

# The technicians of consumer society: the creation of advertising men and practical advertising knowledge in early twentieth-century Sweden

Technicians of  
consumer  
society

77

Received 15 November 2022  
Revised 23 December 2022  
Accepted 10 January 2023

Elin Åström Rudberg

*Department of Economic History and International Relations,  
Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden, and*

Orsi Husz

*Department of History of Science and Ideas, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden*

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to investigate an unexplored part of advertising history; namely, the education of a large, mundane, nonelite group of advertising professionals, so-called advertising technicians and the knowledge they acquired. Examining correspondence courses in the technology of advertising, we focus particularly on the production of technified knowledge and mass personas.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study is based on a qualitative analysis of course material from Sweden's two largest correspondence schools in the 1930s and 1940s. Two theoretical concepts guide the analysis: the concept of market devices and the notion of personas, both of which we use to show how the courses crafted a particular kind of advertising professional as well as knowledge.

**Findings** – The study shows that courses created a template-based persona of the advertising technician, who possessed what we call bounded originality characterized by diligence, modesty and rule-governed creative imagination. Similarly, the courses created a body of knowledge that was controllable and highly practice-oriented. The advertising technician was expected to embody and internalize the advertising knowledge, thus, becoming an extension of this knowledge on the market.

**Originality/value** – By directing the searchlight at the cadre of ordinary, middle-class advertising professionals instead of the high-profile “advertising creatives” and innovators, the paper brings to the foreground the nonelite level of the advertising industry. These practitioners went to work in the business world to produce the everyday advertising that was not necessarily groundbreaking but was needed in a growing mass-consumption society.

**Keywords** History of marketing education, Advertising history, Market devices, Persona studies, Sweden

**Paper type** Research paper

© Elin Åström Rudberg and Orsi Husz. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

The authors would like to thank participants at the higher seminar in economic history at Stockholm University, the STS seminar at the Department of Economic History at Uppsala University and two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments and suggestions. The research for this article has been supported by Jan Wallanders och Tom Hedelius Stiftelse, grant number: P2013-144:1.



Journal of Historical Research in  
Marketing  
Vol. 15 No. 2, 2023  
pp. 77-97  
Emerald Publishing Limited  
1755-750X  
DOI 10.1108/JHRM-11-2022-0032

**Introduction: the mundane technification of advertising**

The 1930s witnessed the birth of a new professional category in Sweden, the *advertising technician* (reklamtekniker). Specialized courses in the *technology of advertising* (reklamteknik), rather than in the art, science or business of advertising, emerged and ultimately trained thousands of people. Who was this figure of the advertising technician, and what body of knowledge was attributed to him (or, more seldom, to her)? And how was the consumer conceptualized in this “technified” knowledge?

This article concerns advertising education in Sweden in the 1930s and 1940s, two decades of rapid societal change that saw the birth of the welfare state and modern consumer society. In particular, we focus on practically oriented advertising education offered by correspondence schools and the ambition to educate a new group of advertising technicians for a wide variety of tasks in Swedish business. Correspondence schools were immensely popular and distinguished themselves by being accessible and affordable to a much broader part of the population than classical secondary and higher education, which was reserved for a small percentage.

From a theoretical perspective, we want to draw attention to the definition and crafting of a new type of professional and a new field of knowledge in the service of modern commercial life: a “technician” who was paradoxically specialized in something not intuitively perceived as conventional technical work, for instance creating advertisements, organizing campaigns and researching consumer markets. Appropriately, our theoretical framework is inspired by science and technology studies (STS), especially the analytical concepts that have been adapted to the study of the commercial world and the market. In line with this literature, we conceptualize advertising as a context-dependent *device* that combines aspects of the economic and the cultural in particular arrangements, but also in a very tangible way (for example, in actual advertisements). Market devices are the “material and discursive assemblages” that form an important part of the construction of markets (Callon *et al.*, 2007, p. 2; see also Muniesa *et al.*, 2007). Specific forms of knowledge, for example, financial statistics or market research, are also important parts of markets and underpin and constitute devices (Ibid, p. 5). With this approach, the object of study becomes, as sociologist Liz McFall has put it, “the diverse forms, tools, techniques, and rationalities that have historically constituted the device of advertising” (McFall, 2004, p. 82). Such an approach has been proposed as a promising methodology for the study of advertising’s role historically, which has tended to be characterized by teleological explanations and a modernization paradigm that revolves around the story of an industry and practice that have grown increasingly sophisticated and cunning (McFall, 2004; Schwarzkopf, 2011).

We also introduce a second theoretical concept to the field: the notion of *persona*, which can help us to understand the “construction, constitution and production of the self” by individuals in social settings (Marshall and Barbour, 2015, p. 2; see also Niskanen and Barany, 2021). In general, research on personas has been preoccupied with studying particularly prominent scientists and innovators in history, similar to how advertising historical research has tended to focus on famous “ad men”. What we do, in contrast, is to turn the searchlight away from successful individuals to the production of a standardized “mass persona”, such as the advertising technician in our sources. We propose the notion of a *template-based persona* that we argue was instrumental in the growth of the mass-consumption society of the mid-twentieth century, which was in many ways driven by advertising.

We address the following research questions. *Who* was this figure, the advertising technician whom the courses aimed to educate? In other words, what kind of persona emerges in the educational material? *What sort of knowledge* was an advertising technician expected to possess and why? How advertising is received by the public is key for its

function and societal role. For this reason, we are particularly interested in the production of knowledge about consumers. Hence, if advertising is a device for creating markets, what characterized the technicians who operated the machinery and what did they need to know? We hypothesize that the education was based on a twofold ambition: not only that the courses sought to transmit a form of knowledge to the students but also that the students themselves were expected to undergo a transformation and *become* modern “advertising men”. In this view, knowledge creation is interwoven with the creation of a new type of professional; thus, the advertising persona becomes part of advertising as a market device.

Previous research on the genealogy of the concept of technology indicates that by the 1930s, the term had become a societal keyword that helped legitimize a new social order in twentieth-century society (Schatzberg, 2012; Marx, 2010). Indeed, historians have long recognized that technology and claims of technical expertise have played a vital role in the discourses and practices of the emerging Swedish welfare state, and the engineer features in historical accounts as an emblematic figure for the building of a new society. The engineers of these well-known accounts are strongly associated with either the world of production or that of social and welfare policy – as so-called social engineers (Bernier, 1996; Björck, 2008). At the same time, sociologist Boel Bernier writes, technical education created a link between capital and labor as it was often a path to upward mobility for people from the working class (Bernier, 1996, pp. 182–183).

Research in the history of advertising and marketing has also shown how preoccupied historical actors have been with notions closely related to technology, such as science and research. In the interwar period, Claude Hopkins’ book *Scientific Advertising* popularized ideas about creating advertising based on predefined knowledge that would ensure a certain response from consumers depending on how different messages, symbols and forms were designed (Hopkins, 1966). Later periods saw the emergence of other forms of ostensibly scientific approaches, for example, subliminal advertising in the late 1950s (see, for example, Logemann, 2019; Kreshel, 1990; Schultze, 1982; Packard, 1957). Despite this interest in the *scientification* of advertising, the occurrence of concepts related to technology is much less noted in research.

Clearly, consumer markets are strongly related to both the world of production and that of social reforms, and historians have recently begun scrutinizing the historical notion of “consumer engineering”, referring mainly to the expert-driven marketing before and after the Second World War that aimed to create consumers and a new society of prosperity defined by mass-produced consumer goods. This mid-century consumer engineering was akin to the larger movement of “social engineering”, not only in its ambition to reshape people’s material environment but also in its emphasis on technical expertise (Logemann, 2019; Husz and Carlsson, 2019; Logemann *et al.*, 2019). In these studies, however, it is often a group of elite experts who are in focus, while we know much less about how the technical mindset played out at the nonelite level. The problem of analyzing and accounting for the ordinary and mundane in contrast to the elite, prominent and exceptional is not unique to advertising history but has been a theme in other historical research as well (see, for example, Todd, 2014; O’Hagan, 2020, introduction, for social history and Popp, 2020; Husz and Larsson Heidenblad, 2021 for business history).

In this paper, we argue that a mundane process of technification took place in the sphere of mass consumption and advertising that created a controllable body of knowledge, a new type of professionals and a new set of professional practices. This process is manifest in the appearance and popularity of the notion of technology (in Swedish: *teknik*) in relation to advertising. We aim to show both *how* this technification happened and what it *did* to the knowledge and practice that were created.

In addition to uncovering the mundane technification of advertising, a further contribution of our article is that it sheds light on an educational outlet, which, even though it enrolled an exceptionally large number of students, has hitherto drawn limited scholarly interest. In several countries, correspondence schools were, in fact, pioneers in offering advertising courses, as well as training in closely related subjects such as sales (Köhler and Logemann, 2016, p. 375; Tadajewski, 2011; Ross and Richards, 2008, pp. 11–12; Stankey, 1990, p. 424). In the USA, graduates were generally not viewed favorably by established practitioners, who either distrusted this kind of education or believed that correspondence schools “denigrated the field” (Stankey, 1990, p. 424). Despite these roots, research in advertising history has focused almost exclusively on higher education at universities and attempts by advertisers to make advertising a legitimate academic subject and respected profession (McCarraher, 2019, ch. 19; Witkowski, 2010; Ross and Richards, 2008; Stankey, 1990; Schultze, 1982). The quest for more professional education was a general feature of the advertising field in the early twentieth century in many countries outside the USA as well (see, for example, Crawford, 2016 on Australia; Åström Rudberg and Kuorelahti, 2021 on the Nordic countries; Köhler and Logemann, 2016 on Germany). One reason for this state of affairs might be that the historical sources produced by those active in the field emphasize the aspiration for increased status, progress and recognition of advertising in higher education. Another might be that scholarly studies conducted by researchers from the academic field of marketing tend to focus on the historical evolution of their own subject.

Thus, by focusing on correspondence education, we investigate a lower-level, practice-oriented knowledge that does not fit well into the marketing discipline’s own historiography. In this approach, we follow the advice of Liz McFall, who proposes that rather than studying historical ads themselves, researchers should focus on the everyday and material practices of advertising and how these were instrumental in “performing” markets (McFall, 2004, p. 170). Admittedly, we do not study advertising “in action” on the market but investigate how advertisers were educated in their trade. Nevertheless, our source material, with detailed descriptions and explanations of the everyday practices, methods and skills considered important to both produce successful advertisements and become a successful advertiser, offers unique insights into the “technologies”, or *teknik*, of routine advertising work at this point in time.

In the study, we use educational material from the largest correspondence school in Sweden at the time, Hermods Korrespondensinstitut (henceforth Hermods), as well as material from its main competitor, NKI (Noréns Korrespondensinstitut, later Nordiska Korrespondensinstitutet). Starting in 1929 and well into the 1960s, these schools continuously offered advertising courses to thousands of students. We focus on the first truly comprehensive courses offered in the 1930s and 1940s.

The material is rich and informative. Each correspondence course consisted of several letters sent by mail at a pace adapted to each student based on how often the student sent in assignments for marking. For example, NKI’s first advertising course, from 1935, contains 15-course letters (kursbrev) – altogether about 200 pages – and Hermods’ course from 1937 includes 19 letters, comprising over 450 pages. New letters could be added in revised editions of the courses. There were assignments to be completed for every course letter, on which the student received individual feedback by mail. After successfully completing them all, students received a diploma and the course letters bound as a hardcover book, which was intended to function as a useful handbook in their professional life. The course letters are our main empirical source, and we used entire sets of unbound letters in the Ephemera collection of the National Library of Sweden (Kungliga Biblioteket [KB]).

---

## Correspondence schools, advertising education and the Swedish advertising industry

Technicians of  
consumer  
society

Hermods, established in 1898, was a well-known and expansive company and an important player in the developing market for education in Sweden. It offered distance education for a large public in a wide range of topics, such as modern languages, technical courses, stenography, typewriting, general secondary school education and not least in business-related fields. As for the last of these, the new correspondence courses, for example, in the *Technology of advertising*, *Course for bank clerks* and *Course for retail dealers*, were often the only available formal education in this field in the country. In many ways, the correspondence schools fostered several generations of people working in trade and business. In the period 1939 to 1948, a total of nearly 700,000 new students registered at Hermods, and by that time, the company already had a few significant competitors with thousands of students of their own. It is important to point out that compared to the USA, for example, correspondence schools in Sweden were respected providers of education (Gaddén, 1973, p. 221; Husz and Glover, 2019).

Correspondence schools have been important in the history of advertising in several ways. In addition to being the first in Sweden to offer a comprehensive education in the field of advertising, they were also major advertisers themselves and very well known to the public. Large, conspicuous advertisements for correspondence courses were widely published in newspapers and popular magazines, which attracted attention but also led to criticism that the ads were misleading as they promised too much in terms of prospects for success in life (Husz and Glover, 2019, p. 500). In the introduction to Hermods' advertising course in 1937–38 (the first 12 letters were printed in 1937, the rest in 1938), there is a reference to the value of the school's own advertising, claiming that advertising was a key factor behind its popularity and the reason why Hermods had become "Scandinavia's largest school" (Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937, introductory letter, p. 1) [1]. According to figures collected by the advertising industry itself, correspondence courses were among the most frequently advertised goods in the Swedish press in the 1950s, alongside cars, detergents and coffee (SOU 1962:16, 1962, 115). Hermods was, thus, a highly professional advertiser and was also mentioned as a forerunner in early methods for measuring the impact of advertising (Affärssekonomi, 1937; Björklund, 1967, pp. 373–374).

Hermods' course *Reklamteknik* (1937, in revised versions in 1944 and 1951) was marketed among the school's extensive range of mercantile and other courses and was thereby visible to everyone reading the Swedish press. In these often full-page advertisements, a serious effort was put into framing the ideal Hermods student. The Hermods student was depicted as a hardworking, ambitious man (or, less typically, a woman) coming from modest circumstances. He was ready to take responsibility for his own future and was determined to succeed in life economically and socially. Enrolling oneself in a Hermods course was often described as an important step up the social ladder and as proof of self-confidence as well as of a modern enterprising spirit (Husz and Forsell, 2020). We know that in the 1930s and 1940s, students at the two correspondence schools we discuss here were predominantly categorized as "middle class" (62% at Hermods, 54% at NKI), but this category also contained sales personnel and lower office clerks. The category "working class" was also well represented (31% at Hermods, 43% at NKI). Young men in their 20s were in the majority (Svenska Gallupinstitutet, 1944, pp. 26–27). In many ways, the prospective students for Hermods' advertising course, a subject presented as the order of the day, were typical Hermods students.

The advertising industry in Sweden in the 1930s was small but growing quickly, and despite the depression in the first years of the decade there was a clear sense of optimism. Historian Elin Gardeström has referred to the Swedish advertising professionals at the time



as engaged in utopian ideas and being convinced of their importance (Gardeström, 2019, p. 484). There was a momentum for advertising that manifested itself in several ways, such as the formation of local advertising clubs, ambitious periodicals, international collaborations and increased press coverage of the activities of the advertising industry (Åström Rudberg and Kuorelahti, 2021; Arnberg and Husz, 2018). The printed advertisement, in the daily press or magazines, was the most important form of advertising and was reinforced by cartel agreement between the largest advertising agencies and newspaper publishers (Åström Rudberg, 2019), but other forms such as direct advertising, window display and packaging were also beginning to draw increased interest (Arnberg and Husz, 2018; Torell and Lee, 2010).

The introduction of correspondence education in advertising was part of this momentum; advertising represented modernity and the future. The courses quickly became popular. In June 1939, Hermods reported that more than 500 students had been enrolled in their new course during the first year after its launch. We do not have additional data regarding enrollments, but considering that the course continued to be offered (and was even updated in 1944 and 1951), it is safe to conclude that it must have had thousands rather than hundreds of students; and these estimates apply to only one of the schools in question (Korrespondens, 1939a, 1939b). Five hundred students are already a high figure compared to the total number of people employed in the Swedish advertising industry at the time. For example, the number of employees who worked with advertising across several different fields, from industry and retail to specialized advertising agencies, was around 2,100 in 1945 and had increased to 3,000 by 1950 (Björklund, 1967, p. 851; see also Kirstein, 1950). With these figures in mind, the 500 advertising graduates from Hermods in 1939 likely worked in a wide range of occupations and not only in positions that were strictly part of the advertising industry.

Notwithstanding the relatively high status of Hermods in Sweden, correspondence education – just as in the academic literature on advertising history – was overlooked already in contemporary overviews of the field. In an article on the state of Swedish advertising education in the 1939 yearbook of the Swedish Advertising Association (Svenska Reklamförbundet), there is no mention of correspondence courses. Instead, the article mentions the various efforts to offer education at the business schools, such as the Stockholm School of Economics and private, commercial schools (Norberg, 1939, pp. 41–46). The first outlet for higher education, the Institute for Higher Education in Advertising (Institutet för högre reklamutbildning [IHR]), was not founded until the early 1950s and only enrolled small numbers of students. In its first school year, 1953–1954, the institute enrolled 20 students (four being women) out of 43 applicants (IHR, 1953–1954, p. 6). The entry requirements were high: applicants needed to have a diploma from upper secondary school, an education that only a small percentage of youth had at the time. There were no such requirements for the correspondence courses.

### Correspondence courses in the technology of advertising

Hermods' advertising courses were developed by a prominent advertising manager and later advertising consultant, Einar Lenning, who, among other things, had been in charge of advertising at the iconic Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 that promoted functionalism and a modern lifestyle (Gardeström, 2018, p. 33). Later, in the 1940s, Hermods collaborated with an advertising company founded by Sven Rygaard, who had a background in working for the well-known American advertising agency Erwin Wasey and Co in Scandinavia. In the 1940s, NKI's courses were developed by another respected advertising man, Yngve Hedvall, a "discreet central figure" in the advertising industry and author of several handbooks (Gardeström, 2018, p. 70; NKI Grundläggande Reklamkurs, 1944, p. 1).

In the 1930s, the advertising courses at Hermods and NKI had rather similar content. Both offered an introduction to what advertising was, its functions and the role of an advertising professional or advertising technician. The various media of advertising were introduced, particularly advertisements in the daily press and weekly magazines, and more technical aspects, such as printing techniques and image processing, were described. In addition, much effort was put into discussing the consumers, especially from psychological perspectives, and into arguing for the importance of knowing the market. The tone was pedagogical, and each course letter contained practical assignments that students were to send in for marking. Assignments could include creating advertisements, evaluating existing advertising and conducting one's own market research study. The 1930s comprehensive courses at Hermods and NKI were followed in the 1940s by dozens of additional, specialized courses such as "The Theory of Advertising", "The Media of Advertising" and "Advertising Psychology".

Hermods' course in the technology of advertising, *reklamteknik* (Figure 1), was rather expensive compared to other courses on offer in the late 1930s. In fact, at 75 SEK, it was the most expensive single-volume correspondence course at Hermods, whereas other courses there varied from 15 to 70 SEK. However, one has to bear in mind that even the priciest correspondence course was considerably cheaper than traditional on-site educational programs. The comprehensive 19-letter course was intended for intensive part-time studies of at least 20 weeks; this in comparison with 125 SEK for a month-long course in window-dressing and advertising offered in Stockholm, to which the costs of lodging (another 125 SEK) and lost income must also be added. In comparison, in 1937, the average yearly income of a retail employee was 2,400 SEK for a man and 1,850 SEK for a woman (Arnberg and Husz, 2018). Thus, a correspondence course for 75 SEK was well within reach of an ambitious person with limited means.

### The concept of *reklamteknik*

The Swedish word *teknik*, with a meaning similar to that of the German *Technik* (Schatzberg, 2012, p. 563), translates as either technology or technique and is a relatively broad term, generally referring to the practical carrying out of certain work (technique), mostly within the industrial/technical field. However, the word is just as often used in Swedish for processes and phenomena that would be referred to as technology in English (Nordisk familjebok, 1919). While it is not a perfect solution, we have chosen to translate *reklamteknik* as the technology of advertising, but semantically the meaning lies somewhere between the English words technology and technique.

We argue that it is significant that Hermods' course was named *Reklamteknik* and not something else; that it was a term that aimed to invoke certain images of modern society, such as technical solutions, systematic knowledge and a promise of material prosperity. The word *reklamteknik* appears to have been used in educational contexts since the early 1920s. In 1923 a short, specialized course was offered by a private commercial school in Stockholm (Bröderna Pählmans Handelsinstitut), and a few years later, a school for shop assistants and window dressers (Stockholms Biträdets och Dekoratorsskola) offered lectures in the technology of advertising in addition to their other courses. However, we know nothing about the content of these courses other than that they were mainly practically oriented and targeted lower-level sales staff or, in the case of Pählmans, those already working in sales. In 1941, a specialized school was established in Stockholm called *Reklamtekniska skolan* (the Advertising Technical School), but it was primarily oriented toward educating the artistic and creative actors in advertising, such as art directors and illustrators (Reklamtekniska skolan, 1942). Regarding the correspondence schools, the first courses named *Reklamteknik* were offered by NKI in 1929 and Hermods in 1937–1938, the latter being a particularly comprehensive course. In the mid-1930s, NKI changed the name of



**Figure 1.**  
Front page of  
Hermods'  
promotional brochure  
about the new course  
Reklamtechnik in  
1937

**Source:** Hermods Reklamtechnik promotional brochure (1937), Ephemera collection, KB

their most comprehensive course to simply *Reklam* (Advertising) and later, in 1951, to *Modern Reklam* (Modern Advertising), whereas Hermods kept the name *Reklamtechnik* until at least the early 1950s.

In 1937 the topics of technology and art were both introduced in the first course letter in *Reklamtechnik* from Hermods. The material stated that some advertising men performed their work as a form of *art*, “that is, without being completely clear about what it is that guides their actions”. However, such persons were rare, and modern business companies would not trust them. On the contrary, for people in “the service of advertising today, there is a need to work *scientifically*” ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), introductory letter, pp. 3–4; see also [Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1951](#), introductory letter, p. 5). But at the same time, the material stated that there was nonetheless a role for art to play as there were limits to the knowledge of advertising: “Where knowledge is not sufficient, art has to be introduced” ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), introductory letter, p. 4). There was a difference between theoretical and applied science, and the course was primarily practically oriented, with the



concept of *teknik* focusing on teaching the students *how* to combine applied scientific knowledge with practical know-how to achieve the best possible advertising.

The word *reklamtekniker*, advertising technician, incorporated all sorts of advertising occupations such as copywriters, artists, advertising agents, advertising managers and typographers who had learned the scientific foundations of their trade and, as such, could act purposefully and with an ability to predict the outcome of their actions ([Hermöds Reklamteknik, 1937](#), introductory letter, pp. 5–6). A search for the word *reklamtekniker* in two of Sweden's largest daily newspapers (*Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*) reveals that it became an accepted and widespread term, particularly in the interwar period and in the first decade after the Second World War. It first appeared in 1915 (*Dagens Nyheter*) and had practically disappeared by 1966.

Previous research has shown how perceptions of the human agency changed with the rise of technology as a societal keyword, particularly in relation to older forms of artisan work. Technology was used to “cement the exclusion of artisanal knowledge from the discourse of industrial modernity” ([Schatzberg, 2012](#), p. 555). In our case, the technification of advertising was a means by which it could develop from involving an individual's natural talent and intuition to involving a defined body of knowledge, which could be taught and controlled. This process was intertwined with but different from the process of scientification; it transferred knowledge from a more advanced level downward to make it more easily absorbable by a broad group of people.

With industrialization, technology also became a term that embodied a class dimension. Technology was for the up-and-coming, or the lower middle class, who occupied the modern industrial positions in society, in contrast to those performing manual labor or old-fashioned artisans ([Schatzberg, 2012](#), pp. 562–563). In a similar vein, advertising technicians were expected to become part of a new, commercial cadre of middle-class practitioners. The process that we identify is reminiscent of that described by sociologist Mike Savage in his work on postwar British identities. He depicts the emergence of a middlebrow “technical identity” in 1950s Britain, which attempted to transcend the boundaries of “skilled manual work cultures” and notions of “gentlemanly science” ([Savage, 2010](#), p. 226). Our group of advertising technicians can be placed in a similar societal process whereby a technified knowledge became a significant imperative. How this group was depicted and how it was addressed in the course material differ in key respects from how advertising practitioners have been described in previous advertising historical research.

### Creating the advertising technician: the middling man

In his classical study of the interwar American advertising industry, Roland Marchand shows that the ad men of New York's Madison Avenue were very far from being representative of the American population, a fact that was also reflected in the advertising they produced, which tended to reinforce their perceptions of social relations. The advertising professionals had domestic servants, played golf and preferred modern art to a much greater extent than average Americans did ([Marchand, 1985](#), p. 38). In Britain, one of the leading interwar advertising agencies pioneered the cultivation of a highly specific type of “advertising creative”, part of an upper-class, bohemian social group that contributed to the economic success of the agency. Part of this lifestyle, or habitus, of the staff was the confidence to break with established conventions and norms ([Schwarzkopf, 2008](#)). Gardeström has painted a similar picture of the interwar Swedish advertising industry, describing the leading figures as bold and adventurous. Obedience was not held in high esteem ([Gardeström, 2018](#), pp. 73–74). Gardeström also makes a distinction between those who saw advertising as belonging in the cultural sphere (as a form of art) vs. the economic

sphere. This ideal of the bold and adventurous ad man, however, is nowhere to be found in the course material of Hermods or NKI; the future advertising technician was instead a toned-down, polite and trustworthy professional who realized the responsibility placed on his shoulders due to the importance of advertising in society.

On the pages of the course material, the advertising technician is portrayed, explicitly as well as implicitly, as a more modest person. He (it was typically a he) was not only a middle-class man but also a middling man, positioned between the entrepreneur and the diligent worker; between the boardroom and the shop floor; between commerce and art; and between business interest and social responsibility. This theme of dualisms, for example, art and technology or commercialism and idealism, has been reoccurring in advertising historical research (see, for example, [McFall, 2004](#), ch. 2; [Leiss et al., 2018](#), pp. 10–11). Historian Jan Logemann's shows how the tensions between "creative" and "scientific" approaches in the mid-twentieth century opened up the possibility for outsiders: consumer engineers with backgrounds in arts and academia who could navigate and transcend such boundaries in innovative ways ([Logemann, 2019](#), p. 6). In our material, as we will show below, students were also advised on how to dissolve or traverse these kinds of dualisms, albeit in a much more down-to-earth manner.

Already in Hermods' first-course letter from 1937, an important theme was the attempt to merge two seemingly contradictory aims – one commercial and one noncommercial – in a manner that echoes the idea of classical political economy and foreshadows typical justifications of the advertising profession. The self-interest of businessmen, the letter emphasized, in fact, coincided with the pursuit of universal welfare. According to Hermods' material, any manufacturer must in some way be interested in serving his fellow human beings if he was to succeed with his business. Thus, an advertising man did not need to be a "cold and calculating person" but should genuinely believe in the importance of helping people to improve their lives through the utilities that advertising made it possible to produce and distribute ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), letter 1, p. 10). Without advertising, many industries would be unable to sell their products on the scale needed to produce them efficiently.

Both Hermods' and NKI's courses oscillated between describing advertising as a very wide and a very narrow field at the same time. The courses primarily inculcated the importance of selling. The purpose of advertising was above all to sell, and the repetitive element was crucial: Consumers had to be constantly reminded about the product or service ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), Letter 1, p. 13; Letter 2; see also [NKI Reklam, 1935](#), Letters 4 and 9). An expression from an American ad man that the Hermods students were advised to carefully remember was that "advertising is not an art, it is business" ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), Letter 3, p. 2).

The narrow focus on selling skills was, however, widened in different ways. On the one hand, the skill of selling was something that could be extended to the students themselves. They were to create themselves in a new professional role but also be able to sell this "person" that they became. Regarding searching for work in advertising, they were advised to carefully compose a "selling letter" that would evoke the interest of an employer. The advice read ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), letter 19, p. 16):

In this course You have practiced how to write a so-called selling letter. Now, can You sell Yourself with such a letter? [...] The letter should be characterized by the originality that reflects Your personality, however without exceeding sound moderation in business [...] Such a letter will cause the receiver to exclaim: Here is the person we need! This is a person who really knows how to sell!

Thus, by selling themselves, the technicians of advertising proved their value on the market and their professional competence.

On the other hand, an expansionist definition of advertising was also provided: public information about health issues, the interior of a shop or a branded calendar on an office wall

were all forms of advertising, according to the course material ([Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937](#), Letter 1; [NKI Reklam, 1935](#), Letter 1; cf. [Tistedt, 2019](#); [Gardeström, 2018](#)). To students, advertising was generally presented as serious business, a key node in the consumption-production nexus (see also [Rosenberg, 1937](#)), and could not be left to some unreliable, eccentric avant-garde. In line with the expansionist view, students were taught that those who mastered the technology of advertising belonged to the most important “servants of society” ([Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937](#), introductory letter, p. 2). The role of advertising, as well as of the advertising professional, was to serve the public and provide advice and information, as well as be a responsible guide and advisor. The “hard” skill of selling, in combination with more lofty invocations of serving society, formed an unexpected alliance of key tenets of the advertising persona. Advertising technicians should embody these tenets in their attitude and behavior, in a sense, becoming an extension of advertising themselves.

The seriousness of advertising was accentuated by the advertising technician’s need for order. All material, ideas, printing plates and prints should be kept in order in an office that should also be characterized by tidiness. Discipline was also manifested in the advice given to students starting Hermods’ course: hard work and in-depth study were needed, and the course was not for someone who thought he could become an advertising expert in an instant ([Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937](#), letter 19, p. 9; [Hermods Reklamteknik promotional brochure, 1937](#); p. 9).

In parallel with being orderly and conscientious, the advertising technician had to be an optimist: “Optimism and advertising are two inseparable concepts”, the educational material stated, continuing ([Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937](#), letter 19, pp. 18–19):

Do not say it is too difficult to nurture this trait of character [optimism]. Already then, You discard Your chances of success. To be an optimist you only have to become slightly more acquainted with yourself so that you can understand which mental inhibitions to overcome.

Again, we can observe how the students were supposed to work on themselves, recreating and shaping their own personalities. Instead of being discouraged by mistakes and setbacks, which were unavoidable and should be learned from, students should become accustomed to succeeding, the course material stressed ([Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937](#), letter 1, p. 19; cf. [Husz and Forsell, 2020](#)). The cheerful, jaunty approach is similar to the sort of culture that was nurtured among insurance agents, who, just like advertising men, were also in the business of selling ([McFall, 2015](#), p. 80). In addition, we can invoke the parable of the petty bourgeoisie in the early and mid-twentieth century in Britain, whose characteristics have been described as ranging from “pretentious” and trapped in “suburban respectability” to more positive connotations such as “energetic” and “self-reliant” ([Bailey, 1999](#), pp. 273–274). In fact, the adjective “energetic” was a key concept in the Hermods’ own advertisements with the recurring slogan “Hermods – the school for energetic people” (see, for example, the advertisements in [Korrespondens, 1943](#); [Korrespondens, 1944](#)).

In testimonials used to advertise Hermods’ courses, former students shared their opinions about the education. Concerning the course *Reklamteknik*, some students stated that it had given them valuable practical knowledge that they had previously lacked, despite having a business education, while others, who already had some practical experience, believed the course had given them important theoretical understandings ([Akselson, 1942](#); [Berg, 1942](#)). While we know that no previous knowledge or education was required for the course, we cannot simply conclude that it was attended by those who lacked an education. Testimonials published by Hermods, likely chosen among a select few of the students, reveal a heterogeneous group with careers already underway, mostly in retail and printed media, with titles such as editor, business manager, advertising man, financial manager and illustrator ([Pählman, 1939](#); [Leion, 1947](#); [Hermods Reklamteknik, 1942](#)). Writing such a

testimonial letter, along with creating a full-page advertisement or an advertising campaign for Hermods' course *Reklamteknik*, was part of one's final assignment before completing the course ([Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937](#), Letter 19). With this clever method, the course produced continuous potential advertising material for itself.

In general, Hermods' course material advised students to embrace their work with their "whole personality" and make it a calling; only then did they have the chance to become truly successful. An advertising man was always working, in the sense that he should at all times be receptive to new ideas and possibilities whenever and wherever these appeared. This way of living should not be due to some external coercion but should be based on a genuine conviction that one was "one of the leading persons serving today's society and building the society of tomorrow" ([Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937](#), Letter 19, p. 1; [Hermods Reklamteknik, 1951](#), Letter 13, p. 1). By following these instructions, the future advertising technician could himself become a kind of device in the sense that he was expected to embody the knowledge and internalize the importance of advertising.

Several of the student testimonials contain similar ideas. One student stated that he had made the content of the course his "spiritual property", and another that he felt like a "pioneer for something new and big", whereas a third referred to the skills he had gained as a "journey from darkness to light" ([Hermods Reklamteknik, 1942](#)). Certainly, these big words belong to the genre of testimonials, and most students likely did not perceive the course as such a life-changing experience; however, they do show that several students took its comprehensive and transformative ambition to heart.

Thus, there were many elements in the material from Hermods that aimed to boost students' self-importance, but simultaneously the students were constantly reminded of the necessity of hard work and discipline ([Hermods Reklamteknik promotional brochure, 1937](#), Letter 17, pp. 1–2 and Letter 19, p. 20; [Hermods Reklamteknik Prospekt, 1937](#), pp. 12–15; see also [NKI Grundläggande reklamkurs, 1944](#), Letter 8, pp. 11–12). In addition, as we will discuss more below, the kind of self-importance that was inscribed into the advertising technician's persona was always framed as part of a modest, middle-class discourse without any extravagant elements.

### **Bounded originality: a template-based persona**

Big words aside, the courses provided many rules that the advertising technician was expected to observe. Templates and checklists were common, intended both for carrying out the advertising work itself and for the more general crafting of the right persona ([Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937](#), Letter 1; Letter 19; Letter 13, pp. 20–21; see also [NKI Grundläggande reklamkurs, 1944](#), Letter 1). Students were guided into being original, albeit according to templates and certain rules. In this sense, the advertising technician would come to embody the essence of mass-consumption society: becoming unique in the most typical way.

The values of adventure and nonconformity that apparently lay behind the success of advertising men, which were acknowledged already at the time, were held within strict boundaries in the correspondence courses. Admittedly, advertising for Hermods' course ([Hermods Reklamteknik promotional brochure, 1937](#), p. 3) stated that the work in the field was particularly suitable for people who were imaginative, receptive to modernity and had the capacity to create something new. It was important to realize that as an advertising technician, it was not possible to simply walk in the footsteps of others; one had to be a pioneer ([Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937](#), letter 19, p.20). Nevertheless, what the courses actually taught future advertising technicians, was to stay on the safe side. Imagination was a good thing, but it was not possible to simply "let loose" when trying to come up with ideas for an advertisement. Reason must always be there to steer one's imagination in the direction of a feasible solution ([Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937](#), Letter 12, p. 2). Good ideas did

not come easy and were often the result of hard work, resourceful borrowing and constant alertness. An advertising technician should always keep his ears and eyes open and should have a notebook at hand at all times to write down any ideas that come to mind.

The advertising technicians were very different from the “consumer engineers” of the mid-twentieth century described in previous research (Logemann, 2019; Logemann *et al.*, 2019). If the consumer engineers were *innovators* in developing new tools in market research, design and consumer psychology, the advertising technicians were the *workforce* that was expected to use and manage these tools, similar to how technically skilled workers learned to manage the machines in a factory. In aggregate, the content of the correspondence courses illustrates what we call bounded originality: students were encouraged to think independently and be original, but these imperatives were encircled by various reservations.

A similar line of thinking was present in how students were taught to create and compose actual advertisements. Below is an example from the NKI course in advertising in 1935 of how an appealing advertisement – in this case for bathing suits – could be composed (Figure 2). Using examples such as the bathing suit ad, the course pedagogically described how an advertisement could be created, from the facts of the product and suitable copy to layout and headline. Sketches of advertisements were frequently used in the material and were often accompanied by specific instructions on detailed aspects of an ad or evaluations of different components.



Source: NKI Reklam (1935, Letter 10, p. 19), Ephemera Collection, KB

Figure 2.  
Example of a  
successful  
composition of an  
advertisement for  
bathing suits



Much advice was given in regard to achieving the right balance of uniqueness and familiarity in an advertisement; just enough originality to get the attention of potential buyers but not too much to alienate them. Humor could be used, but only moderately, as Swedes were said to be sensitive to such content. Superlatives should be avoided, as should negative emotions and a tone that was too authoritative. Above all, advertising should be positive and enjoyable (Hermods Reklamteknik, 1937, Letter 5; NKI Reklam, 1935, Letters 6 and 9). The advice regarding what characterized the most effective advertisements and how to become a successful advertising man, thus, coincided in several ways; positivity and bounded originality were watchwords in both.

In addition to templates for advertisements, timetables, spreadsheets for budgets and punch cards used for statistical calculations, larger and more technical machinery of the advertising industry was introduced in the course letters, such as equipment for printing and for photography and so-called tabulators (for punch cards). Operating these were seldom the task of the advertising technician; however, technical literacy was needed. But there were also other machines that were introduced in the course material. For example, the meticulous work of gathering, registering and sorting addresses of potential customers and sending out direct advertising and follow-up letters, was facilitated by addressing machines, letter-folding machines and envelope-sealing machines, as well as address plates and plate registers (Figure 3). Clearly, a



**Figure 3.**  
“Some technical aids  
for direct  
advertising”

**Source:** Hermods Reklamteknik (1937, Letter 16, p. 25),  
Ephemera collection, KB

personalized advertisement was aided by machines even before the information technology of the late twentieth century, but it required considerable amounts of man-hours. The methods, tools and know-how regarding these aspects of advertising work were discussed in the same manner and at the same level as the seemingly more “creative” labor of producing newspaper ads or planning an advertising campaign. The actual technical arsenal of the advertising industry presented in the Hermods course offers a hint as to the context from which the overall technified mindset derived its nourishment.

### The nuts and bolts of consumer knowledge

Above, we discussed the ideal persona that was created in, and through, the course *Reklamtechnik*, as well as how similar ideals were manifested in the teaching of how to produce actual advertisements. Unsurprisingly, the conception of the consumer formed a cornerstone of the knowledge that was packaged and transmitted in the courses from both Hermods and NKL. What we aim to show below is how this consumer knowledge, too, formed a coherent part of the creation of this cadre of skilled advertising workers that the modern industrial and consumer society needed; it was a form of applied knowledge of psychological insights about the human mind.

In addition, successful engagement with consumers required a great deal of work that was highly practical and hands-on to record and keep track of all existing and potential customers, work that could involve the kinds of technical machines mentioned above. Together, the applied psychological insights and the practical elements for collecting, ordering, storing and using these insights constituted the “nuts and bolts” of consumer knowledge, a crucial part of the work of the advertising industry.

It is well known that understanding the consumer, and both anticipating and influencing the tastes, behavior and desires of consumers, became increasingly important to advertisers and market experts from the early 1900s onward. The knowledge produced by market research was used to conceptualize the idea of the market as consisting of distinct, yet still large, groups of consumers with different characteristics and needs (see, for example, [Arnberg, 2019](#); [Schwarzkopf, 2016](#); [Smedberg, 2021](#)). Consumer knowledge implied a double possibility: it could be used to map out and understand the market and consumers, but based on such an understanding, it could also be used to influence and shape consumers’ choices ([Logemann, 2019](#), pp. 99–100). The latter aspects were often understood as the real source of power for advertising, and this is where the so-called consumer engineers and innovators of advertising became crucial. That advertising could awaken “sleeping needs”, and that human needs were “practically endless” were repeatedly pointed out to the future advertising technicians in Hermods’ course as well ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), Letter 4, p. 1; 13).

It was particularly in relation to the creation or “awakening” of needs that knowledge inspired by psychology became important, and Hermods’ course referred particularly to the psychological discipline called psychotechnology. This had started being used in the USA in the 1910s for, among other things, the screening of job seekers and to fit people with the right mental skills into different occupations. It was a form of experimental psychology in which laboratories and rigid scientific methods were introduced in the study of the human mind ([Blatter, 2015](#); [Carpintero and Herrero, 2002](#)). The topic of psychotechnology was allotted not one but two course letters of its own in Hermods’ course. Clearly, the promise of uncovering individual traits was attractive knowledge for advertisers.

Hermods’ course material in the 1930s stated that, unlike the production of goods – whereby material could be forcibly shaped and transformed into, for example, a car – the production of demand had to respect the consumers’ free will. Advertising was about exercising mass

influence over people so that they could make independent decisions. Thus, the advertising technician had to have enough knowledge of humans' emotional life and the reasons for their desires and acts of will to understand what it was that would lead consumers to make a particular purchasing decision ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), Letter 4, p. 1).

What dictated human behavior, in general, were elementary driving forces, for example, "the motivation to live", "hunger and thirst", "sexual desire" and "love for one's offspring". However, through their experience and studies, "civilized people" had learned to make choices between different actions, and thus, curb their driving forces ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), Letter 4, pp. 4–5; see also [NKI Reklam, 1935](#), Letter 6, pp. 8–16 for similar reasoning).

In addition, the course made a distinction between actions based on reason and those based on emotions. Female consumers were often used as an example of a consumer category who made choices based on emotions, and the descriptions of women in the course material were based on presumptions about their behavior and more or less unconscious desires. When advertising women's clothes, it was "undisputable" that elegance and a modern look were the most common buying motives, rather than quality and sustainability, which would have been more rational ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), letter 3, p. 9; cf. [Arnberg, 2018](#); [Husz, 2004](#)). Nevertheless, the course stated that most people – both men and women – generally made choices based on irrational motives, even though few would admit it. Most consumers had the desire to show off their respectability and paid a great deal of attention to what others thought of them. Particularly, people had a tendency to rationalize their actions in hindsight ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), Letter 4, pp. 5–6). One piece of advice was to mix rational and irrational buying motives, which all appealed to elementary driving forces. This way, the consumer would be "helped" to rationalize even an irrational buying motive.

We can discern an ambiguity in the depiction of consumers in the course material from Hermods. On the one hand, it was stated that "you should not underestimate the intelligence of your customers". On the other, the material insinuated that most people were relatively unintelligent, lacking the capacity to imagine and invoke within themselves an image of the usefulness or joy of a particular product based on facts presented to them ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), letter 4, p. 9). It was, therefore, important to pedagogically lead the consumer into the right associations. The course stated that ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), Letter 19, p. 13):

It has been said that among the larger public – to which everyone belongs, but which no one will admit – the average level of intelligence is not above that of a normal 12-year-old child. This opinion might be exaggerated, but it is certain that when advertising for general consumer goods it is best to use expressions that are so simple and clear that even a child can understand what you want to say.

Thus, both Hermods' and NKI's courses painted a picture of consumers as being relatively unsophisticated and easy to influence and manipulate, but they also acknowledged the difficulty of catching people's attention. The general advice concerning how to design advertisements for the masses revolved around simplicity and a kind of harmless pleasantness. In fact, the course from NKI stated that an advertisement should be "as enjoyable and easily absorbable as possible" in both format and content ([NKI Reklam, 1935](#), Letter 7, p. 1). Hermods concluded that "you must avoid anything that feels uncomfortable". For example, advertising for a detergent should never invoke negative thoughts about dirt or untidiness in the potential buyer [housewife] but should talk about how clean everything will be ([Hermods Reklamtechnik, 1937](#), Letter 5, p. 15). Again, the school itself followed this principle and advertised the course *Reklamtechnik* in the same vein: "Every course letter is just like a pleasant advertising brochure" ([Hermods Reklamtechnik Prospekt, 1937](#), p. 14).

We recognize the importance of invoking positive and harmless feelings from the discussion above regarding the general advice for how to practice advertising successfully

---

and what kind of persona the course material crafted. The conception of the consumer and the formation of knowledge in the course, along with the persona of the advertising technician, can be seen as parts of a whole, a worldview of advertising in its entirety. This worldview was not visionary or particularly innovative but was based on the same ideas of the mass-consumption society it was serving; an illusion of originality and uniqueness shared with thousands of others. The advertising envisioned in the courses was a kind of “utility advertising” – the kind that had to fill the pages and other outlets of mass media every day – and it was the advertising technicians’ job to produce it.

### Operators of the advertising machinery: conclusion and discussion

In this article, we highlight and analyze what we call the mundane technification of advertising knowledge. We point out that this process involved the crafting of a new type of professional persona: the advertising technician, a figure that we describe by proposing two key notions, *bounded originality* and *template-based persona*. While previous advertising historical research has tended to focus on scientification and on elites in the advertising industry, we point to technification as an equally important development in the early and mid-twentieth century. We do that by analyzing the extensive and hands-on educational material from correspondence schools that offered education to thousands of more ordinary and low-profile advertising professionals. Although the two processes were clearly intertwined and interdependent, technification, in contrast to scientification, was a means to lower the level of sophistication and make advertising knowledge more mundane and accessible to a broad base of potential students and future workforce in the advertising industry. Students were trained to think within a delimited frame of what was reasonable and efficient. In this sense, the introduction of the words *teknik* and *technicians* was a means to simplify and transfer the advanced “elite” and “scientific” knowledge to the level of the mundane and every day. Technification made knowledge applicable and transformed it into a range of tools that could be mastered by ordinary men (and women).

We also propose that the technification in relation to advertising was an attempt to solve the problems arising from the dualisms inherent in advertising, for example, the problem of art versus science or of commercialism versus idealism. Contrary to the innovative solutions developed by advertising pioneers discussed in previous research (for example, in [Logemann, 2019](#); [McFall, 2004](#)), the solution in the correspondence courses was to steer students into becoming middling men who could be naturally positioned between and be able to traverse contradictions, but always in a down-to-earth manner.

Bounded originality as an ideal for advertising practitioners is a novel concept in research on advertising history, which has been preoccupied with famous ad men and creative innovators. However, the broader educational effort that we analyze here implies that a large group of advertising practitioners was needed to carry out the actual work of advertising on the market. The students were educated to embrace their future professional roles according to carefully set rules and templates. The template-based persona that was promoted is very far from the eccentric personalities described in much previous research. Our identification and subsequent conceptualization of these traits is also a contribution to the broader research field concerned with social class and identities, particularly as we focus on a field in society that has so clearly become a symbol of modernity and mass consumption while simultaneously harboring notions related to more conventional salesmanship and commerce.

In thinking of the advertising knowledge as well as the advertising technicians in terms of market devices, we draw attention to agency. We argue that the technified knowledge itself, as well as the template-based persona of the new advertising professionals, shaped the advertising market at this point in time. This claim is based on the fact that these educational

outlets, at least in the Swedish case, trained so many students. We know that the growing mass consumer economy demanded a continuous production of advertising. However, much of this advertising was not costly and groundbreaking campaigns but rather the kind of everyday utility that filled the pages of newspapers and magazines by the thousands.

Our findings give rise to a few questions. Why was it so important to inculcate the attributes of modesty, discipline and bounded originality? These attributes, in hindsight, do not come across as obvious ingredients for fostering a creative cadre. In the 1930s and 1940s, despite its newfound self-confidence, the advertising industry still struggled with public suspicion and a bad reputation. It was most likely crucial to the industry's credibility and future success to show that the field could weed out dubious elements; hence, the ideal of diligence and impeccable behavior. No one should be able to blame advertising technicians for dishonesty or unsound behavior, and the ambition to foster the correct attributes seems to have come at the expense of a more innovative, bold approach to advertising.

Furthermore, we can ask to what extent the findings of this article are unique to the Swedish experience. Thanks to the importance and relatively high prestige of correspondence schools in Sweden, an extensive body of uniquely detailed educational material has been produced in printed form and is therefore accessible to historians. This material offers a window into the broad knowledge base and everyday practices of the field in the 1930s and 1940s. While this specific material is clearly entangled in the Swedish context, it also builds on international experiences; thus, it seems likely that similar knowledge and competencies were cultivated in other countries as well. However, to be certain, more research is needed precisely on the history of the nonelite level of advertising practitioners in other countries.

#### Note

1. For the sake of simplicity, we refer to the year 1937 as the year when Hermod's course *Reklamteknik* was offered for the first time, even though the last part of the course was not offered until 1938.

#### References

- Affärssekonomi (1937), "Kontrollen av annonsresultaten hos hermods", no 4.
- Akselson, J. (1942), "Varför jag studerat reklamteknik hos hermods", *Korrespondens*, September.
- Arnberg, K. (2018), "Beyond Mrs consumer: competing femininities in swedish advertising trade publications, 1900–1939", *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, Vol. 66 No. 2, pp. 153–169, doi: [10.1080/03585522.2018.1467340](https://doi.org/10.1080/03585522.2018.1467340).
- Arnberg, K. (2019), "Selling the consumer: the marketing of advertising space in Sweden, ca. 1880–1939", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 142–164, doi: [10.1108/JHRM-10-2017-0062](https://doi.org/10.1108/JHRM-10-2017-0062).
- Arnberg, K. and Husz, O. (2018), "From the great department store with love: Window display and the transfer of commercial knowledge in early twentieth-century Sweden", *History of Retailing and Consumption*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 126–155, doi: [10.1080/2373518X.2018.1449922](https://doi.org/10.1080/2373518X.2018.1449922).
- Åström Rudberg, E. (2019), *Sound and loyal business. The history of the Swedish advertising cartel 1915–1965*, PhD thesis, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm.
- Åström Rudberg, E. and Kuorelahti, E. (2021), "We have a prodigious amount in common: Reappraising americanisation and circulation of knowledge in the interwar nordic advertising industry", *Business History*, November, pp. 1–23, doi: [10.1080/00076791.2021.1991915](https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2021.1991915).
- Bailey, P. (1999), "White collars, gray lives? The lower Middle class revisited", *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 38 No. 3, pp. 273–290.
- Berg, S. (1942), "Varför jag studerat reklamteknik hos hermods", *Prospekt 1942, Aktuella Hermodskurser Genom Köpmannainstitutet*, Ephemera collection, KB, p. 71.



- Berner, B. (1996), "Professional or wage worker? Engineers and economic transformation in Sweden", in Meiksins P. and Smith, C. (Eds), *Engineering Labour: Technical Workers in Comparative Perspective*, Verso, Stockholm.
- Björck, H. (2008), *Folkhemsbyggare*, Atlantis.
- Björklund, T. (1967), *Reklamen i Svensk Marknad 1920–1965: En Ekonomisk-Historisk Återblick På Marknadsförings – Och Reklamutvecklingen Efter Första Världskriget*, Bd 1 and 2, Norstedt and Söner, Stockholm.
- Blatter, J. (2015), "Screening the psychological laboratory: Hugo Münsterberg, psychotechnics, and the cinema, 1892–1916", *Science in Context*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 53-76, doi: [10.1017/S0269889714000325](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0269889714000325).
- Callon, M., Millo Y. and Muniesa F. (Eds.) (2007), *Market Devices*, Wiley-Blackwell.
- Carpintero, H. and Herrero, F. (2002), "Early applied psychology: the early days of the IAAP", *European Psychologist*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 39-52, doi: [10.1027//1016-9040.7.1.39](https://doi.org/10.1027//1016-9040.7.1.39).
- Crawford, R. (2016), "More than froth and bubble; marketing in Australia 1788-1969", in Tadajewski, M. and Jones D.G. (Eds), *The Routledge Companion to Marketing History*, Routledge, London.
- Gaddén, G. (1973), *Hermods 1898–1973: Ett Bidrag till Det Svenska Undervisningsväsendets Historia*, Hermods, Malmö.
- Gardeström, E. (2018), *Reklam och propaganda under svenskt 1930-tal*, Södertörns högskola, available at: [www.urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:sh:diva-34890](http://www.urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:sh:diva-34890)
- Gardeström, E. (2019), "Propaganda as marketing", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 478-493, doi: [10.1108/JHRM-11-2017-0071](https://doi.org/10.1108/JHRM-11-2017-0071).
- Hermods Reklamteknik (1937), "Ephemera collection, KB".
- Hermods Reklamteknik (1942), "Deltagarna har ordet. Reklamteknik", in vol. Undervisning, Korresp., Hermods, Ephemera collection, KB.
- Hermods Reklamteknik (1951), "Ephemera collection, KB".
- Hermods Reklamteknik promotional brochure (1937), "Informationsbroschyr, Ephemera collection, KB".
- Hopkins, C. (1966), *My Life in Advertising and Scientific Advertising*, McGraw-hill Education.
- Husz, O. (2004), *Drömmars värde: Varulhus och lotteri i svensk konsumtionskultur*, Gidlunds, Hedemora.
- Husz, O. and Carlsson, K. (2019), "Marketing a new society or engineering kitchens? The Swedish consumer agency and IKEA in the 1970s", in Logemann, J., Cross, G. and Köhler, I. (Eds.), *Consumer Engineering, 1920s–1970s: Marketing Between Expert Planning and Consumer Responsiveness*, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, pp. 215-243.
- Husz, O. and Forsell, H. (2020), "Hermodeleven: Den svenska idén om framgång", in Josephson P. and Runefeldt, L. (eds.) *Historiska typer*, Gidlunds, Möklinta.
- Husz, O. and Glover, N. (2019), "Between Human capital and human worth. Popular valuations of knowledge in 20th-Century Sweden", *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 44 No. 4, pp. 484-509, doi: [10.1080/03468755.2019.1578687](https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2019.1578687).
- Husz, O. and Larsson Heidenblad, D. (2021), "The Making of everyman's capitalism in Sweden: Micro-Infrastructures, unlearning, and moral boundary work", *Enterprise and Society*, pp. 1-30, doi: [10.1017/eso.2021.41](https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2021.41).
- IHR (1953–1954), *Redogörelse och Katalog*, Stockholm, Ephemera Collection, KB.
- Kirstein, H. (1950), *Reklamen som Yrke*, Svenska Reklamförbundet, Stockholm.
- Korrespondens (1939a), "456 Innehållsladdade sidor med 242 illustrationer", advertisement, February.
- Korrespondens (1939b), "Apropå reklamteknik", June, p. 138.
- Korrespondens (1943), "Skapa själv er framgång", advertisement, January.
- Korrespondens (1944), "Skapa själv er framgång", advertisement, February.

- Kreshel, P. (1990), "John B. Watson at J. Walter thompson: the legitimization of 'science' in advertising", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 49-59, doi: [10.1080/00913367.1990.10673187](https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673187).
- Köhler, I. and Logemann, J. (2016), "Towards marketing management: German marketing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries", in Tadajewski, M. and Jones D.G. (Eds), *The Routledge Companion to Marketing History*, Routledge, London.
- Leion, O. (1947), "Varför jag studerat reklamteknik hos hermods", *Korrespondens*, Vol. 46, p. 9.
- Leiss, W., Kline, S., Jhally, S., Botterill, J. and Asquith, K. (2018), *Social Communication in Advertising*, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Logemann, J. (2019), *Engineered to Sell: European Emigrés and the Making of Consumer Capitalism*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Logemann, J., Cross, G. and Köhler, I. (2019), *Consumer Engineering, 1920s–1970s: Marketing Between Expert Planning and Consumer Responsiveness*, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.
- McCarraher, E. (2019), *The Enchantments of Mammon: How Capitalism Became the Religion of Modernity*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- McFall, L. (2004), *Advertising. a Cultural Economy*, SAGE, London.
- McFall, L. (2015), *Devising Consumption: Cultural Economies of Insurance, Credit and Spending*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon.
- Marchand, R. (1985), *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940*, Univ. of CA Press, Berkeley.
- Marshall, P.D. and Barbour, K. (2015), "Making intellectual room for persona studies: a new consciousness and a shifted perspective", *Persona Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 1, doi: [10.21153/ps2015vollno1art464](https://doi.org/10.21153/ps2015vollno1art464).
- Marx, L. (2010), "Technology: the emergence of a hazardous concept", *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 51 No. 3, pp. 561-577.
- Muniesa, F., Millo, Y. and Callon, M. (2007), "An introduction to market devices", *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 55 No. 2, pp. 1-12, doi: [10.1111/j.1467-954X.2007.00727.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2007.00727.x).
- Niskanen, K. and Barany, M. J. (Eds) (2021), *Gender, Embodiment, and the History of the Scholarly Persona: Incarnations and Contestations*, Palgrave Macmillan.
- NKI Grundläggande Reklamkurs (1944), "Stockholm, Ephemera collection, KB".
- NKI Reklam (1935), "Stockholm, Ephemera collection, KB".
- Norberg, R. (1939), "Reklamundervisningen", *Svensk Reklam*, Svenska Reklamförbundet.
- Nordisk familjebok (1919), "Uggleupplagan", "teknik", pp. 668–669; "teknologi", p. 698, [www.runeberg.org/nf/](http://www.runeberg.org/nf/)
- O'Hagan, L.A. (Ed) (2020), *Rebellious Writing: Contesting Marginalisation in Edwardian Britain*, Peter Lang.
- Packard, V. (1957), *The Hidden Persuaders*, David McKay, New York, NY.
- Popp, A. (2020), "Histories of business and the everyday", *Enterprise and Society*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 622-637.
- Påhlman, G.A. (1939), "Varför jag studerat reklamteknik hos Hermods", *Korrespondens*, May, p. 112.
- Reklamtekniska skolan (1942), "Informationsbroschyr, Ephemera collection, KB".
- Rosenberg, G. (Ed) (1937), *4:e nordiska Reklamkongressens Handlingar*, Nordstedt, Stockholm.
- Ross, B. and Richards, J.I. (2008), *A Century of Advertising Education*, American Academy of Advertising.
- Savage, M. (2010), *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Schatzberg, E. (2012), "From art to applied science", *Isis; an International Review Devoted to the History of Science and Its Cultural Influences*, Vol. 103 No. 3, pp. 555-563.

- 
- Schultze, Q.J. (1982), "An honorable place: the quest for professional advertising education, 1900–1917", *The Business History Review*, Vol. 56 No. 1, pp. 16–32, doi: [10.2307/3114973](https://doi.org/10.2307/3114973).
- Schwarzkopf, S. (2008), "Creativity, capital and tacit knowledge", *Journal of Cultural Economy*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 181–197, doi: [10.1080/17530350802243594](https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350802243594).
- Schwarzkopf, S. (2011), "The subsiding sizzle of advertising history", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 3 No. 4, pp. 528–548, doi: [10.1108/17557501111183653](https://doi.org/10.1108/17557501111183653).
- Schwarzkopf, S. (2016), "In search of the consumer: the history of market research from 1890 to 1960", in Tadajewski, M. and Jones D.G. (Eds), *The Routledge Companion to Marketing History*, Routledge, London.
- Smedberg, C.P. (2021), "En marknad för klass: Marknads- och opinionsundersökningar som skillnadsmaskiner 1930–1960", *Lychnos*, pp. 91–113.
- SOU 1962:16 (1962), *Korrespondensundervisningen inom Skolväsendet*, Stockholm.
- Stankey, M.J. (1990), "Ethics, professionalism, and advertising", in Hovland R. and Wilcox G.B. (Eds), *Advertising in Society. Classic and Contemporary Readings on Advertising's Role in Society*, NTC Business Books.
- Svenska Gallupinstitutet (1944), "Korrespondensinstitutet. En gallupanalys av deras rekrytering och konkurrenskraft", Digitized at: [www.snd.gu.se/sv/gallup](http://www.snd.gu.se/sv/gallup) (G022).
- Tadajewski, M. (2011), "Correspondence sales education in the early twentieth century: the case of the Sheldon school (1902–39)", *Business History*, Vol. 53 No. 7, pp. 1130–1151, doi: [10.1080/00076791.2011.590935](https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2011.590935).
- Tistedt, P. (2019), "Reklam för demokrati? Reklamens politik i mellankrigstidens sverige", *Scandia*, Vol. 85 No. 1, pp. 65–91.
- Todd, S. (2014), "Class, experience and Britain's twentieth century", *Social History*, Vol. 39 No. 4, pp. 489–508.
- Torell, U. and Lee, J. (2010), "Talande paket: butiksrum, förpackningar och försäljningens kommunikativa former", in Torell, U., Qvarsell, R. and Lee J (Eds), *Burkar, Påsar Och Paket: förpackningarnas Historia i Vardagens Konsumtionskulturer*, Nordiska Museets Förlag, Stockholm.
- Witkowski, T.H. (2010), "The marketing discipline comes of age, 1934–1936", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 2 No. 4, pp. 370–396, doi: [10.1108/17557501011092457](https://doi.org/10.1108/17557501011092457).

### About the authors

Elin Åström Rudberg is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Economic History and International Relations at Stockholm University. She has published on advertising history and history of markets, competition policy, and cartels. Contact information: Department of Economic History and International Relations, Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm, Sweden. Elin Åström Rudberg is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: [elin.astromrudberg@ekohist.su.se](mailto:elin.astromrudberg@ekohist.su.se)

Orsi Husz is a Professor at the Department of History of Science and Ideas at Uppsala University. She has published works in the intersection of cultural and economic history, such as history of consumer culture, markets of education and everyday finance. Contact: Department of History of Science and Ideas, Uppsala University, Box 629, 751 26 Uppsala, Sweden.