they match their needs, it would be expected that a lot of information on the characteristics and qualities, or attributes, of the products would be provided. However, most advertisements do not contain a lot of information on product attributes but more visual elements instead. Persuasion does thus not only take place via verbal arguments but also through visual elements (Mitchell, 1986). This can be explained by the peripheral route to persuasion.

3.2.2.1 Attitude formation through cues

Attitude change does not always take place through actively thinking about an advertisement but can also occur due to simple cues, such as warm colors or smiling people which elicit happy feelings, used in the advertisement. Persuasion occurs due to these cues when the motivation, ability, or opportunity to process the message is low and takes place through the peripheral route to persuasion. The reasoning behind the peripheral route entails that people are not capable of generating deep thoughts about all the information to which they are exposed (Petty, Briñol, & Priester, 2009). People are receiving more information than they are able to process and they are experiencing an information overload (Eppler & Mengis, 2004). The cues used in advertising entail features that often elicit certain emotions or rules of thumb that people use to make decisions, heuristics, that people will associate with the position or the brand (Petty, Briñol, & Priester, 2009). In advertisements for toothpaste, the cue of a man in a white coat is often
used. The white coat and the context of the toothpaste advertisement suggests that the man is a dentist who is an expert on toothpaste and this particular cue will probably elicit the simple heuristic that ‘experts are right’. Numerous studies, for instance the one’s from Batra & Ray (1986) and Edell & Burke (1987), have found that emotions elicited by the cues in advertisements affect people’s attitude towards the product which in turn affects people’s behavior towards the product; whether they buy it or not.

3.2.2.2 Attitudes formed via the peripheral route
Attitudes changed through the peripheral route to persuasion differ from attitudes changed through the central route in that they are less accessible and enduring. Furthermore, they are less resistant towards contradictive messages (Petty, Briñol, & Priester, 2009) since they are not integrated in the inter-attitudinal structure. The attitudes formed via the peripheral route are not based on beliefs about the product attributes, or cognitive associations, but on the emotions that are elicited by the cues used in an advertisement, or affective associations. An individual does not have deep thoughts about advertisements that are processes via the peripheral route and therefore the attitudes are not held with high confidence and are not integrated in the inter-attitudinal structure.

3.3 CONCLUSION
The goal of advertising is thus to positively change consumers’ attitudes towards products and eventually changing their behavior accordingly. Attitudes entail evaluations about a particular attitude object and are resistant to change when they are integrated in a person’s inter-attitudinal structure. People’s attitudes can be formed via the central route to persuasion, which entails actively thinking about the message, which results in attitudes that are easily accessible over a long period of time, held with high confidence, and strong predictors of behavior. Since these attitudes are integrated, they are not easily changed. Attitudes can also be formed via the peripheral route to persuasion when attention is low via cues that elicit certain emotions. These attitudes are less accessible than attitudes changed via the central route and they are less persistent in time because these attitudes are not integrated in one’s inter-attitudinal structure.
Chapter 4: The Relationship between Advertising and Autonomy

Before describing the relationship between advertising and autonomy as described by self-determination theory, some attention will be given to other studies that analyze the influence advertising has on people’s autonomy. It is important to note that in these studies, different definitions of autonomy have been used since there is no universal definition to describe the concept. This results in different positions on the issue at hand. Roughly speaking there are two sides in the discussion on the relationship between advertising and people’s autonomy. On the one hand there are authors who claim that there is no influence of advertising on autonomy, and on the other hand there are authors who claim that advertising is indeed affecting autonomy. These opposing views are best illustrated by the writings of Robert Arrington and Richard Crisp concerning this topic (Sneddon, 2001).

4.1 ADVERTISING DOES NOT INFLUENCE PEOPLE’S AUTONOMY

In Advertising and Behavior Control, Arrington (1982) answers the question if advertising violates human autonomy by controlling consumer behavior or if advertisements just provide information to let consumers make their own decisions in a more efficient and cost-effective way. Arrington argues that in the issue of the relationship between advertising and autonomy, desires induced by advertisements can still be, and often are, one’s own. If one integrates the desires derived from advertisements, this means that these desires are indeed one’s own. According to Arrington, when you see an advertisement for Coca-Cola and you then buy the drink, it was not the advertisement but you who decided to buy it. If you already knew that you do not like Coca-Cola and did not want to buy it, you would not have done so. Arrington concludes by saying that “advertising may, but certainly does not always or even frequently, control behavior, produce behavior that people not choose themselves to do, or create desires which are not rational or are not truly those of the consumer” (Arrington, 1982, p. 11). Hence, advertising generally does not violate autonomy.

Cunningham (2003) also does not believe that advertising negatively influences autonomy. She does not see consumers as powerless victims of advertising but claims that it is the consumer who has the power to decide what product to buy instead of the advertiser. According to Cunningham, people behave according to certain fundamental beliefs, or values, which are the core of people’s self. She claims that advertising would only violate autonomy if a person with strong beliefs on a certain issue who is often exposed to an advertisement for a product that
is not in accordance with his or her beliefs would feel the need to buy this product. For instance, when an athlete, who eats very healthy, decides to get dinner at McDonalds after seeing an advertisement of the fast-food-chain, the advertisement would violate the autonomy of the athlete. According to Cunningham, this will not happen since people will evaluate the values and beliefs of the advertisement to see if they are in accordance with their own beliefs. The power of the advertiser does not extend any further than providing the advertisement and will therefore not be able to let consumers behave contradicting to their beliefs. Cunningham’s logic of people comparing the values and beliefs of advertisements with their own values and beliefs is consistent with the central route to persuasion of the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion which entails forming deep thoughts about a message. However, motivation, opportunity, and ability to process a message cannot always be high and, as will be explained later, advertisements cannot always be processed via the central route.

4.2 ADVERTISING DOES NEGATIVELY INFLUENCE PEOPLE’S AUTONOMY

Opposite to the views of Arrington and Cunningham, is the position of Roger Crisp. Crisp (1987) argues that advertising violates consumer’s autonomy and that it is therefore morally wrong. He argues that for a person to truly make an autonomous decision to buy a product, he or she needs to evaluate the actual merits of the product and then decide to buy the product again. Autonomous decisions to buy can therefore only arise when one tries every product and decides which one is the best instead of being induced to buy the product that is advertised heavily and not knowing if it is better than the alternatives. Crisp thus argues that advertising overrides consumer’s autonomy which is undesirable.

Sneddon (2001) examines the relation between advertising and what he calls deep autonomy. According to him there are two forms of deep autonomy and he also distinguishes between first order desires, which are desires that are perceived to have priority, and lower order desires, having no priority. The first form of autonomy he presents entails “assessing what our values are and whether our 1st order desires are consistent with these” (Sneddon, 2001, p. 25), and the second form entails “assessing whether our values themselves are desirable” (Sneddon, 2001, p. 25). According to Sneddon, both these forms of deep autonomy are threatened by advertising. For people to know of other ways to lead their lives, they first need to experience this for themselves. Advertising prevents this since it tries to establish a connection between the interests that people already have and the product that is being advertised. Therefore people do not need to go out and try which product fits their interests since the advertisement has already
established this for them. Red Bull, for instance, uses people who do extreme sports in the advertisements for the energy drink and uses the slogan ‘Red Bull gives you wings’ to illustrate that people’s performance improves by drinking Red Bull. If you are into extreme sports, you do not have to try every energy drink to see what you like, because according to the advertisement, extreme sportsmen drink Red Bull. Furthermore, advertising addresses and shapes desires in that it makes people believe that their desires can be satisfied by the market and therefore people feel that they should desire the products that the market can in fact provide. According to both Crisp’s and Sneddon’s logic, in order to make autonomous choices about which products to buy, one has to try every product for themselves and advertisements prevent this. Hence, they are assuming that true autonomous behavior, or self-determination, exists and that it is possible to exercise this.

4.3 ADVERTISING AND SELF-DETERMINATION

As the previous sections illustrate, there is already an extensive discussion going on about the influence that advertising exercises on autonomy and strong opinions have been formulated. The arguments, however, do not make the correct assumptions which will be examined below.

4.3.1 Incorrect Assumptions

The arguments of Arrington (1982) and Cunningham (2003) that advertising can elicit certain desires but that consumers will only act on these desires when they are in accordance with their own beliefs assume that people give their full attention to advertising and that they deliberately decide if they share the beliefs posed in the advertisements. However, according to the elaboration likelihood model, it is also possible for people to be persuaded by peripheral cues, which happens without extensive thinking about the subject. If every advertisement that a person sees would be processed via the central route to persuasion, advertising would not influence autonomy, which is in line with Arrington and Cunningham’s arguments. However, they leave out the possibility of being persuaded by peripheral cues, such as warm colors and smiling people. When watching an advertisement, people are processing the peripheral cues, even if they do not pay much attention to the advertisement.

In their arguments, Crisp (1987) and Sneddon (2001) assume that true autonomy exists and that autonomous behavior would entail evaluating all available products by experience before making a decision. True autonomy does, however, not exist according to self-determination
theory since there is always influence from one’s environment present. Advertising is not the only factor that influences people in the case of evaluating products in order to make a decision; the availability of products in a certain shop, for example, also influences one’s decision with advertising being absent. Furthermore, it is nonsense to assume that people would go out and try every product before making a decision, even if there was no advertising. People do not have the motivation, opportunity, and ability to do this, simply because it costs too much time and effort.

### 4.3.2 The Influence of Advertising on People’s Autonomy

According to self-determination theory, there are three levels of integration, varying from least self-determined to most self-determined. The least self-determined level of integration is called introjected regulation, the medium level of integration is identified regulation, and the most self-determined level of integration is termed integrated regulation. Which level will be used depends on the attention that is given to an advertisement, hence, whether persuasion occurs via the central or the peripheral route to persuasion. When a person’s motivation, ability, and opportunity to process the advertisement are high, this means that he or she will actively think about the advertisement and try to determine the important information in the message. In other words, one will take the central route to persuasion. In this case, when one buys the product of the advertisement, introjected regulation might take place because one might think that because a product is being advertised, it is popular and by buying the product, the person expects approval from others. Identified regulation can also take place if processing occurs via the central route to persuasion when one has determined that he or she can identify him or herself with the beliefs of the advertisement. When these beliefs are also in accordance with the other beliefs of this person, integrated regulation takes place.

People do, however, not actively think about all advertisements they see but they can also be persuaded by elicited emotions through cues. The attitudes resulting from this kind of persuasion are not long lasting and very prone to change. This is the case since the attitudes are not integrated at all with one’s self. However, people are still being persuaded by these advertisements and they can buy products purely by the emotions that the advertisement elicited (Mitchell, 1986). Purchases based on these advertisements are therefore not autonomous at all.

Advertising does thus indeed affect people’s autonomy, be it to a varying degree. There are situations where advertising does not affect people’s autonomy which is the case when the advertisement is being processed via the central route to persuasion and when integrated
regulation takes place. Advertising can also decrease people's autonomy while not taking it away altogether when the advertisement is being processed via the central route to persuasion and when introjected or identified regulation takes place. These situations will, however, not happen very often since most advertisements contain much more visual elements than product information (Mitchell, 1986). This means that most of the time people will be influenced via the peripheral route to persuasion and the attitudes that follow from this kind of persuasion are not integrated with the self. Therefore, when one buys a product based on the peripheral cues of an advertisement and the emotions that were elicited, the person is not acting autonomously. Hence, advertising does not always negatively influence autonomy but in most cases advertising will negatively influence autonomy in that people's autonomy diminishes or even totally disappears.

4.4 CONCLUSION

Previous authors on the relationship between advertising and autonomy came, roughly speaking, to two different conclusions, stating on the one hand that advertising does not affect autonomy, and on the other that advertising indeed affects autonomy. However, they assumed that consumers think actively about all advertisements they encounter and they assumed that true autonomy exists. According to self-determination theory, integration of the beliefs of advertisements can take place on three different levels when one is motivated and able to process the message, hence, decisions to buy vary from being little autonomous to very autonomous. When one is not motivated or able to process the message and one is persuaded by peripheral cues in the advertisement, there is no integration of the beliefs of the advertisement with one's self at all. If a person then buys the product of the advertisement, he or she is influenced by the advertisement and is not acting autonomously. Hence, advertising does not always but often negatively affect people's autonomy.
Chapter 5: Research Proposal

So, the conclusion of the previous chapter states that advertising, although not always, often does negatively affect people’s autonomy. All previous studies on the influence of advertising on autonomy were, however, purely theoretical (see Arrington, 1982; Crisp, 1987; Cunningham, 2003; Sneddon, 2001) and therefore, in order to find empirical evidence to back up the conclusion of the previous chapter, a research is being proposed which examines people’s autonomy before and after watching particular advertisements. By comparing the results to each other, one should be able to conclude if advertising indeed negatively affects people’s autonomy. This chapter contains the hypotheses that were obtained in the previous chapter and it proposes the research methods and design that can be used to test these hypotheses in the future.

5.1 HYPOTHESES

The question that must be answered in this research is the following: Does advertising negatively affect people’s autonomy? The previous chapter concluded that when advertisements are processed via the central route, there is no influence of advertising on autonomy expected because people integrate the beliefs of the advertisements. People do, however, more often take the peripheral route to persuasion and in that case, advertising is expected to have a negative effect on autonomy because the beliefs of the advertisements are not being integrated. Whether someone takes the central or peripheral route to persuasion depends on the motivation, ability, and opportunity (MOA) of a person to process the advertisement. Hence, whether advertising will negatively influence autonomy depends on MOA. The two hypotheses that can be formed based on these assumptions are the following: (1) Advertising will have a negative influence on people’s autonomy, and (2) Whether advertising will negatively influence autonomy depends on MOA. This can be illustrated by the following model:
The model illustrates that there is a negative relationship between advertising and autonomy, which means that the more a person comes into contact with advertising, the lower that person's autonomy should be. Furthermore, when motivation, ability, and opportunity are low, the impact of advertising on autonomy is expected to be even more negative since processing in this case takes place via the peripheral route and the beliefs of the advertisement are thus not integrated.

5.2 METHOD

In order to test the hypotheses, an experimental design is proposed in order to be able to control the kind of advertisements that people are being exposed to. Since people are constantly exposed to advertisements, the research cannot take place in a natural setting. An experimental design allows for the researcher to manipulate the kinds of advertisements that are being used (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Advertisements are thus the independent variables in this research, or treatments that are manipulated and of which the effects on the dependent variable are measured. The dependent variable is people’s autonomy which measures the effects that advertisements have on the participants (Malhotra, 2010). Participant's autonomy before being exposed to the independent variables will be measured with the Self-Determination Scale. Afterwards, participants will get to watch a television program containing advertising breaks. One group of people will score high on MOA while watching the advertisements. A second group of people will score low on MOA while watching the advertisements. A third group will function as control group and will not see any advertisements. Then participants will need to perform a task in which they have to choose between different products and afterwards they need to fill in the Self-Determination Scale again in order to examine how autonomous they feel. Participants will also need to fill in the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory with respect to the task of choosing the products. The following sections will describe the two scales that are being used and afterwards a detailed description of the design, including the story that is being told to participants, will follow, concluding with a description of how to analyze the results.

5.2.1 Self-Determination Scale

In order to examine if advertising affects people's autonomy, the autonomy, or self-determination, of participants before watching advertisements should be examined. The measurement that can be used to analyze one's self-determination is the Self-Determination Scale (SDS). The scale measures two things: (1) how aware a person is of his or her feelings
and his or her sense of the self, and (2) to what extent a person experiences a sense of choice
with respect to his or her behavior. The SDS consists of a 10-item scale which is divided in two
subscales. One subscale represents awareness of oneself, and the other represents perceived
choice in one’s actions. Participants need to fill in a questionnaire that consists of 10 pairs of
statements. For each pair of statements, the participants need to indicate the degree to which
the first statement feels true in respect to the other on a 5-point scale. The following question is
an example of the questions asked in the questionnaire:

1. A. I always feel like I choose the things I do
   B. I sometimes feel that it’s not really me choosing the things I do.
   Only A feels true 1 2 3 4 5 Only B feels true

If a person’s response is ‘1’, this would mean that statement A feels completely true and that
statement B feels completely untrue. If a participant feels that both statements are equally true,
the appropriate response would be ‘3’ (The Self-Determination Scale (SDS)). The complete SDS
including instructions on how to score the answers can be found in Appendix 1.

5.2.2 Intrinsic Motivation Inventory

In order to examine how autonomous people feel regarding to performing a certain activity, such
as buying a particular product, the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) was developed. The IMI is
a measurement that assesses participants’ interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, effort,
value/usefulness, felt pressure and tension, perceived choice, and the experience of relatedness
while performing a given activity. The measurement, thus, contains seven subscales, however, it
is not necessary to use all subscales in our questionnaire. It is recommended for researchers to
construct their own IMI, using only the relevant subscales. The subscales that are being
proposed for this research are interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, perceived choice,
pressure/tension, and value/usefulness. The interest/enjoyment subscale can be seen as the
self-report measure of intrinsic motivation and perceived choice and perceived competence are
both positive predictors of intrinsic motivation. Pressure/tension, on the other hand, is a negative
predictor of intrinsic motivation. This means that when people perceive their competence and
choice to be high, it is likely that they also indicate high interest/enjoyment but when they
perceive a lot of pressure to perform, they are likely to indicate low interest/enjoyment and thus
intrinsic motivation. The value/usefulness subscale is applicable in this research because people
internalize activities that they experience as useful or valuable for themselves. The more valuable one regards a particular activity, the more internalized and thus self-determined the activity becomes. Using these five subscales results in a 28-item questionnaire and for each statement the participants need to indicate to which extent the statement is true on a 7-point scale. The following question is an example of the questions posed in the questionnaire:

1. I enjoyed picking items in the web shop very much.

   Not true at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very true

If a person’s response is ‘1’, this means that the statement is not true at all and if the response is ‘7’, this means that the participant feels that the statement is very true. If a participant feels that the statement is somewhat true, the appropriate response would be ‘4’ (Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI)). The complete IMI including instructions on how to score the responses can be found in Appendix 2.

5.3 DESIGN

This section will explain the setup of the experiment. Participants, however, cannot be aware of the purpose of the experiment and therefore they will get to hear another story which is described in one of the following sections.

5.3.1 Setup

First, participants will need to fill in the SDS to establish how autonomous they are feeling before the start of the experiment which will act as a measure of participant’s autonomy before being exposed to particular advertisements. Then, the participants are randomly assigned into three groups so that variables that influence autonomy other than the advertisements, such as expectations of the researcher, are equally represented in each group and therefore do not influence the outcomes (Malhotra, 2010). The participants of group 1 and 2 will get to watch a television program that lasts between 45 minutes and one hour. These programs contain advertisement breaks after the first quarter of the program and before the last quarter in order to simulate a television watching experience that closely resembles reality. Group 3 will get to watch television without any advertisements and will therefore function as the control group.
The reasoning behind using television advertisements and not, for instance, advertisements in magazines is that it is easier for people to ignore printed advertisements. When one chooses to watch a program on television, he or she will want to see the entire program even when it is interrupted by advertising. When reading a magazine it is possible to turn a page that contains advertising but when watching television, however, it is not possible to fast forward through advertisements and skip them.

The reasoning behind choosing for two experimental groups and a control group is the difference between processing a message via the central route and the peripheral route to persuasion. The previous chapter suggests that when an advertisement is processed via the central route, there should be no impact on a person’s autonomy but when an advertisement is processed via the peripheral route, a negative influence on autonomy is expected. Group 1 will therefore process the advertisements that they see via the central route, and group 2 will process them via the peripheral route. The control group should be present to examine if the measured effects of the experimental groups are significantly different from people who did not receive the treatment.

After watching television, the participants of all groups will get a shopping list containing five items that they need to buy in a web shop. For participants of groups 1 and 2, these shopping lists contain two items for which they have also seen an advertisement. After shopping in the web shop, participants will need to fill in the SDS again in order to examine their autonomy after seeing the advertisements and shopping for the items on the list. The participants will also need to fill in the IMI so that their autonomy regarding the shopping experience can be evaluated.

5.3.2 Manipulating MOA

In order for someone to process an advertisement via the central route, the motivation, opportunity and ability to process need to be high. When this is not the case, a person will process the advertisement via the peripheral route. Since motivation and ability to process are characteristics of a person, these are hard to manipulate. Opportunity to process, however, depends on influences from the environment while watching an advertisement and can thus be manipulated. For both group 1 and 2, the motivation and ability to process the message should be high, and for group 1, the opportunity to process the message will also be high but for group 2 the situation will be manipulated so that the opportunity to process will be low.

To make sure that the motivation to process the advertisements of the participants is high, participants will get to choose between three different television programs. The advertisements
that are shown will be related to the program that the participants are watching. Because the participants can choose which program they want to watch, they will choose a program they like and it is likely that they will be more motivated to process the advertisements that are shown since these advertisements are related to the program they like. To make sure that the ability to process is high, the advertisements that are shown need to be clear and not contain very difficult information so that anyone could understand them. For group 1, the opportunity to process will be high since participants will be alone in a room with the television and they will thus not be interrupted while they are watching television. Participants in group 2 will perform a task while watching the advertisements. While the participants of group 2 are watching the advertisements, they also get to see slides that contain problems such as ‘eight plus six = x’. Participants are not asked to solve the problems arithmetically but to add the letters in the problem so that they are not able to fully focus on the advertisements that they see and their opportunity to process the advertisements will be low. Harkins & Petty (1981) demonstrated in their research on the effects of distractions that while performing this task, people are still able to process a message. This processing, however, does not take place via the central route to persuasion since people’s opportunity to process is low and therefore they are not able to form deep thoughts about the message and the processing therefore takes place via the peripheral route.

5.3.3 The story

The participants cannot be aware of the ultimate goal of the research because then they will act in a way that they think is expected which will influence the results. The participants are told that they are participating in a study to test how easy one can find products he or she is looking for in a web shop. The experimenter tells the participants that they will first need to fill in the SDS to see how good they feel they are in making choices, for instance between different brands when they are shopping. Then, the experimenter will tell the participants that it is very busy and therefore there is no room for them yet. While the participants are waiting they get to watch television and they get to choose between ‘America’s Next Top Model’, ‘Masterchef’, and ‘Top Gear’. These are very different programs that target women in the case of ‘America’s Next Top Model’, both men and women in the case of ‘Masterchef’, and men in the case of ‘Top Gear’. For every participant there is thus a program that he or she should be at least a bit interested in.

For groups 1 and 2, ‘America’s Next Top Model’ will contain two advertisements for beauty products, ‘Masterchef’ will contain two advertisements on cooking gear, and ‘Top Gear’ will contain two advertisements on car accessories. Participants of group 2 will get a note that states
that there is another experimenter who would like to use the participants to test an experimental task while they are waiting and watching television. The note explains that during the advertisement breaks of the television program, the participants will get to see slides that contain problems such as ‘eight plus six = x’ and they are asked to count the letters that are in that problem. The participants are told that is not important to get the correct answers since the experiment is only in the testing phase.

After watching television, the experimenter takes the participants to a computer and provides them with a shopping list, depending on which program they chose to watch. The shopping list contains five different items but no brand names so the participants can choose the brands. The participants are told to go shopping at a website, such as www.bol.com, for the items on the list and that they will be timed in order to check how easy it is to find the products in the web shop. Afterwards participants are asked to fill in the SDS again to see how good they feel they are in making choices between products. Participants are also asked to fill in the IMI to see what they thought about the experiment.

5.4 ANALYZING THE RESULTS

Although the research has not yet been conducted, the statistical analysis that should be used to examine the results can already be identified. A statistical technique that is often associated with experimental designs is the analysis of variance (ANOVA). ANOVA is used to analyze group differences for two or more groups when there is one dependent variable (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). ANOVA is applicable in this research since there is only one dependent variable, which is people’s autonomy. Furthermore, there are three different groups in this research and in order to determine if the two hypotheses can be accepted or rejected the results between the groups should be analyzed. Also the results of individual groups before and after the treatment should be analyzed. The results of the SDS before the experiment and after the experiment will be compared using ANOVA, which compares the means of the results of the SDS of the three groups before the experiment with the means of the results of the SDS of the three groups after the experiment to see if they are significantly different. The means of the results of the IMI of the three groups will be compared to each other, using ANOVA, to see if they are significantly different. Earlier in this thesis there was concluded that when an advertisement is processed via the central route, than people’s autonomy will not be affected, but when an advertisement is processed via the peripheral route, people’s autonomy will be negatively affected. If the results on autonomy of participants in group 2 after being exposed to
advertisements is lower than the results on autonomy of group 1 and 3, and if the results of participants in group 2 after being exposed to advertisements is lower than before the experiment, and this is not the case for group 1 and 3, both hypothesis (1) and (2) can be accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Autonomy before advertisements</th>
<th>Autonomy after advertisements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 – Central route</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 2 – Peripheral route</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3 – Control group</td>
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This table indicates that before conducting the experiment, all participants will feel autonomous. After the treatment it is expected that participants of group 1, who processed the advertisements they saw via the central route to persuasion, will still feel autonomous because they internalized the beliefs of the advertisements with their own and thus made their own choices between products. Participants of group 2 will score low on autonomy after the experiment because they were influenced by the advertisements through peripheral cues and they will therefore not have an explanation as to why they chose the products they did. The participants of group 2 will have the feeling that it was not their own choice to pick the products that they picked because they were unknowingly influenced by the advertisements. Participants of group 3 will, just like group 1, still feel autonomous after the experiment since they did not receive the treatment and watched only television without advertisements. The choices that participants of group 3 made were truly their own choices since they were not being influenced by advertisements.
Chapter 6: Restricting Advertising

If advertising does indeed negatively influence people’s autonomy, and thus violates people’s freedom to make their own decisions, the question becomes if advertising should be allowed. Since we live in a democracy, people should be allowed to make their own choices, however, free speech is the fundament of a democracy and by restricting advertising, advertisers right to free speech may be compromised. This chapter examines the effectiveness of restricting advertisements and inspects if it is even possible to restrict advertisements according to the U.S. constitution.

6.1 EFFECTIVENESS

Research shows that in the past, restrictions on advertisements for products that were not considered decent were in place in countries in Europe. Advertisements for cigarettes and alcohol are still widely restricted (Shao, 1993). Banning of tobacco advertisements can reduce tobacco consumption but only if all advertisements for tobacco, and not merely a selection of them, are banned. If all tobacco advertisements are banned, tobacco use is predicted to be reduced by 5.4% and cigarette use is predicted to be reduced by 7.4% (Saffer & Chaloupka, 2000). Alcohol consumption also reduces when there are bans on advertisements for alcoholic beverages. Countries that prohibit advertisements for spirits have about 16% lower alcohol consumption than countries with no bans on alcohol advertisements. Countries that, next to bans on advertisements for spirits, also prohibit advertisements for wine and beer have about 11% lower alcohol consumption than countries that only ban advertisements for spirits (Saffer, 1991). Merely controlling advertisements is thus, in the case of tobacco, not effective, and in the case of alcohol less effective than restricting the advertisements. Advertising is thus capable of influencing people’s decisions since without any advertisements on alcohol and tobacco, the consumption of these products is lower than when there are still advertisements for alcohol and tobacco in place. Hence, restricting advertising might be a solution to prevent advertising from affecting people’s autonomy.
6.2 COMMERCIAL SPEECH AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT

In the United States, free speech is protected by the *First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution*, which reads: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” (Amendment 1 - Freedom of Religion, Press, Expression). People thus have the right to free speech and the government cannot restrict expression because of its ideas or content (Farber, 1979). Following this logic, it should not be possible for governments to ban advertisements based on their content because if it is possible for people to assemble before a business establishment and urge others not to go in, by the same reasoning it should be possible for a company to solicit customers (Redish, 1971).

Baker (1987), however, argues that *commercial speech*, hence advertising, should not be protected by the first amendment. Solitary uses of speech for achieving one’s personal goals, such as singing a song, and communications that do not communicate attitudes of the speaker, such as storytelling, contribute to the key values of the first amendment which are *self-fulfillment* and *participation in societal decision making and culture building*. When speech is involuntary, it does not involve self-fulfillment of the speaker and according to Baker the contents of advertisements are not determined by the speakers but by the market and advertisements thus entail involuntary speech. Commercial speech should therefore not be constitutionally protected since it does not reflect anyone’s personal choice.

The Supreme Court did indeed decide in several cases that commercial speech is not protected by the first amendment because it is not a manifestation of personal freedom or choice. Commercial speech does not have a connection with self-realization and individual liberty which are essential to the protection of speech. Governments are, thus, allowed to regulate advertising since it is not protected by the first amendment (Baker, 1976).

Since autonomy is one of the basic psychological needs that need to be satisfied in order for people to develop themselves, it is important that autonomous behavior is supported and not diminished. If advertising creates an environment that does not support but violates people’s autonomy, advertisements form an obstacle for people to develop themselves. Governments should then ban advertisements in order to create an environment that is not diminishing autonomy. Since commercial speech does not entail voluntary speech, it should not be protected by the right to free speech and restricting advertisements would therefore not be a violation of
advertisers’ right to free speech but would provide people with more freedom to make their own choices.

6.3 CONCLUSION

Restrictions of advertisements on alcohol and tobacco have already shown that advertisements are capable of influencing people’s decisions since without advertisements for these products, consumption of alcohol and tobacco decreases. When advertising does indeed negatively influence people’s autonomy, governments should restrict advertisements so that people have more freedom to make their own choices. Commercial speech is involuntary speech since the content of advertisements is determined by the market and not by an individual and therefore advertising is not protected by the first amendment. Banning advertisements would therefore not be a violation of the right to free speech.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to answer the following question: *Does advertising negatively affect people’s autonomy and if so, should advertisements then be restricted?* To answer this question, needs were examined and it was established that the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs are necessities for psychological growth and health. The need for autonomy is one of the basic psychological needs and self-determination theory was examined which provides a definition of autonomy as the feeling that one’s actions originate from the self. Integrating rules from the environment that allow for the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs results in development of the self. Since one can never act independent of one’s environment, true self-determination does not exist and autonomy is evaluated to the extent that integration takes place. The three levels of integration that can be identified are introjected regulation, which is the least self-determined, identified regulation, which is more self-determined than introjected regulation, and integrated regulation, the most self-determined form of integrated behavior.

Because the goal of advertisements is to persuade people to buy certain products by changing their attitudes, someone’s decision to buy a certain product may not be his or her own decision; therefore advertising may negatively influence people’s autonomy. Attitudes were identified as evaluations of particular attitude objects and these attitudes are resistant to change. Since attitudes are related to one another in people’s memory, it would cost too much time and effort to change one attitude because all the others then also need to change. The fact that attitudes are resistant to change does not mean that they can never change. The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion was examined to explain the two different ways in which advertisements can change attitudes, which are the central route and the peripheral route to persuasion. Processing advertisements via the central route to persuasion results in attitudes that are easily accessible over a longer period of time because the attitudes are integrated in one’s self. Processing advertisements via the peripheral route to persuasion results in attitudes that are less resistant to change since these are formed via peripheral cues and therefore less integrated in one’s self.

Combining self-determination theory and the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion, the conclusion that followed was that advertising will not negatively influence people’s autonomy when people process the advertisement via the central route. Most advertisements, however, are processed via the peripheral route, in which case advertising will indeed negatively influence autonomy. Since there is no previous empirical research done on the influence of advertising on
people’s autonomy, and in order to provide the empirical evidence to validate the theoretical conclusions, an experimental research design is proposed. The results of this research will indicate if advertising does indeed negatively influence people’s autonomy. If that is the case, then people’s development of the self is being jeopardized and governments should consider banning advertising to protect people’s autonomy and thus their development. An examination of the first amendment of the U.S. constitution concludes that advertisements should not be protected by the right to freedom of speech and therefore restricting advertisements is allowed for governments. When people’s autonomy is indeed negatively being influenced by advertising, governments are morally obligated to protect their people by restricting advertisements.


Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI). Retrieved from http://www.selfdeterminationtheory.org/questionnaires/10-questionnaires/50


Shao, A. T. (1993). Restrictions on Advertising Items That May Not Be Considered "Decent". *Journal of Euromarketing, (2)*3, pp. 23-43. DOI: 10.1300/J037v02n03_03


*The Self-Determination Scale (SDS).* Retrieved from http://www.selfdeterminationtheory.org/questionnaires/10-questionnaires/54


Appendix 1: Questionnaire Self-Determination Scale

1. A. I always feel like I choose the things I do.
   
   B. I sometimes feel that it’s not really me choosing the things I do.

   Only A feels true  1  2  3  4  5  Only B feels true

2. A. My emotions sometimes seem alien to me.
   
   B. My emotions always seem to belong to me.

   Only A feels true  1  2  3  4  5  Only B feels true

3. A. I choose to do what I have to do.
   
   B. I do what I have to, but I don’t feel like it is really my choice.

   Only A feels true  1  2  3  4  5  Only B feels true

4. A. I feel that I am rarely myself.
   
   B. I feel like I am always completely myself.

   Only A feels true  1  2  3  4  5  Only B feels true

5. A. I do what I do because it interests me.
   
   B. I do what I do because I have to.

   Only A feels true  1  2  3  4  5  Only B feels true

6. A. When I accomplish something, I often feel it wasn’t really me who did it.
   
   B. When I accomplish something, I always feel it’s me who did it.

   Only A feels true  1  2  3  4  5  Only B feels true
7. **A.** I am free to do whatever I decide to do.
   
   **B.** What I do is often not what I’d choose to do.
   
   **Only A feels true** 1 2 3 4 5  **Only B feels true**

8. **A.** My body sometimes feels like a stranger to me.
   
   **B.** My body always feels like me.
   
   **Only A feels true** 1 2 3 4 5  **Only B feels true**

9. **A.** I feel pretty free to do whatever I choose to.
   
   **B.** I often do things that I don’t choose to do.
   
   **Only A feels true** 1 2 3 4 5  **Only B feels true**

10. **A.** Sometimes I look into the mirror and see a stranger
   
   **B.** When I look into the mirror I see myself.
   
   **Only A feels true** 1 2 3 4 5  **Only B feels true**

Items 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 need to be reverse scored by subtracting the response from 6 so that the higher scores on every item will indicate a higher level of self-determination. The scores for the Awareness of Self are calculated by taking the average of the scores on items 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10. The scores for the Perceived Choice are calculated by taking the average of the scores on items 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9.
Appendix 2: Questionnaire Intrinsic Motivation Inventory

1. I enjoyed picking products in the web shop very much.
   
   Not true at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very true

2. I think I am pretty good at picking the right products in the web shop.
   
   Not true at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very true

3. I did not feel nervous while shopping in the web shop.
   
   Not true at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very true

4. I felt like I had to pick the products I did.
   
   Not true at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very true

5. Shopping in the web shop was fun to do.
   
   Not true at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very true

6. I believe I had some choice about picking the products.
   
   Not true at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very true

7. I believe the products I picked could be of some value to me.
   
   Not true at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very true

8. I thought shopping in the web shop was boring.
   
   Not true at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very true

9. I think I did pretty well at picking the right products, compared to others.
   
   Not true at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very true

10. I felt very tense while shopping in the web shop.
    
    Not true at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very true

11. I felt like it was not my own choice to pick the products I did.
    
    Not true at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very true
12. I would be willing to pick the same products again because they have some value to me.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

13. Shopping in the web shop did not hold my attention at all.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

14. After picking the products, I felt pretty competent.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

15. I was very relaxed in picking the products in the web shop.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

16. I didn’t really have a choice about picking the products.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

17. I believe picking the products I did could be beneficial to me.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

18. I would describe shopping in the web shop as very interesting.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

19. I am satisfied with my performance at this task.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

20. I picked certain products because I had no choice.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

21. I was anxious while picking the products in the web shop.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

22. I thought shopping in the web shop was quite enjoyable.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

23. I was pretty skilled at this activity.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |

24. I picked certain products because I wanted to.

| Not true at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very true |
25. While I was shopping in the web shop, I was thinking about how much I enjoyed it.

Not true at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very true

26. This was an activity that I couldn’t do very well.

Not true at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very true

27. I felt pressure while shopping in the web shop.

Not true at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very true

28. I picked certain products because I had to.

Not true at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very true

First, items 3, 4, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 20, 26, and 28 need to be reverse scored which can be done by subtracting the response from 8. The scores for interest/enjoyment are calculated by taking the average of the scores on items 1, 5, 8, 13, 18, 22, and 25. The scores for perceived competence are calculated by taking the average of the scores on items 2, 9, 14, 19, 23, and 26. The scores for perceived choice are calculated by taking the average of the scores on items 4, 6, 11, 16, 20, 24, and 28. The scores for pressure/tension are calculated by taking the average of the scores on items 3, 10, 15, 21, and 27. The scores for value/usefulness are calculated by taking the average of the scores on items 7, 12, and 17.