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**NEED FOR CLOSURE AND MEDIA USE**

**AND PREFERENCE OF YOUNGSTERS**

IRIS VERMEIR

MAGGIE GEUENS

Maggie.Geuens@vlerick.be

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IRIS VERMEIR

Ghent University

MAGGIE GEUENS

Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School

**Contact:**

Maggie Geuens

Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School

Tel: +32 09 210 98 99

Fax: +32 09 210 97 00

Email: [Maggie.Geuens@vlerick.be](mailto:Maggie.Geuens@vlerick.be)

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the explanatory power of an individual difference variable, Need for Closure (NFCL) for media use and preferences for specific media, genres and channels. Results of the study show that high and low NFCL youngsters do not differ in the amount of time spent on cognitive undemanding media (TV, radio, music). However, high (versus low) NFCL youngsters engage less in cognitive effortful activities like reading newspapers and surfing the Internet. Furthermore, high and low NFCL youngsters have a preference for a similar scope of genres and channels. More specifically, high NFCL youngsters prefer well-respected, conventional and less cognitive complex genres and channels. Low NFCL youngsters prefer more alternative, non-conformists, critical and intellectually stimulating genres and channels. Results are discussed and practical implications are provided.

Keywords: Media use, media preferences, individual differences, motivation

## INTRODUCTION

Current media-use statistics show the sheer size of media consumption of young people all over the world. Statistics show that Flemish and American youngsters spend an average of 2 hours and 20 minutes watching television each day (Glorieux & Vandeweyer, 2002; Woodard, 2000), the largest portion (59%) of their leisure time (cfr. Wright et al., 2001). In addition, youngsters read newspapers and magazines about 29 (Flemish) to 50 (American) minutes daily, listen to music 6 (Flemish) to 100 (American) minutes a day and surf the internet 5 (Flemish) to 140 (American) minutes daily (Harris Interactive and Teenage research Unlimited, 2003; Glorieux & Vandeweyer, 2002). Although some major international differences occur in the amount of time dedicated to specific media, the engagement in media consumption among youngsters is very high, regardless of the country one lives in.

In addition to various media, youngsters can choose from a variety of channels and program types for their entertainment; a choice that is much welcomed since media and program preferences largely differ amongst individuals (cfr. McLuhan, 1964). Unfortunately, up to now, research on this topic is scarce leaving individual differences in existing preferences for specific media, channels and program types largely unexplained. This is surprising since the question which viewers watch which television programs is central to the study of television and other media for both practical and theoretical reasons (Webster & Washklog, 1983). From a practical point of view, matching the message style to the personality style of the recipient increases the effectiveness of the message and the evaluation of offered products. Information about the specific media used could aid media planning, while psychographic descriptions can be useful in developing message content. From a theoretical point of view, academics that wish to understand the motivation for and effects of media use should especially look at the unattended relations between channels, programs and viewers in addition to the preference for specific media.

With this research, the purpose was to contribute to closing the above-mentioned research gap, shedding some light on a psychological characteristic that could determine or explain media use and preferences. Mass customization criteria like demographics are nowadays especially used to communicate with their customers (Pine, 1993), while the

personality style of the recipient could communicate more in-depth information about a person (e.g; what a person's motives or goal-directed behaviors are, cfr. Winters et al., 1998) and give more targeted (versus general) information. More specifically, the objective of this study is to investigate the explanatory power of an individual difference variable, Need for Closure, for media, program and music genre and channel preferences. The need to obtain closure (NFCL) is related to the reluctance of ample cognitive processing and the approval of conservative, traditional ideas. Since different media and different genres and channels demand a different cognitive capacity and differ in traditionalism of ideas, NFCL might be related to the preference for specific media, genres and channels. First, a review on the motivation for media usage and the preference for specific media, genres and channels will be presented. Next, the results of a study on the relation between NFCL and the preference of specific media, genres and channels is described.

## **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MEDIA USE AND PREFERENCES**

### **Motivations for Media Usage: From Television to Internet**

Previous research points out that people use different media for satisfying different motivations: escape from demands from reality and negative feelings (Kubey, 1986), dislike of thinking (Henning & Vorderer, 2001), relieve tension, distract oneself from worries, to pass time and to relieve boredom (Zillmann & Gan, 1997) or as a force of attraction. More importantly, both television viewing and listening to the radio have unarguably a cognitive less demanding nature compared to other leisure activities like reading. In addition, watching television and listening to the radio are established daily activities that can easily be combined with other activities, while reading and surfing the internet are not as routine and require more sole attention. Similarly, Spencer, Seydlitz, Laska & Triche (1992) argue that individuals use an heuristic information processing mode (i.e. cognitive less demanding) for TV, while systematic processing (i.e. cognitive more demanding) is used when reading newspapers.

Reading is a traditional form of cognitive leisure experience that is assumed to be important to individual development (Guthrie & Seifert, 1984). Reading involves the use of a variety of print contents to serve different purposes, which are assumed to result in

distinct outcomes for individuals, including improved literacy proficiency. A relatively new category of leisure time is that of surfing the Internet. Internet use is a form of cognitive demanding leisure activity that can be used to fill time or to avoid doing something that is seen to be less immediately rewarding (Hills & Argyle, 2003).

### **Use of and Preference for Specific Media**

Media use patterns are considered to be relatively stable and distinctive ways of interacting with the media, are inherent within individuals and may or may not change over a lifetime (McLeod & McDonald, 1985). A literature review showed a relationship between personality traits and the use of specific media. Extraversion, Openness, Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness coincided with a lower mass media use in general and a lower TV use in particular (Persegani et al., 2002; Finn, 1997). Pleasure reading was positively related to Openness and Introversion (Finn, 1997). Henning & Vorderer (2001) reported a negative effect of Need for Cognition on the viewing amount, while commonly assumed predictors of escapist television use (e.g. life satisfaction, loneliness, strain and external belief of control) were nonsignificant. The less they enjoy thinking, the more both female and male students watch television, because TV is a convenient tool to avoid thinking activity. In addition, Internet use is associated with individual differences in Extraversion, Neuroticism (Hamburger & Ben-Artzi, 2000) and Psychoticism (Hills & Argyle, 2003).

Different media are likely to have dominant and relatively stable patterns of presentation of issues (Sotirovic, 2001). For example, television news focuses more on events and persons, while contextually rich thematic frames predominate in newspaper stories (Iyengar, 1991). Individual differences exist in preferences for different media according to personality. For example, Hornik & Schlinger (1981) found that more socially, intellectually and physically active individuals read magazines, while more passive people were heavy TV viewers.

## **Preferences for Specific Channels and Genres**

Previous studies have disregarded the content of television programs although people actively seek out and consume media content to gratify their needs and fill their various interests. Nowadays, viewers can easily select the content they prefer through the diversity of existing channels and programs. Different channels and genres within a medium have different dominant patterns of representation in response to specific audience expectations (e.g. individual behaviors in entertainment programs versus complex social situations in documentaries; focus on ideas and arguments in current affair programs and on concrete events and emotional reactions in soaps).

Some researchers have investigated the relationship between personality traits and preferences for specific genres. Psychoticism, Neuroticism, Introversion and Alienation are associated with a higher preference for TV violent programs (e.g. Slater, 2003). Schwartz and Fouts (2003) found that adolescents prefer listening to music that reflects specific personalities and the developmental issues with which they are dealing. Finally, Rentfrow & Gosling (2003) found significant correlations between music preferences and the Big Five, Interpersonal and Social Dominance, Blirtatiousness, Self-Esteem and Depression. In the next section, an individual characteristic –Need for Closure- that is believed to help explain media use/preference and especially genre and channel preferences is discussed.

## **NEED FOR CLOSURE**

The dimension Need for Closure (NFCL) reflects the desire for clear, definite, or unambiguous knowledge that will guide perception and action, as opposed to the undesirable alternative of ambiguity and confusion (Kruglanski, 1990). A high NFCL is a motivation to draw a conclusion quickly and terminate cognitive processing related to the issue (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). High NFCL individuals neglect new, alternative information and views different from their own because high accessible structures (like pre-existing knowledge structures or stereotypes) afford immediate closure (Ford & Kruglanski, 1995). For example, a high NFCL consumer examines one or more magazines in a store, picks one and sticks to this decision, even if other interesting

magazines are offered. Low NFCL individuals are sensitive to new, alternative information and competing, divergent views when closure is “in danger” of forming. For example, a low NFCL individual keeps on looking for new positive or negative information about magazines or keeps on considering new magazines, before making the purchase decision. The main idea behind the NFCL theory is that individuals with a high NFCL level (high NFCL individuals) experience a negative feeling when closure is threatened or undermined and a positive feeling is evoked when closure is attained or facilitated. The motivation to avoid these negative feelings prompts activities aimed at the acquisition of closure and consequently biases the individual's choices and preferences toward closure-bound pursuits (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Individuals exhibit stable personal differences in the degree to which they value closure (high versus low NFCL) (Houghton & Grewal, 2000).

NFCL and Need for Cognition (NFC) have some communalities like the decreased amount of cognitive processing of both high NFCL and low NFC individuals. However, high (versus low) NFCL consumers decrease cognitive activities to help satisfy their closure, while low NFC individuals consider the low cognitive activity as a desired end-state. For other differences between NFCL and NFC the reader is referred to Vermeir (2003) and Klein and Webster (2000).

Recently, Need for Closure has received considerable emphasis in the social cognition literature (e.g. Vermeir, Van Kenhove & Hendrickx, 2002; Klein & Webster, 2000; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Ford & Kruglanski, 1995). Kruglanski and his associates conducted several experimental studies demonstrating the effect of the Need for Closure on the way people seek and elaborate information prior to forming various judgments or making decisions.

## **MEDIA PREFERENCES AND NEED FOR CLOSURE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND HYPOTHESES**

According to the uses and gratifications approach (Larson, 1995), people make different media choices depending on personal characteristics. People gravitate to particular kinds of media because they have particular personality characteristics, issues

and/or needs that are either reflected in the media they choose or that the medium satisfies. In this research, the Need for Closure is introduced as an individual characteristic that can help explain and predict media choices. The amount of use and preference of different specific media (TV, Radio, Newspapers, Magazines, Music and the Internet) is considered. In addition, the content orientation or the preference for different channels and genres is examined.

High NFCL individuals desire immediate closure. In addition, they long for an enduring closure that provides them with a clear-cut, non-ambiguous answer to a problem (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). TV viewing and listening to the radio or music could help high NFCL individuals to reach immediate closure because TV, radio and music are always available at home (and thus immediately present when desired), but more importantly, watching TV/listening to the radio or music decreases their level of thinking. It requires few cognitive resources and can easily help to pass time quickly without unexpected consequences. Similarly, Henning and Vorderer (2001) reported a negative effect of Need for Cognition on TV viewing amount indicating the minimal cognitive load of TV. In addition, the predictability of TV, radio and music (e.g. fixed timetables, familiar programs, CD's) and linearity of program structures (e.g. newscasts progress from top stories to sports and weather- Eveland, 2003) satisfies the high NFCL individuals' need for consistent knowledge across situations and provides them with a clear-cut, non-ambiguous answer to the problem of passing time at home. Low NFCL individuals could be less compelled to watch TV to pass their leisure time because they are more open to less immediate gratifying and more unpredictable and cognitive stimulating activities.

In addition, low NFCL individuals probably engage more in cognitive activities like reading as they impel more cognitive resources. Furthermore, reading content is unpredictable, variable and sometimes unstructured and not organized (Eveland, 2003), opposing the preference for order, structure and predictability displayed by high NFCL individuals. Moreover, high NFCL individuals ignore alternative views that are easily confronted in newspapers or magazines (cfr. negative relation pleasure reading-openness, Finn, 1997), while low NFCL individuals embrace defiant, provocative views. Finally, the heuristic-systematic information-processing mode associated with TV versus reading

(Spencer et al., 1992) also predicts the preference for TV displayed by high NFCL individuals as they especially use heuristic thoughts and processing and the preference for reading associated with low NFCL as the latter process messages more elaborately due to a relatively high motivation to engage in effortful processing. (Klein & Webster, 2000).

Surfing the Internet is definitely an unstructured, relatively new leisure activity. The unpredictability and the amount of cognitive resources and time it requires to gather information, might make it an unattractive medium for high NFCL individuals, while low NFCL individuals probably welcome this medium and its characteristics. In addition, the relative novelty of the Internet may well result in less (versus more) surfing time for high NFCL (versus low) individuals as they ignore (versus embrace) new and alternative leisure possibilities.

Based on the foregoing, the following hypotheses are posited:

H1. High (versus low) NFCL individuals watch more TV, listen more to the radio and to music.

H2. High (versus low) NFCL individuals read less magazines or newspapers and spend less time surfing the Internet

Nowadays, media users can choose from a vast amount of channels and genres to entertain themselves. It is argued that individuals have a preference for types of channels, newspapers, magazines and genres that are similar in content and structure. This preference for a given content or presentation mode can be attributed to the match between individuals' characteristics or aspirations and the themes in particular genres or channels (cfr. Schwartz & Fouts, 2003). According to Sotirovic (2001), different genres and broadcast and print media exhibit similar patterns of media influence, which suggests that it is the structure and focus of media presentation that influence the viewers' perceptions. It could be argued that youngsters who have a similar NFCL could display a preference for similar scopes across media because they value the same kind of structures and interaction (presentation) manners, resulting in following hypothesis:

H3. High and low NFCL youngsters have a preference for similar scopes of channels and genres across media

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

### Measures

Media use was measured in different ways for specific media. The respondents had to indicate the amount of hours they spend watching TV, listening to the radio and to music. A distinction was made between weekend and weekdays because the sample consisted predominantly of school going or working youngsters who obviously have less leisure time during the week. The respondents were asked how many times per week they read newspapers (never, less than once a week, once a week, a few times a week, daily) and to what extent they read magazines (never, less than once a month, once a month, twice a month, almost every week, every week). Next, the respondents indicated if they use the Internet, how regularly they use the Internet (less than once a month, between one and three times a month, between one and two times a week, between three and five times a week, between six and seven times a week, more than once a day) and how much time they spend each time they surf the Internet (less than 15 minutes, between 15 and 30 minutes, between 30 and sixty minutes, between one and two hours, between 2 and 3 hours, more than three hours).

To measure the preference for specific media and genres a list was composed with the most important TV channels, radio stations, newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines in Flanders. The respondents had to indicate their most preferred newspaper, the extent to which they read a particular magazine and they had to order the TV channels and radio stations according to preference. More information on the different channels, stations, newspapers and magazines can be found in tables 3, 4 and 5.

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Insert Table 3, 4 and 5 about here

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Finally, a list of a variety of often-broadcasted genres (15 program genres and 21 music styles), covering the whole spectrum of possible program genres and music styles

(see tables, 3, 4 & 5) was provided. Respondents had to indicate their liking for each genre/style on a 4-point scale (1=do not like at all, 2=do not really like, 3 = like, 4=like a lot). Principal component analyses were performed to reduce the amount of variables to some common factors. The analyses resulted in 5 TV program genres (light entertainment, infotainment & human interest, fiction, provocative entertainment and sports), 6 music styles (alternative, ethnic & religious, (inter)national schlagers, pop and street music) and 7 magazine types (women's lifestyle, glossy women's lifestyle, light entertainment, alternative information and entertainment, teens, general news & science and television guides).

Different genres and channels were classified according to their target group and three inherent characteristics that are important in NFCL theory: cognitive complexity, conventionality and predictability. The latter three characteristics are supposed to be embraced by high NFCL individuals, while avoided by low NFCL individuals (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996) (see tables 3, 4 & 5). For example, a popular newspaper that addresses the men in the street and that contains less intellectually stimulating articles was categorized as “less cognitive complex”, while a financial, economical newspaper that targets higher educated businessmen was labeled “more cognitive complex”. In addition, programs were labeled as more conventional if they contained more traditional, accepted elements like soaps and game shows, while sensation programs and erotic shows are labeled unconventional (i.e. more eccentric, alternative elements). Finally, predictable plots and scenario's in soaps and game shows yielded the label “predictable”, while sensation programs are labeled less predictive because of their inherent surprises.

Concerning NFCL, a measure of individual differences in NFCL has been developed and its reliability and validity established (Klein & Webster, 2000; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). The NFCL scale discriminates people with a different dispositional NFCL (Webster & Kruglanski 1996). The validated<sup>1</sup> 25-items translation of the measure is used (Vermeir, 2003). The reliability of the scale is moderate ( $\alpha = .66$ ). Following previous research, high and low NFCL respondents were categorized using median split

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<sup>1</sup> Validation of the scale is determined by reliability, interim homogeneity, confirmatory factor, within-method convergent validity, composite reliability, discriminant validity and nomological validity analyses.

(Chiu et al., 2000). Respondents categorized as high ( $M=4.34$ ,  $SD=.37$ ) and low ( $M=3.29$ ,  $SD=.45$ ) NFCL significantly differ in their level of closure ( $t[1292]= -45.75$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

### **Respondents and Procedure**

Data were collected using street interviews. Youngsters were at random addressed in a shopping mall or in a shopping street during two weeks. Youngsters were motivated to participate in the survey and instructions were given to fill in the questionnaire truthfully. The questionnaire was self-administered and completely anonymous. It took respondents on average 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Respondents received a soft drink as a reward for participation. The sample consisted of 1350 respondents, about evenly split amongst males and females (51.5% were women, 48.5% were men). The age of the respondents ranged from 15 to 24 years, with a mean of 18.67 ( $SD=2.82$ ).

## **RESULTS**

Multivariate analysis of variance with Need for Closure as the independent variable and all interval-scaled variables (TV, radio and music consumption, liking of genres of TV programs, liking of types of magazines, liking of music types and liking of newspaper types) as dependent variables, showed a significant main effect of NFCL ( $F[33, 1158]= 3.12$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2=.078$ ). Univariate statistics showed a significant difference for the amount of radio listening on weekend days ( $F[1, 1349]= 3.89$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $\eta^2=.003$ ). High NFCL respondents listen on average 3.83 ( $SD=3.06$ ) hours to the radio on weekends, while low NFCL respondents listen 3.50 ( $SD=2.84$ ) hours on average (cfr. H1/radio). No other significant differences were found (H1/TV; H1/music). Next, a  $\eta^2$  square analysis was performed to explore the differences in newspaper and magazine reading and Internet use for high and low NFCL respondents. Results show that significantly more low NFCL respondents read newspapers ( $\eta^2[4]= 34.33$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $\eta^2=.13$ ) (cfr. Hypothesis 2), read them on a more regular basis ( $\eta^2[4]= 3.05$ ,  $p<.05$ ;  $\eta^2=.06$ ), are more likely to use the internet ( $\eta^2[4]= 3.36$ ,  $p<.05$ ;  $\eta^2=.05$ ), use it more frequently ( $\eta^2[4]= 11.22$ ,  $p<.05$ ;  $\eta^2=.13$ ) and have a longer history with Internet surfing

( $\chi^2[4] = 8.14, p < .05; \eta^2 = .12$ ). No significant results were found for magazine reading and the duration of Internet use (H2/magazines; H2/internet use).

In addition, we investigated the influence of Need for Closure on the extent to which different types of newspapers, magazines, TV channels, radio stations, program genres and music styles are preferred (see tables 1 and 2).

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Insert Table 1 and 2 about here

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Multivariate analyses revealed that high NFCL individuals have a higher preference for light entertainment and women's lifestyle magazines and TV guides; more popular and straightforward newspapers; inter(national) schlagers, and pop music, while low NFCL individuals prefer fiction, sports, general news, science and alternative information & entertainment magazines; intellectual, alternative and intelligible newspapers; and alternative and street music (cfr. H3).

In addition, non-parametric analyses (Mann-Whitney) and  $\chi^2$  square analyses showed that preferences for some TV channels and radio stations differs for high and low NFCL individuals. High NFCL individuals prefer more commercial TV and commercial pop/techno or family radio, while low NFCL consumers prefer intellectual, comedy/movie or regional event related TV and alternative or classical radio. In addition, low (versus high) NFCL individuals show a tendency towards a preference for the public news radio. Although in general, high and low NFCL individuals classified TV channels and radio stations similarly, some interesting differences occur. High and low NFCL individuals both classify comedy/movie and public, family as their most preferred channels, but low NFCL individuals' preferences are more distinct (i.e. relatively more low (versus high) NFCL individuals classify commercial comedy/movie channels as preferred channel). In addition, high (versus low) NFCL individuals categorized the commercial family channel higher, while the commercial youth and music channels are classified lower. The radio stations with commercial music (public and commercial) come first for high NFCL individuals, while low NFCL individuals rate the alternative radio station within their 3 most preferred channels.

## DISCUSSION

### Summary of Findings

Need for Closure is introduced as a potential individual characteristic that can help explain and predict individual differences in media use. No difference was found between high and low NFCL individuals concerning their use of TV, radio and music (except radio on weekdays). Probably, these leisure activities are so established and all-round available that every individual almost automatically engages in them. It is commonly known that young people spend most of their free time at home watching TV, listening to the radio and to music. Alternatively low NFCL individuals could look upon TV, radio and music as attractive media to challenge one's ideas and gathering alternative views and lines of reasoning. Possibly, a ceiling effect can be observed: low NFCL youngsters spent so many time watching TV, listening to the radio and music that it is impossible for high NFCL youngsters to exceed this.

More importantly, the non-universal cognitive activities like reading and surfing the Internet are considered. Low NFCL youngsters are more likely to read newspapers, read them more frequently, are more likely to use the Internet, surf more frequently and have a longer history with the Internet. The cognitive effort, the unpredictability and the unstructured composition of reading material and the Internet probably deter high NFCL youngsters or attract low NFCL youngsters.

To answer the question if high, respectively low NFCL youngsters have a preference for a similar type of genres and channels, specific types of programs or channels are categorized based on their characteristics (i.e. cognitive nature, conventionalism and predictability). Results showed that high NFCL individuals have a preference for similar scopes of genres and channels, more specifically -what we call-well-respected, conventional, predictable and less cognitive complex (or intellectually stimulating) channels and genres. Low NFCL youngsters prefer more alternative, non-conformist, critical, and intellectually stimulating genres and channels. More specifically, high NFCL youngsters prefer light (i.e. cognitive less complex) TV programs (e.g. soaps, game shows), as well as light, popular, conventional music (e.g. pop, Hit parade, National) and light reading (e.g. women's health, TV guides, straight-forward newspapers). In addition, they have a preference for light commercial TV and radio

channels. Possibly, high NFCL youngsters prefer cognitive less complex media because these facilitate closure. They provide quick, easy, common and unchallenged programs that help them engage in uncomplicated, convenient entertainment. Conversely, low NFCL youngsters prefer information channels and reading material (e.g. scientific magazines, intelligible, intellectual newspapers) and comedy/movie channels and fiction programs. Low NFCL youngsters probably prefer more intellectually challenging and non-conformist programs as they help provide them with alternative, complex ideas and lines of reasoning that help postponing closure. In addition, they prefer more exciting programs (e.g. sports) and event-related channels, alternative, rebellious and energetic music (e.g. hard rock, rap), alternative public radio and alternative information and entertainment magazines.

These results are consistent with NFCL research. High (versus low) NFCL individuals prefer consensual judgments (De Dreu & Koole, 1997), they avoid non-conformists, rebels, critics or opinion deviates (Dechesne, Janssen & Van Knippenberg, 2000) and choose shared traditional knowledge that is politically conservative, socially intolerant, anti-democratic, and system-justifying over knowledge that poses a challenge to the status quo (Jost et al., 1999), characteristics that can be associated with well-respected and conventional genres and channels. Conversely, low NFCL individuals embrace the alternative, unconventional and critical ideas that are provided in some genres and channels. Furthermore, high NFCL individuals prefer structured and organized environments and situations, making them more open to well-organized and predictable media and genres, while low NFCL individuals are more positive towards unpredictable and less organized information and situations (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996), explaining their preference for genres and channels that have a less predictable, structured mode of presentation. In addition, high NFCL individuals are not willing to spend much time and energy in processing large amounts of information (Houghton & Grewal, 2000); they have a generalized desire to maintain simple cognitive structures, making them less open for intellectually challenging and complex media and genres, while low NFCL are more motivated to process cognitive demanding or complex information. Hence the latter's preference for complex and intellectually stimulating genres and channels.

The results confirm some previous findings. For example, McIlwraith (1985) found a relation between fantasy style and preferred media content rather than an association with a particular medium (movies, books and music). In addition, the preference for heavy music is related to being more risk-taking or sensation-seeking (Little & Zuckerman, 1986) and being independent and anti-conformistic (Schwartz & Fouts, 2003), characteristics associated with a low NFCL. Conversely, preferences for popular and mainstream light music is associated with trying to do the right and proper thing (Schwartz & Fouts, 2003), characteristics associated with a high NFCL.

### **Practical Implications**

The results of this study have several practical implications for communication towards youngsters. Messages attuned to specific media segments (who's viewers aspire similar values, attitudes, feelings) may help parents, teachers and counselors in establishing dialogue and facilitating adolescents in dealing with normal developmental issues. In addition, advertisers could fine-tune their communication campaigns according to the specific media they use to communicate their message. NFCL can help to construct messages cut out for particular media, genres or channels. Not only do high and low NFCL consumers prefer different types and outlines of messages (e.g. clear-cut, easy, concrete to the point versus complex and abstract; Vermeir; 2003; Vermeir et al., 2002), the present research suggest that individuals with a comparable NFCL level have a preference for a similar content and modes of presentation of a message (e.g. conservative, predictable). Moreover, the choice of music as a background feature in advertising can be attuned to the specific NFCL level of the target group. In addition, advertisers now have information about which media vehicle (e.g. TV versus print media) or specific medium (e.g. specific channel) to choose if they want to reach a specific group, which is necessary to optimal position an advertising message that is attuned to a specific group. Moreover, profiling specific media vehicles toward loyal users could trigger an enhanced consumption. In sum, advertisers can reach both high and low NFCL consumers because they have knowledge about the content and the presentation mode their ad has to meet, and they know which media vehicle, channel or genre they have to choose to broadcast their ad.

## **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

Some limitations could be noticed. First of all, media attention<sup>2</sup> was not incorporated in this study; media exposure was exclusively investigated although Chaffee and Schleuder (1986) suggest that both should be measured when investigating media use. Possibly, high and low NFCL youngsters may watch the same amount of television (e.g. because of its established nature), but they could attend to it differently in addition to watching different shows. Future research could investigate if Need for Closure influences the amount of attention youngsters give to particular media, and the concurrent behaviors that they can engage in.

Other individual characteristics like Need for Cognition are not incorporated. The purpose was to determine the influence of NFCL on media use and preferences without other possible determinants of media choices. However, this limitation prevents us from establishing how vast the influence of NFCL on media choice is.

In addition, all program types were offered, for example, no distinction was made between humorous series and suspense series. Instead of heaping them together, a separation could be made to examine the relation between NFCL and program content more specifically. For example, Saroglou and Scariot (2002) found that high NFCL was negatively related to social, self-enhancing, hostile and self-defeating humor styles in a Belgian sample. They argue that humor, in general, is based on playfulness, transgression of rules and conventions, surprise and play with meaning and therefore unattractive to high NFCL individuals. Consequently, high (versus low ) NFCL would not prefer humorous series, while high and low NFCL individuals could equally prefer other series.

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<sup>2</sup> We want to thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this to our attention.

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**TABLE 1****ANOVA results for TV Program Genres**

<i>TV Program Genre</i>	<i>Mean value</i>	<i>Mean value</i>	<i>F-Value</i>	<i>η<sup>2</sup></i>
	<i>Low NFCL</i>	<i>High NFCL</i>		
Light entertainment	1.98 (.65)	2.26 (.69)	54.054***	.041
Infotainment & human interest	2.49 (.56)	2.54 (.55)	2.059	
Fiction	3.18 (.57)	3.11 (.60)	3.939*	.003
Provocative entertainment	2.47 (.57)	2.42 (.62)	2.242	
<b>Sports</b>	2.56 (1.12)	2.4 (1.13)	5.867**	.005

\*<.05 \*\*<.01 \*\*\*<.001

entries between brackets refer to standard deviations

**TABLE 2****ANOVA results for Music Genres**

Music Genres	<i>Mean value</i>	<i>Mean value</i>	<i>F-Value</i>	$\eta^2$
	<i>Low NFCL</i>	<i>High NFCL</i>		
Alternative	1.93 (.72)	1.77 (.66)	16.637***	.013
Ethnic & Religious	1.52 (.59)	1.52 (.57)	.003	
Inter(national) schlagers	1.35 (.42)	1.43 (.46)	9.697**	.008
Techno	2.23 (.79)	2.26 (.81)	.441	
Pop	2.75 (.66)	2.86 (.65)	8.713**	.007
Street	2.10 (.73)	1.93 (.69)	17.382***	.014

\* $<.05$  \*\* $<.01$  \*\*\* $<.001$

entries between brackets refer to standard deviations

**TABLE 3****ANOVA results for types of magazines**

<i>Magazine Types</i>	<i>Mean value</i>	<i>Mean value</i>	<i>F-Value</i>	$\eta^2$
	<i>Low NFCL</i>	<i>High NFCL</i>		
Women's life style	1.95 (.97)	2.11 (1.01)	7.643**	.006
Light entertainment	1.95 (.77)	1.99 (.81)	1.209	
Alt. information & entertainment	1.99 (.87)	1.76 (.79)	24.988***	.020
Teens	1.91 (1.14)	1.99 (1.18)	1.601	
General news & science	1.71 (.78)	1.62 (.76)	3.301*	.003
TV guides	1.71 (1.08)	1.82 (1.07)	2.576*	.002
Glossy women's lifestyle	1.21 (.49)	1.24 (.61)	.872	

\* $<.05$  \*\* $<.01$  \*\*\* $<.001$ 

entries between brackets refer to standard deviations

**TABLE 4****Chi Square results for newspaper type**

<b>Newspaper Type</b> <i>(<math>\chi^2=17.541</math>, <math>df=7</math>, <math>p&lt;.05</math>)</i>	<i>Number of low NFCL</i> <i>expressing preference for:</i>	<i>Number of high NFCL</i> <i>expressing preference for:</i>
Regional	129	127
Financial & Economical	8	6
Popular, straightforward	195	235
Independent, alternative	38	25
Popular, intelligible	150	110
Intellectual, conservative	31	22

**TABLE 5****Difference in TV Channels ranking between high and low NFCL respondents**

<i>TV Channels</i>	<i>Mean rank Low NFCL</i>	<i>Mean rank High NFCL</i>	<i>(Z-value) Mann-Whitney Test</i>
Commercial comedy/movie	595.03	639.08	-2.238**
Public, family	623.67	608.32	-.769
Commercial, youth	607.54	610.47	-.148
Music	581.49	588.49	-.357
Commercial, family	657.49	548.59	-5.488***
Public, information & in-depth	572.98	630.60	-2.899**
Public, kids	578.53	586.50	-.408
Regional	570.43	559.56	-.567
Event-related	519.53	528.36	-.487
Financial, economical	520.70	527.26	-.367

\* $<.05$  \*\* $<.01$  \*\*\* $<.001$

**TABLE 6**

**Difference in Radio Stations ranking between high and low NFCL respondents**

<i>Radio Stations</i>	<i>Mean rank Low NFCL</i>	<i>Mean rank High NFCL</i>	<i>(Z-value) Mann-Whitney Test</i>
Public, popular	631.18	606.72	-1.250
Public, alternative	570.75	640.58	-3.518***
Commercial, popular	626.23	556.89	-3.557*
Public, family	599.68	557.17	-2.202*
Public, news	571.09	551.98	-1.007
Public, classical	540.98	587.30	-2.531*

\* $<.05$  \*\* $<.01$  \*\*\* $<.001$

## APPENDIX 1

### Description of Newspapers

<b>Newspaper Type/characteristics</b>	<b>Name (Target Group)</b>
Regional; Less cognitive complex, conventional	Het Belang van Limburg/Gazet van Antwerpen (Regional)
Financial, economical; More cognitive complex, conventional	De Financieel Economische Tijd (higher educated)
Independent, Alternative; More cognitive complex, unconventional	De Morgen (Higher educated)
Popular, straightforward; Less cognitive complex, conventional	Laatste Nieuws/ Nieuwe Gazet/het Volk (Men in the street)
Popular, intelligible; More cognitive complex, conventional	Nieuwsblad/de Gentenaar/'t Stad (Allround)
Conservative, Intellectual; More cognitive complex, conventional	De standard (High educated)

## APPENDIX 2

### Description of Radio Stations

Radio Station Type/characteristics	Name (Target Group)
Public, news, general information and current events; More cognitive complex, conventional	Radio 1 (Higher educated)
Public, entertainment for the whole family; Less cognitive complex, conventional	Radio 2 (Allround)
Public, classical ; More cognitive complex, conventional	Radio 3 (KLARA) (Higher educated)
Public, alternative; More cognitive complex, unconventional	Studio Brussel (Young People)
Public, popular Contemporary music; Less cognitive complex, conventional	Radio Donna (Young People)
Commercial, popular, contemporary music; Less cognitive complex, conventional	Radio Contact/ Topradio (Young People)

### APPENDIX 3

#### Description of TV Channels

TV Channel Type/characteristics	Name (Target Group)
Public, information, in-depth and culture; More cognitive complex, unconventional	Canvas (Higher Educated)
Commercial, youth ; Less cognitive complex, unconventional	Kanaal2 (Young)
Information about all sorts of manifestations; Less cognitive complex, conventional	Event TV (Liberty TV) (Allround)
Financial & economical information; More cognitive complex, conventional	Kanaal Z (Higher Educated)
Public, kids-minded; Less cognitive complex, conventional	Ketnet (Children & Teens)
Regional information; Less cognitive complex, conventional	Regionale Zender (Regional)
Music; Less cognitive complex, unconventional	TMF (Young)
Public, family-minded, broad; Less cognitive complex, conventional	TV1 (Allround)
Commercial, comedy/movie, Youth-minded; Less cognitive complex, unconventional	VT4 (Young)
Commercial, family-minded; Less cognitive complex, conventional	VTM (Allround)

## APPENDIX 4

### Descriptions and Factor Analyses of Magazines

<i>Factor name and characteristics (explained variance)</i>	<i>Factor load.</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Magazine name</i>	<i>Target group</i>
<b>Women's lifestyle</b>	.750	Women's lifestyle and beauty	Feeling	Higher educated women
Less cognitive complex, conventional (16.685 %)	.722	Women's lifestyle, health and beauty, social issues	Evita	Women
	.677	Women's lifestyle, fashion and beauty	Flair	Young women
	.644	Women's lifestyle, fashion, interior	Libelle	Women
<b>Glossy women's lifestyle</b>	.834	Glossy Women's lifestyle	Elle	Women
Less cognitive complex, conventional (11.369 %)	.780	Glossy Women's lifestyle, international	Cosmopolitan	Women
	.774	Glossy Women's lifestyle	Marie Claire	Women
<b>Light entertainment</b>	.637	Exclusive news about celebrities, royals and society	Story	Women
Less cognitive complex, conventional (7.573 %)	.608	Exclusive news about celebrities, royals and society and TV guide	TV familie	Women
	.588	Confronting interviews, sports, music and movie news and cover girls	P-Magazine	Men
	.523	Soccer	Voetbalmagazine	Men
	.475	Exclusive news about society, celebrities and royals, and popular political issues	Dag Allemaal	Allround
<b>Alternative information &amp; entertainment</b>	.815	Music (free)	RifRaf	Young
	.768	Film and music	Teek	Allround

More cognitive complex, unconventional (5.808 %)	.543	Critical and provocative interviews and coverages	Humo	Allround
<b>Teens</b>	.797	Music and way of life of teens	Joepie	Young
Less cognitive complex, unconventional (5.639 %)	.790	Teen's lifestyle	Fancy	Teen Girls
<b>General news &amp; science</b>	.701	Economic, Social and cultural information	Knack	Higher Educated
More cognitive complex, conventional (4.933 %)	.646	Science and technology	Eos	Educated
	.582	Business, Economical, Entrepreneurship	Trends	Higher Educated
<b>TV guides</b>	.784	TV guide	Teve Blad	Allround
Less cognitive complex, conventional (4.802 %)	.574	Exclusive news about society, royals and celebrities, TV guide	Tv Express	Allround

## APPENDIX 5

### Factor Analyses of TV Program Genres

<i>Factor name (explained variance)</i>	<i>Factor loading</i>	<i>Program genre</i>
<b>Light entertainment</b>	.751	Soaps
Less cognitive complex, conventional, predictable	.742	Shows
(19.039 %)	.681	Music Programs
	.617	Quizzes and Game Shows
<b>Infotainment &amp; Human Interest</b>	.763	Current affair programs
More cognitive complex, conventional, predictable	.709	Talk Shows
(14.003 %)	.674	Human Interest
	.549	News
<b>Fiction</b>	.720	Movies
Less cognitive complex, conventional, unpredictable	.700	Series
(10.421 %)	.636	Cartoons
<b>Provocative entertainment</b>	.825	Erotic show
Less cogn. complex, unconventional, unpredictable	.618	Sensation programs
(8.661 %)		
<b>Sports</b>	.883	Sports
Less cognitive complex, conventional, unpredictable		
(7.287 %)		

## APPENDIX 6

### Factor Analyses of Music Genres

<i>Factor name and description</i> <i>(explained variance)</i>	<i>Factor loading</i>	<i>Music Genres</i>
<b>Alternative</b>	.838	Hard Rock
Unconventional	.801	Heavy Metal
(19.794 %)	.682	New Wave
	.621	Grunge
<b>Ethnic &amp; Religious</b>	.799	Oriental
Conventional	.755	African
(13.619 %)	.714	Classical
	.609	Church
<b>(Inter)national schlagers</b>	.760	Schlagers
Conventional	.759	Flemish
(9.382 %)	.669	French Chansons
	.496	Country & Western
<b>Techno</b>	.826	Techno
Conventional	.812	Hardcore Techno
(8.356 %)	.669	Commercial House
<b>Pop</b>	.767	Pop
Conventional	.749	Hit parade music
(6.833 %)	.620	Disco
<b>Street Music</b>	.806	Rap/Hip Hop
Unconventional	.707	Reggae
(5.086 %)	.603	Skatepunk