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TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

Misleading Advertising of Cosmetics Products

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The use of cosmetic products is increasing, as is the variety of products invented by cosmetics industry. The appreciation of beauty and pressure created by the society to look good increase demand, to which cosmetics companies gladly respond. As the products rarely sell themselves without any marketing efforts, advertising is required.</p> <p>Advertising is subject to laws and regulations created to protect both consumers and companies, but regardless of them some advertisements do not comply with the rules and can be considered as misleading. Consumer protection laws also exist, with the purpose of guaranteeing fair practice in informing the consumer and responsibility in disputes.</p> <p>This report is a study about misleading advertising of cosmetic products. The research problem was to find out about people's experiences about the topic and their awareness about the laws related to it. A quantitative research conducted by a questionnaire to which 205 people responded is the foundation for the findings and conclusions. Information about the cosmetics industry, marketing and advertising and the legislation concerning the advertising of cosmetics is also presented.</p> <p>The responses to the questionnaire indicated that people experience that they see misleading advertising often, and that social media and television are the major platforms of these kind of advertisements. Anti-age products were considered to be the most represented product category. Despite of the general opinion of the respondents, which indicated that they consider recognising misleading advertising from truthful one fairly well, the majority of the respondents had bought products which were inequivalent to the promises given in the advertisement. This had affected negatively their opinion towards the company, thus causing distrust or unwillingness to continue as a customer. Consumer Protection Act was familiar to the majority of the respondents. The respondents were divided into age groups, between which variation could be found in the responses to the questions.</p>			
<p>Keywords Marketing, advertising, cosmetics, consumer protection</p>			

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1 INTRODUCTION

Selling cosmetics is a multi-billion business, which produces new products every second. Last year (2018) the whole industry was valued at 507.7 billion USD (Shahbandeh 2019-11-27). As the society we live in emphasizes beauty, people are led to believe that it is necessary to buy all those products to be accepted. Especially now when social media has taught people that they should look at their best 24/7, because that is what everyone else is doing according to the pictures on Instagram and other social media platforms. People should be beautiful, young and radiant but at the same time accept their selves as they are and highlight their best features with the help of -what else but- cosmetics. This is, understandably, profitable to all cosmetics companies, for their aim is to sell and get revenues just like all other businesses.

But in order to these products to find their way to the consumers they need to be marketed and advertised. Although some products might sell themselves without any advertising efforts, mainly due to a strong brand already existing behind them, a well-designed and executed advertisement will create more interest and boost the sales. And although marketing and advertising are subject to laws and regulations, it must be stated that many of those advertisements promise more than the product can deliver. And in many cases the consumers are not aware of the laws concerning misleading advertising and their rights to receive compensation if the product was not as promised.

This thesis is the outcome of personal interest towards this matter. The subject will be approached by reviewing literature about the topic and by presenting the research process as well as the outcome of a survey conducted. The beginning chapters of this report contain information about cosmetics industry, marketing and advertising and the legislation concerning the advertising of cosmetics. The survey and its results are presented at the end of this thesis report among conclusions. The research problem is to find out people's experiences about misleading advertising of cosmetic products. The awareness about the laws and regulations concerning the matter and the awareness about the consumers rights are also a matter of interest. Also, the effect of negative experiences concerning buying products inequivalent to the advertisement has to the image towards the company will be studied.

2 COSMETICS INDUSTRY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

“Cosmetics and personal care products are applied to the human body for the purposes of cleaning, beautifying, promoting attractiveness or changing its appearance.” (Cosmetics Europe 2019a.) Cosmetics and personal care products can be divided into seven main categories: decorative cosmetics, perfumes, and oral-, sun-, skin, hair- and body care products, all of which have their own subcategories (Cosmetics Europe 2019a). In this thesis the focus is on products which are applied to the face, such as makeup (decorative cosmetics), cleansing products, moisturisers, anti-age products and other facial products.

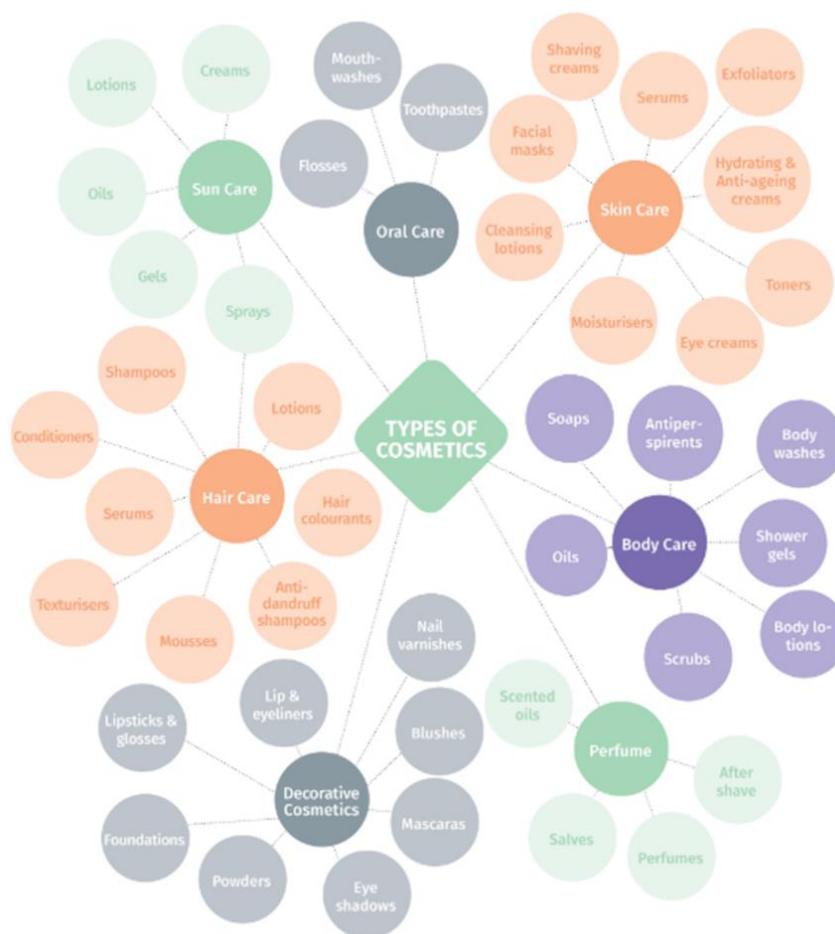


FIGURE 1. Types of cosmetics (Cosmetics Europe 2019a.)

As mentioned, the cosmetics industry is a multi-billion business. In 2017 the global market was valued at 532.43 billion USD (479.87 billion EUR) and is expected to reach 805.61 billion USD (726.08 billion EUR) by 2023 (Reuters 2018-3-13). The European cosmetics industry was valued at 78.6 billion EUR in 2018 (Cosmetics Europe 2019b). The sales can be affected by economic fluctuations, but the demand is constantly rising due to increasing number of users and products. Declining fertility and mortality rates have led to the increase of aging population, resulting to a growth in the sales of anti-aging products. (Reuters 2018-3-13.) And as people born between the 1980's and mid-1990's have reached the age of entering the labour market, they have more disposable income to spend on cosmetics, which has affected positively to the overall sales (Shahbandeh 2019-3-18).

The top ten most valuable cosmetics brands in 2019 were: Johnson's, Chanel, L'Oréal, Gillette, Neutrogena, Nivea, Dior, Clinique, Shiseido and Guerlain. Johnson's holds the first place although its brand value has dropped 20 per cent from previous year. Chanel on the other hand has increased its brand value by 95 per cent from previous year. (Brand Finance 2019-05.) Top ten personal care brands in 2019 were L'Oréal Paris, Colgate, Gillette, Lancôme, Garnier, Nivea, Dove, Clinique, Estee Lauder and Shiseido (Shahbandeh 2019-07-03).

Marketers are sometimes criticized for creating artificial needs to which their products then respond. However, another perspective to this matter is that needs are biological and cannot be created artificially and that it is the society itself that has taught people that they have to satisfy their needs. Needs are created by the society and marketers are only responding to what the society wants. (Solomon et al. 2016, 22-23.) Possibly the most known theory about needs is Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, which presented human needs in a five-tier pyramid (Figure 7.). The two bottom tiers consist of basic needs, such as physiological and safety needs, followed by psychological needs such as belongingness and love, and esteem needs. The top of the pyramid consists of self-fulfillment needs such as self-actualization. According to the theory after the basic needs are met, more higher needs will arise and motivate people to seek fulfillment to those. The order of needs can be different depending on circumstances and people, as Maslow later stated. (McLeod 2018.)

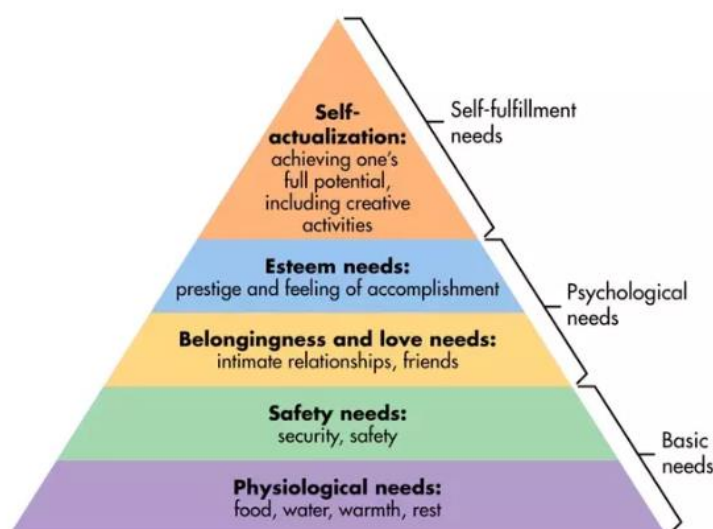


FIGURE 2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (McLeod 2018.)

Maslow refined his theory during several decades, adding more layers to the pyramid (Figure 2.). Among them is aesthetic needs (McLeod 2018.), the one that particularly interests us as a connection to cosmetics. Whether we speak about needing something or simply wanting it, the cosmetics industry has developed from people's desire to see beauty.

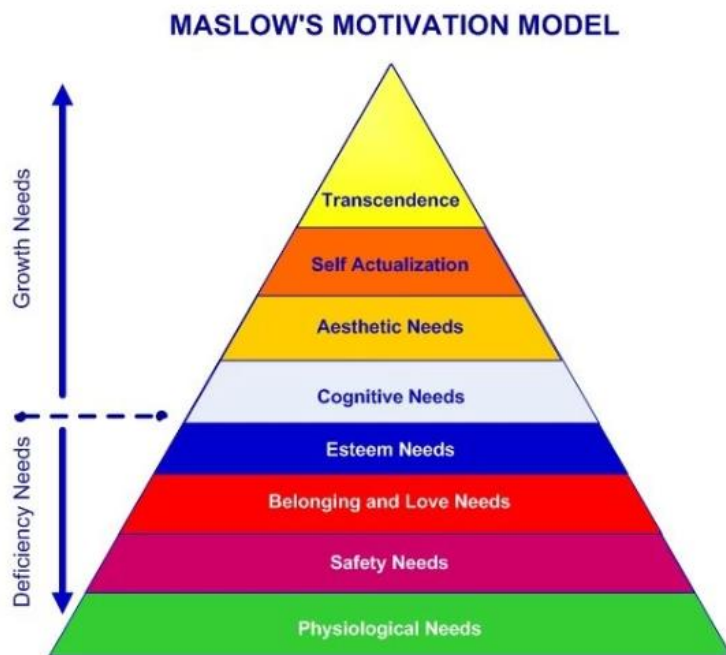


FIGURE 3. Maslow's motivation model (McLeod 2018.)

3 MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

Marketing has an impact to the way we see the world and marketing messages -hidden or visible- tell us what we should want or how we should act. It effects to our preferences and life choices more than most consumers can even imagine. At the same time, we place our trust into those operators behind the messages and in good faith believe that what they promise is true, safe and fair. (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg 2016, 14.)

Eugene McCarthy (1960) simplified the existing lists defining marketing into four P's: *Product*, *Price*, *Place* and *Promotion*. *Product* is the actual deliverable, the tangible or intangible offering to a customer. *Place* means the distribution of the product, the way the product is brought within the reach of customers. *Price* means the cost, both to customers and to the seller. *Promotion* is the action of introducing the product's features to the potential customer. (Baines, Fill, Rosengren & Antonetti 2017, 11.) In this thesis the focus is on the latter, promotion, and more specifically on advertising.

As a word, marketing and advertising can sometimes be mixed with each other and mistakenly referred. Marketing is the wider concept of which advertising is just a one part. According to American Marketing Association AMA, "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." (Baines et al. 2017, 6.) Advertising is placing a paid announcement into any media where it can reach the potential buyers, a persuasive message introducing the product or service and its features and the company to viewers. It is also the most expensive part of marketing activities, due to costs generated from designing, publishing channels and frequency of presenting. (Lake 2019-7-25.)

Advertising on television used to be the most used channel to reach out to customers, but because of ad-skipping technologies it is not so effective anymore than it used to be. Also, depending on the desired broadcast time and frequency, it can be very expensive. And as people, especially the younger generation, are not using television anymore as their primary source of entertainment, the power of television ads has decreased. (Zipin 2019-06-25.) On another hand, a study made by WARC showed that people pay more attention to advertisements shown on the television than they do to the ones shown on digital media (Pensworth 2019-10-09). Advertising on print media, such as newspapers, magazines and brochures, is still a popular way to reach customers, but it is also rather expensive and the return on investment cannot be guaranteed (CampaignDrive 2019-09-03). Although traditional advertising channels are still used by the cosmetics industry, digital media and especially social media has become a more popular advertising channel. Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms are a cost-effective way to advertise and allow to reach more targeted audiences. Influencer marketing has also become important to the beauty industry, as people are seeking more authentic content. (Aguilar 2019-06-04.)

3.1 Legislation and Guidelines of Cosmetics Marketing

In addition to country-specific legislation The European Union regulates all marketing and advertising inside the EU area with directives set to ensure consumer protection as well as with industry-specific directives. Consumer protection laws vary by country, but the EU directives are set to generate consistent rules to EU's inner market (Mainostajien Liitto 2011, 13). However, the member states are allowed to maintain higher level of consumer protection than the directive demands requiring that they will not create market barriers. The Finnish consumer protection act meets the requirements mainly and the Finnish consumer protection is to some extent higher than in several other EU member states. The implementation of the consumer protection act is supervised by the Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority under the authority of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland. (Mainostajien Liitto 2011, 13, 333-334.)

The Finnish consumer protection act concerns the sales and marketing of commodities and services from a business to a private consumer. According to the act, it is forbidden to give untruthful or misleading information when marketing or advertising a product so that the information can lead the consumer into an invalid purchase decision. The product must meet the alleged by quality, features and quantity which can be considered as agreed. If these conditions are not attained the product can be considered as faulty. The product can also be considered faulty in case it does not match the information given by the seller, someone prior in the chain of sales or someone in the name of the seller when marketing the product or otherwise prior the sales act. The buyer has the right to demand the flaw to be corrected, the product being replaced with a flawless one, a discount or cancellation of the purchase. (Consumer Protection Act 1978/38, Chapters 1-5.)

The International Chamber of Commerce is the most significant factor in developing the ethical principles for marketing and it has provided self-regulatory guidelines for the industry since 1937. The ICC Marketing Code is currently complied in 42 countries. It aims to protect consumers by giving clear instructions for marketers to ensure honest and truthful communication. They also offer guidance and education for marketers and advertising agencies to help them follow the guidelines. In 2018 they published a 10th revision for the ICC Advertising and Marketing Communications Code, updated to guide the industry in digitalized world. (International Chamber of Commerce 2018.)

In addition to the aforementioned, cosmetics industry's own operators have generated rules and guidelines to follow when advertising their products to ensure fair and sincere practice. Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency Tukes also monitors the advertising of cosmetics products in Finland (Teknokemia 2019). The European trade organisation for the cosmetics and personal care industry Cosmetics Europe has created self-regulatory rules for the European cosmetics industry, which adhere to the European Union's legislation concerning the marketing of cosmetics. The rules ensure that the industry can operate following the EU's as well as country-specific legislation offering consumers truthful advertising and valid information while also enabling the industry to grow and develop. (Cosmetics Europe 2019d.) Summarized, the rules created by Cosmetics Europe aim to secure that the advertising of cosmetics will adhere to the following guidelines:

- "Comply with the relevant European and national legal and self-regulatory frameworks
- Be sincere, truthful and not misleading
- Allow consumers to make informed choices
- Act in a socially responsible manner." (Cosmetics Europe 2019c, 2.)

3.2 How (Not) to Advertise Cosmetics

When advertising cosmetics, the three most used ways are claims, visual manipulation, and testimonials and recommendations. In the following chapters these three are explained by legal and general guidelines and with some examples. Although there are other rules as well concerning environmental aspects, social responsibility and vulnerable audience and also using sex or violence in advertising of cosmetics, these are not included and discussed further because they are rarely used.

3.2.1 Claims

If the advertisement presents factual claims about the product, it must be stated what kind of study the results are based on, the size of the study group and whether the study was a self-evaluation or other. Also, the possibility to get more information about the product must be offered. (Mainostajien Liitto 2011, 146.) As an example, a screenshot from the manufacturer's online store (Figure 2.) in which clinically proven results are mentioned, but the link to the alleged research is not active and thus will not lead anywhere.

≡ Augustinus Bader

CLINICALLY PROVEN RESULTS*

Fine Lines and wrinkles are reduced after just 4 weeks

- 94% of people agree that dull skin appears brighter
- 87% of people agree that their skin feels protected, stronger and more energized
- 92% of people agree that their skin appears healthier
- 70% of people agree that the appearance of scars and age spots have never been less noticeable in such a short time
- 85% of people agree that the product lessens the appearance of unwanted redness of the skin
- 79% of people agree that the product improves the appearance of skin damaged by sun exposure

*Find out more about Augustinus Bader Clinical and User Trials here.

FIGURE 4. The rich cream (Augustinus Bader 2019-12-04.)

However, it is allowed to present claims such as "Skin feels softer" or "Hair looks glossier" which can be considered as common commercial praises and cannot be scientifically proven (Mainostajien Liitto 2011, 146). As an example, Figure 3. in which expression "appears" is used. It can also be considered as a subjective experience which depends on the viewer and cannot be proven.

FACE

Elevate your skincare regime with our extensive range, powered by the healing, mineral rich waters of Hungary, for a complexion that appears firmer, suppler and more youthful.

FIGURE 5. Face (Omorovicza 2019-12-04.)

3.2.2 The Seller's Responsibility

According to the Finnish consumer protection act the seller can be seen as responsible of the accuracy of the claims presented in marketing even though the advertisement was not made by the seller. For example, if the advertisement has been presented widely in television or in newspapers, the seller can be considered to have been aware of the claimed features. (Koivistoinen 2019-11-07.) In the picture below (Figure 4.) is a screenshot from the seller's own website in which even 24 hours of matte finish is promised to a concealer. Although the claim was probably originally presented by the manufacturer the seller is in this case responsible if the product does not provide what was promised.



FIGURE 6. Rimmel Lasting Matte (Sokos 2019-12-04.)

3.2.3 Visual Manipulation

Using digital techniques to retouch images is allowed to a certain extent, but the advertiser must make sure that the result is not misleading. The image cannot imply the product to have features or effects which it does not have. (Cosmetics Europe 2019c, 5.) For example, erasing wrinkles from the picture is not allowed when advertising anti-wrinkle cream (Paloranta 2014, 207). Styling techniques such as using hair extensions and false lashes is allowed if they are not relevant to the product being advertised. For example, when advertising mascara it is allowed to use hair extensions to enhance the beauty of the model. (Cosmetics Europe 2019c, 5.) However, the use of false lashes is not allowed when advertising mascara if the result cannot be achieved without them (Paloranta 2014, 207).

In pictures below there are two examples of mascara advertisements. In the first picture (Figure 5.), the result is shown without using false lashes and can be considered as truthful. The second picture (Figure 6.) clearly shows that the model is wearing lash extensions. This can be acceptable if the result can be achieved without them or if the use was made clear to the viewer with a disclaimer (e.g. Dramatization, lash inserts were used to fill in gaps).



FIGURE 7. Monsieur Big Mascara (Lancôme 2019-12-04.)



FIGURE 8. Total Temptation ripsiväri, Maybelline New York (YouTube 2018-01-29.)

3.2.4 Testimonials and Recommendations

Testimonials and recommendations from celebrities and specialists can be used if they are true and can be verified. Testimonials should be presented as personal assessments rather than a proof of the product's effectiveness and they cannot be used to replace proper evidence. Specialist recommendations can also be used if they base on adequate research information. (Cosmetics Europe 2019c, 6.) Many advertisements present celebrities or private consumers speaking about, or specialists recommending the use of a certain product. For the consumer's perspective it is sometimes difficult to tell whether the opinion is unbiased and was not paid for. Especially when using specialist's recommendations in advertising, the consumer is rarely able to find the information supporting the claim.

4 SURVEY ON EXPERIENCES OF MISLEADING ADVERTISING OF COSMETICS

After selecting the topic, it required a lot of defining. The original idea was to study misleading advertising in general but given the time and resources available it was scaled down to concern only cosmetic products. The research problem would have been too imprecise and the execution of the research too difficult without limiting. Also, the focus group of the research was limited to people who do feel that they have come across misleading advertising of cosmetics products. (More information about the focus group in chapter 7.3.)

The research problem was to find out people's experiences about misleading advertising of cosmetic products. The interest was to find out how well people think they can recognise misleading advertising, how often they feel they see it and where they think they see it the most. The effect it had to their opinions towards the company in question and willingness to continue as a customer was also studied. Other questions studied were people's knowledge about consumer's rights and their experiences about returning products which were not of promised quality. For all the topics studied there were hypotheses which led the process of forming the questions. Nardi (2014, 74-75) explains the meaning of a hypothesis as an unproven statement, an idea or a gut feeling about a connection between variables, which can be tested and proven either true or false.

The hypotheses were that

- people are mostly able to recognise misleading advertising
- people see it daily
- people see it the most on social media and television
- makeup is the most represented category in these advertisements
- majority of respondents have bought products which they had felt were not of promised quality
- it had affected negatively towards their opinion about the company and willingness to continue as a customer
- price of the product is significant when considering returning the product
- most people are not aware of the laws concerning cosmetics' advertising
- most people are not aware that according to the consumer protection act they are entitled to a compensation if the product does not meet the promised qualities

4.1 Research method used

The research method used in this thesis was quantitative, which is the most suitable method to gather information which can be measured and analysed statistically. It is also a good way to gain information about opinions and attitudes. The most common form of quantitative research is a questionnaire, which allows to gather a larger number of responses. Another common form of quantitative method is a structured interview. (Nardi 2014, 19.) The advantages of a questionnaire are lower costs when wanting a large number of respondents, ability to use the same standardized questions for all and suitability to be sent online. Disadvantages include possible low return rate, misunderstanding of questions and other errors affecting the results. The advantages of an interview are the possibility to

gain additional information and to clarify questions if needed. On the other hand, interviews can be very time consuming and limit the size of the study group. Also, if the person conducting the interview is not an experienced interviewer, the possibility of errors or misunderstandings increases. (Nardi 2014, 20-21.)

After considering both options, using questionnaire to collect the answers was chosen. Interviews could have provided more in-depth information about the matter, but due to the limited time to conduct the research it was decided that it was not an option. Using a questionnaire also enabled a larger sample group and easier data analysis. The questions and the reasons why they were chosen are explained in more detail in chapters 7.2 and 8.

4.2 The Questionnaire

After defining the research problem and reviewing literature, the questions for the questionnaire were developed. The questionnaire (Appendix 1.) was written in Finnish to maximize the answering rate and also to avoid misunderstanding the questions due to people's different skill levels of understanding and/or writing English. The questionnaire started with a foreword explaining to whom the questionnaire is targeted, what is meant by misleading advertising in this case and what is meant by cosmetics in this case. The English translations of the questions are presented in chapter 8.

Leading and loaded questions can contain either biased or charged wording in the question or in the response alternatives (Nardi 2014, 83). Trying to avoid biased questions and leading the answerer was essential to gain reliable information about people's opinions about this matter, and the words used in the questionnaire were considered as carefully as possible. Also, due to the subject itself, which is somewhat negative per se, the questions had to be worded carefully. Both closed- and open-ended questions were used in the questionnaire, but to help to analyse the data, most of the questions were closed-ended.

The questionnaire contained only one question about the demographics of the answerers. Demographics are the issues which can be used to categorize people, such as age, gender, race, income level et cetera (Nardi 2014, 89). In this research only the age of the respondents was asked (Question 1.). To help analyse the data, age groups from which to choose were provided.

The gender of respondents is often asked in questionnaires, but in this case it was left out by purpose for several reasons; at the moment it is a rather sensitive subject, the sample group was alleged to be rather homogenous and cosmetics is mainly marketed for women but can be used by anyone regardless of gender. Also, it was assumed that if people identifying their selves as other than female were to answer, the amount of those answers would not have been sufficient to provide proper base for comparison. Other issues about demographics were also irrelevant in this case.

The questionnaire was divided on two pages for the sake of clarity. The first page contained the question about age, followed by questions which dealt with the respondent's views about their ability to recognise misleading advertising, how often and where they see it and what category they feel is the most represented in misleading advertisements.

The second page started with a question "Have you ever bought a cosmetics product based on seeing an advertisement and discovered it was not equivalent to what was promised?" For those who answered "Yes" a defining open-ended question "Why do you feel that it was not equivalent to what was promised?" appeared. The following questions dealt with the respondents' thoughts about the effect of buying such product had to the opinion towards the company, their knowledge about consumer protection and possible experiences about returning products.

4.3 Execution

The questionnaire was created using Webropol and was shared by a public link sent to networks and into one closed Facebook group (Pelastetaan vanhojen talojen naiset). Timeframe for answering was 27.11.2019-3.12.2019. The respondents were able to answer anonymously and only once. The desired amount of answers was 100, but eventually 205 people answered the questionnaire.

Sending the questionnaire to friends and relatives led to snowball sampling when they asked if the questionnaire could be sent to their friends. Snowball sampling is used when respondents are difficult to find, and people are asked to pass the questionnaire to people they know and think could be suitable and willing to answer. The weakness of this sampling is that the sample group is not random, and the respondents are somewhat similar because people tend to choose similar people into their social groups. (Nardi 2014, 126.) In this case the permission to spread the questionnaire was given to those who wanted to do so. For this, a covering note identifying the person behind the questionnaire and explaining the reason for it was attached.

Using a closed Facebook group to collect answers was purposive sampling. Purposive or judgmental sampling is used when selecting a group of people who are known to be suitable for answering (Nardi 2014,125). In this case the group was chosen because all members were assumed to have some level of interest towards the subject, and that they would react to the questionnaire respectfully and answer honestly.

5 RESULTS

Age

Age distribution of the respondents is presented in Figure 9. People aged 41-50 were the most represented group accounting for 31 per cent of the responses. The second largest group were people aged 31-40 with 27 per cent of the responses and the third one people aged 51-60 accounting for 25 per cent of the answers. Nine per cent of the answers came from people aged 61-70 and seven per cent from people aged 21-30. Surprisingly, one per cent of the respondents were of age 71 or older. Answers from people under 20 were not received so they are left out from the results. The age deviation can possibly be explained with the fact that most of the people in the author's networks and in the Facebook group where the questionnaire link was sent to belong to the three age groups most represented.

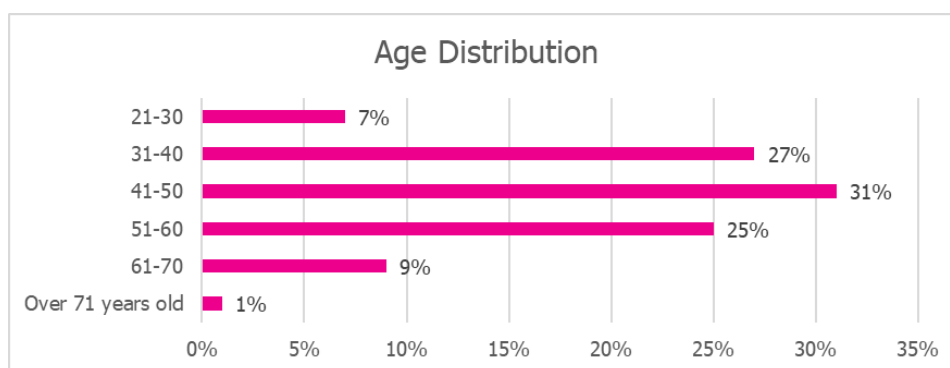


FIGURE 9. Age distribution (n=205).

In Your opinion, how well do You recognise misleading advertising of cosmetic products from truthful?

Hypothesis was that people are mostly able to recognise misleading advertising of cosmetics from truthful. The answers show the hypothesis to be true. Most people in all age groups experienced that they recognise misleading advertising fairly well (Figure 10.). 20 per cent of people aged 31-40 experience that they recognise misleading advertising very well. On the other hand, in the age group of people over 71 the distribution was 50/50 between fairly well and very well, but given the fact that in this age group the amount of answers was only 2 it explains the even distribution. No one chose the alternative "Not at all" in any age groups. What stands out from the answers is the amount of people aged 21-30 answering "I'm not sure" (20 per cent).

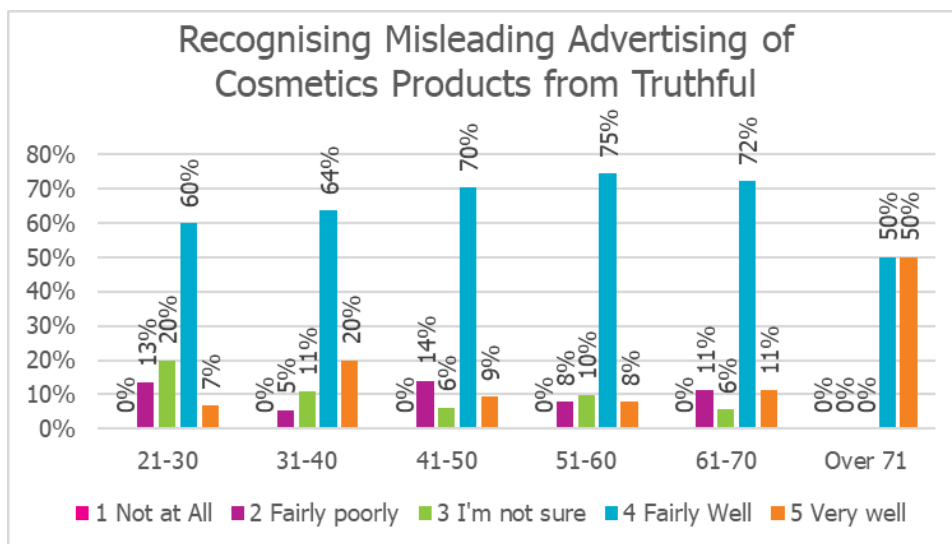


FIGURE 10. How well people think they recognise misleading advertising of cosmetics products (n=205)

How often You feel You see misleading advertising of cosmetic products?

The hypothesis was that people see misleading advertising of cosmetics daily. The responses, however, show that most people consider that they see them weekly, so the hypothesis is not true. Excluding the people aged 61-70, most of the respondents thought that they see misleading advertising of cosmetics products weekly (Figure 11.). 56 per cent of people aged 61-70 feel that they see it daily. Alternative "monthly" was chosen by 33 per cent of respondents aged 21-30, which could also correlate with the "I'm not sure"-answers to question number two. Alternative "Less often" was the least chosen one in all age groups.

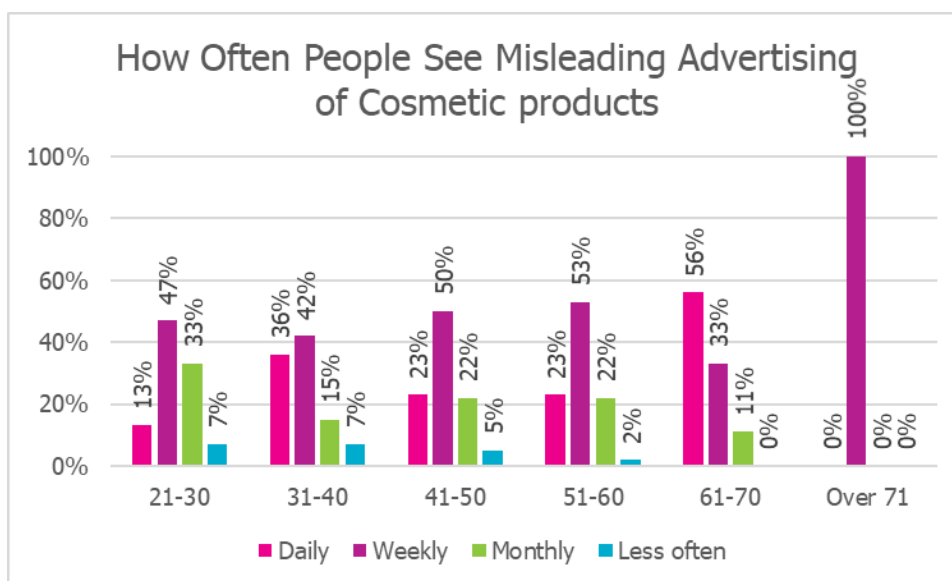


FIGURE 11. How often people see misleading advertising of cosmetic products (n=205)

Where do You feel You see it the most?

The hypothesis was that people see misleading cosmetics advertisements the most on social media and television. Social media was the most chosen alternative (32 per cent) if we look at all answers combined (Figure 12.). Television was chosen by 25 per cent and E-media by 24 per cent when all answers combined. This indicates the hypothesis to be true.

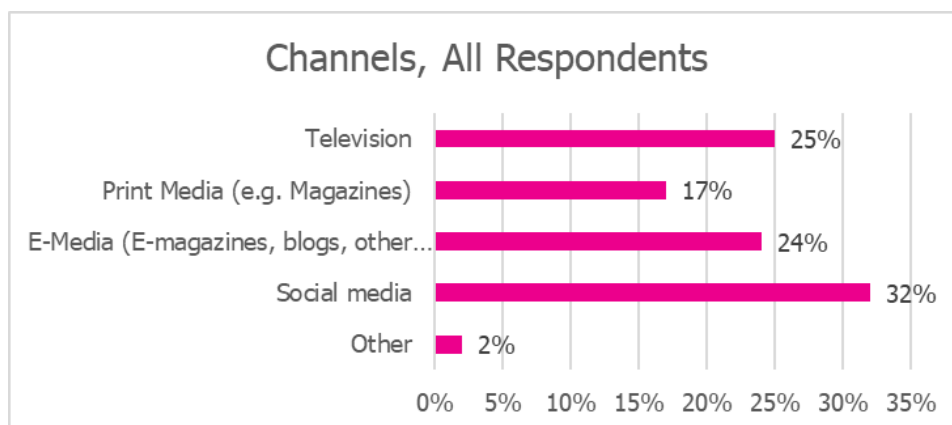


FIGURE 12. Where people see misleading advertising the most, all age groups combined (n=205)

When looking at the answers by age groups (Figure 13.), television and social media were the most chosen alternatives until the age of 50 years old. From people aged 51-60 E-media was chosen by 33 per cent of the respondents, leaving social media and television behind. From people aged 61 or older, print- and E-media were the most chosen alternatives.

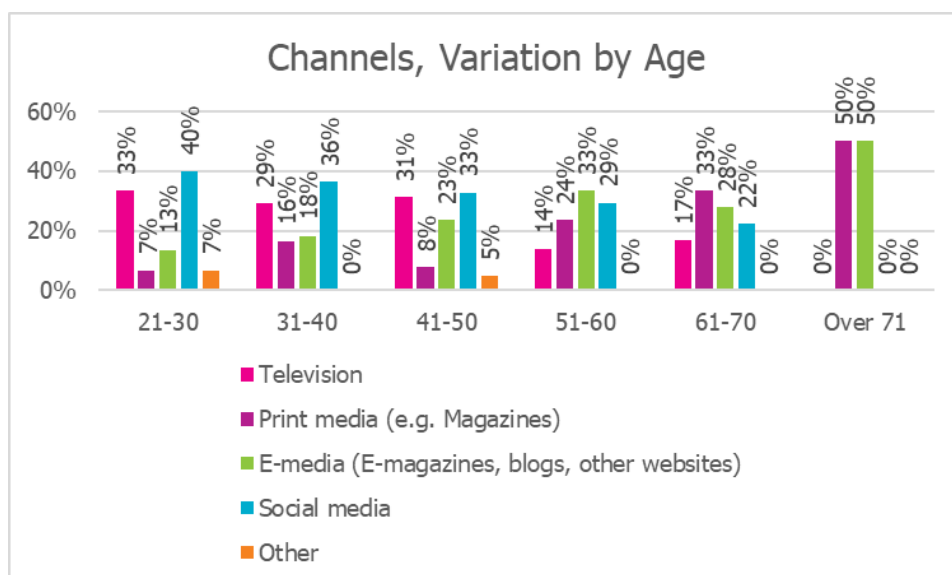


FIGURE 13. Where people see misleading advertising of cosmetic products the most, variation by age (n=205)

In Your opinion, of which category are the most represented products in misleading advertisements of cosmetics products?

Contrary to the hypothesis the most represented category in misleading advertisements was anti age-products according to all age groups (Figure 14.). The second one was makeup, which was chosen by 33 per cent of people aged 21-30. The 100 per cent share of anti-age products in the age group of over 71 years can be explained by the number of respondents in this age group, which was two. Cleansing products and moisturisers were both chosen by 13 per cent of people aged 21-30. 11 per cent of people aged 31-40 chose cleansing products and 9 per cent moisturisers. People who chose "Other" mentioned e.g. "products which are claimed to be natural", "products treating couperosa" and "all of them".

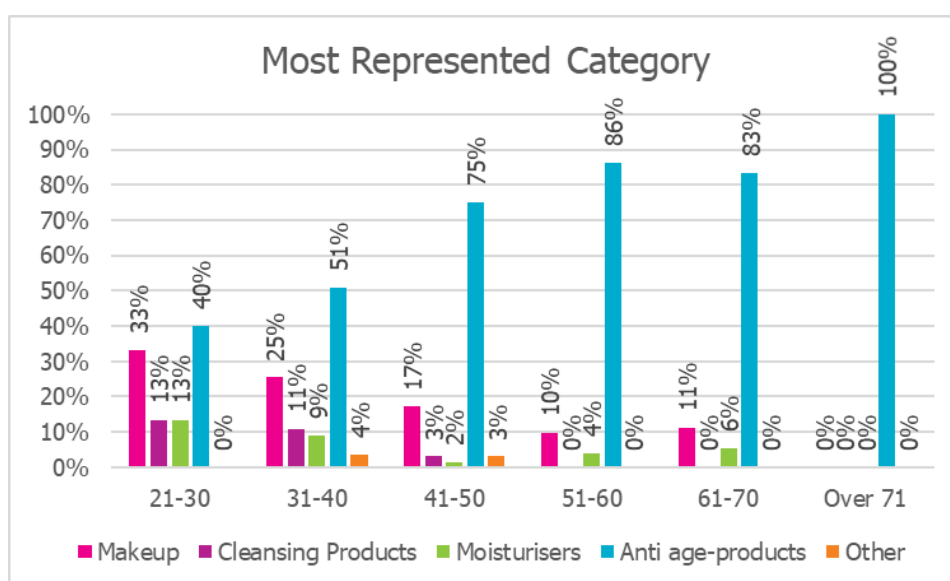


FIGURE 14. The most presented category in misleading cosmetics advertisements (n=205)

Have You ever bought a cosmetics product based on seeing an advertisement and discovered it was not equivalent to what was promised?

The hypothesis was that majority of respondents have bought a product which they have felt was not of promised quality. Excluding the people aged 41-50 and the 50/50 distribution in age group over 71, in all other age groups over 50 per cent of the respondents chose "yes" to the question above. There is a contradiction in the results if they are compared to the answers to question number two, where most people considered that they do recognise misleading advertising fairly well. With people aged 21-30 the difference between yes- and no-answers was the clearest (73 per cent yes and 27 per cent no). However, this was also the group who were the most unsure in question two.

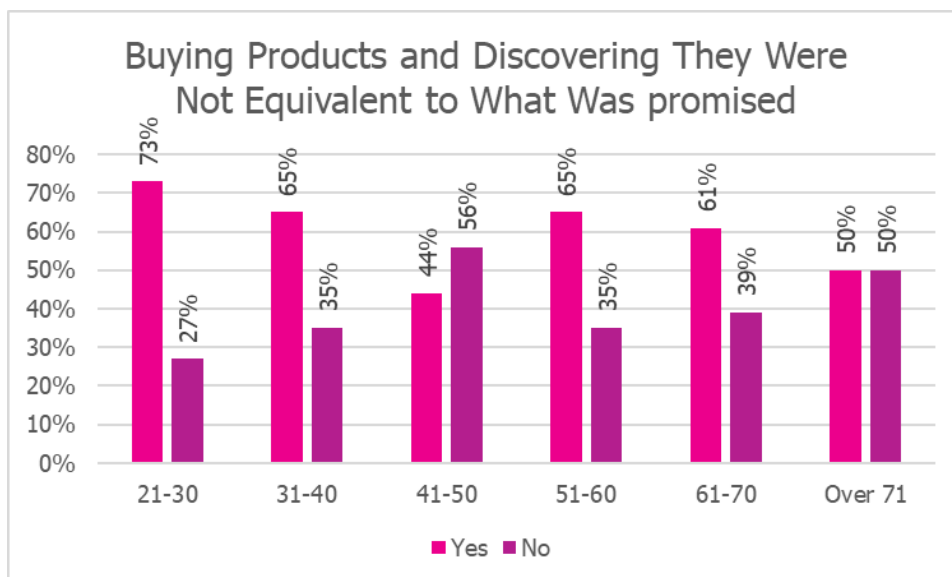


FIGURE 15. Buying products and discovering that they were not equivalent to what was promised in the advertisement (n=205)

Why do You feel that it was not equivalent to what was promised?

In the following table (Table 1.), excerpts from the answers to the question are presented, translated by the author. The answers are divided by age groups. Similar answers have been combined.

TABLE 1. Responses to the Question Above, translated

Age Group	Responses
21-30	<p>In this age group, in answers where the product was mentioned, mascaras were clearly the ones which caused the most dissatisfaction. Moisturisers were also mentioned as products which did not satisfy.</p> <p><i>"Waterproof mascara did not tolerate humidity."</i></p> <p><i>"Mascaras are usually the ones which do not fulfil their promises"</i></p> <p><i>"Didn't give ultimately long lashes."</i></p> <p><i>"Non-sticky and fast absorbing moisturiser was sticky and did not absorb ever."</i></p> <p><i>"The product was not as efficient as what was promised."</i></p>
31-40	<p>In this age group, mascaras were also the most mentioned product. Concealers and cleansing products also had caused dissatisfaction.</p> <p><i>" Promised more curves and length...models in the advertisement probably had extensions and photoshopped result in the picture."</i></p> <p><i>"Lashes looked nothing like the ones in the advertisement, which were improved with fake lashes..."</i></p> <p><i>"...the model probably has fake lashes or naturally long and thick lashes."</i></p> <p><i>"The mascara did not separate lashes." "...did not lengthen lashes..."</i></p>

	<p><i>"Wrinkles did not disappear"</i></p> <p><i>"The product did not moisturise as promised"</i></p> <p><i>"Did not have the promised features, poor quality"</i></p> <p><i>"Did not give good coverage"</i></p> <p><i>"Gentle cleanser was not gentle"</i></p> <p><i>"Any ingredient by itself or together with others will not affect as promised according to science."</i></p> <p><i>"Being organic, greenwashing."</i></p>
41-50	<p>Again, mascaras were the most mentioned products, but the amount of anti-age products mentioned was clearly higher than in previous age groups.</p> <p><i>" Mascara did not lengthen lashes", "...did not grow lashes", "...did not work as expected"</i></p> <p><i>"Did not remove wrinkles"</i></p> <p><i>"Was not as sensitive as promised"</i></p> <p><i>"Did not deliver what was promised"</i></p>
51-60	<p>In this age group, anti-age products were the most mentioned ones to have caused dissatisfaction.</p> <p><i>" Mascara did not lengthen lashes", "...did not do what was promised."</i></p> <p><i>"...wrinkle cream did not take wrinkles away"</i></p> <p><i>"Not moisturising enough"</i></p> <p><i>"Not effective enough", "Not as effective as promised."</i></p>
61-70	<p>Again, in this age group also, anti-age products were mentioned the most.</p> <p><i>" Wrinkles did not disappear."</i></p> <p><i>" No results."</i></p> <p><i>" Poor quality, awful smell, allergic reaction."</i></p>
Over 71	<p><i>" I should have known that the so-called wrinkle creams don't work."</i></p>

If the product you bought was not/would not be equivalent to what was promised, how did/would it make You feel about the company?

All age groups combined, most of the respondents (56 per cent) felt that they would not buy product from that company in question, if the product was not equivalent to what was promised. 36 per cent

would buy products, but with distrust. Only 4 per cent chose “not in any way” or “other”. The hypothesis was that the effect of buying a product not equivalent to the promise would affect negatively towards the opinion about the company. The results show the hypothesis to be true.

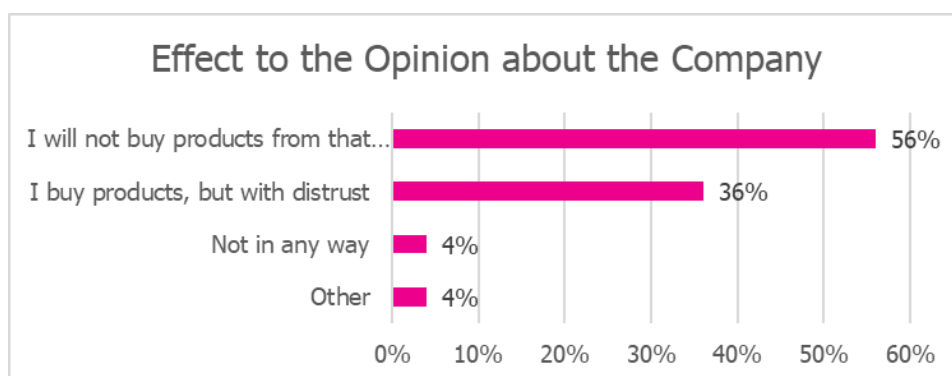


FIGURE 16. The effect to the opinion about the company, all age groups combined (n=205)

When looking at the answers by age groups (Figure 17.), only 20 per cent of people aged 21-30 felt that they would not buy from that company anymore and 73 per cent would buy products but with distrust. The older the respondent's age, the less the amount of people who would still buy, but with distrust was. People who chose “other” mentioned e.g. that they “might buy from that company but not from the same product category” or that they “might buy if the product was really necessary”.

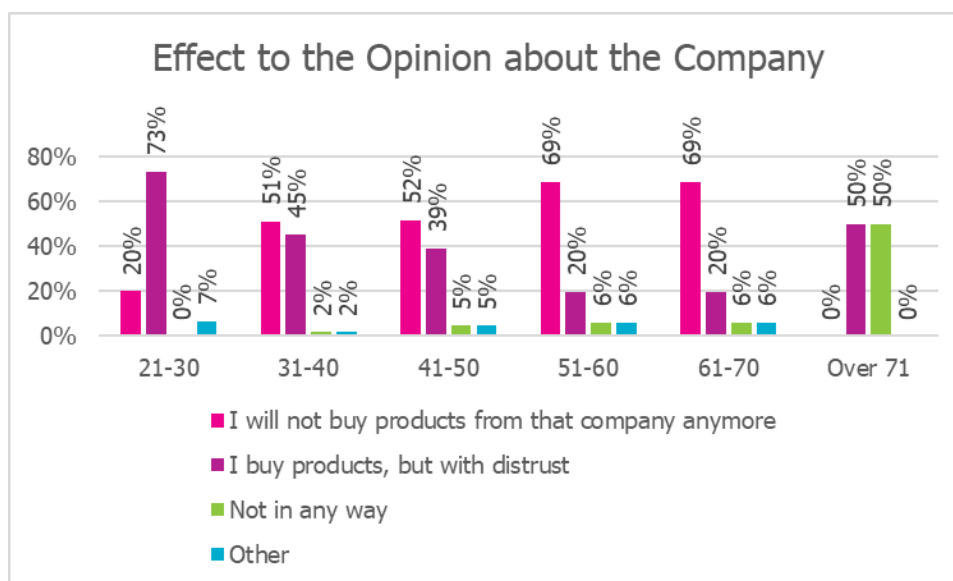


FIGURE 17. The effect towards the opinion about the company, variation by age (n=205)

Are You aware of the laws and regulations concerning the advertising of cosmetics?

The hypothesis was that majority of people are not aware about the laws and regulations concerning the advertising of cosmetics. As Figure 18. shows, majority of people are not aware of the laws and regulations concerning the advertising of cosmetics products, which indicates the hypothesis to be true.

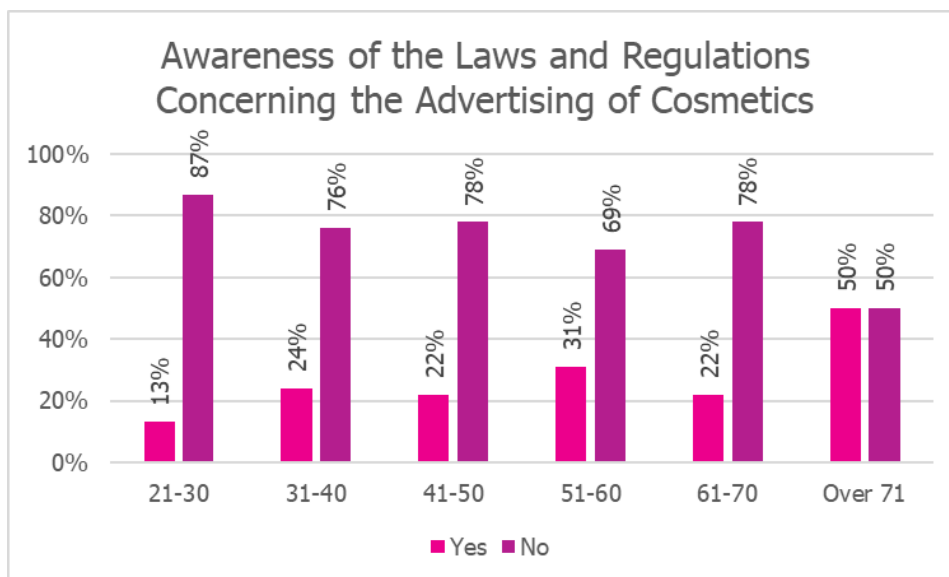


FIGURE 18. Awareness of the laws and regulations concerning the advertising of cosmetics (n=205)

Are You aware of the consumer protection act?

Contrary to the answers to the previous question, most people in all age groups were aware of the consumer protection act.

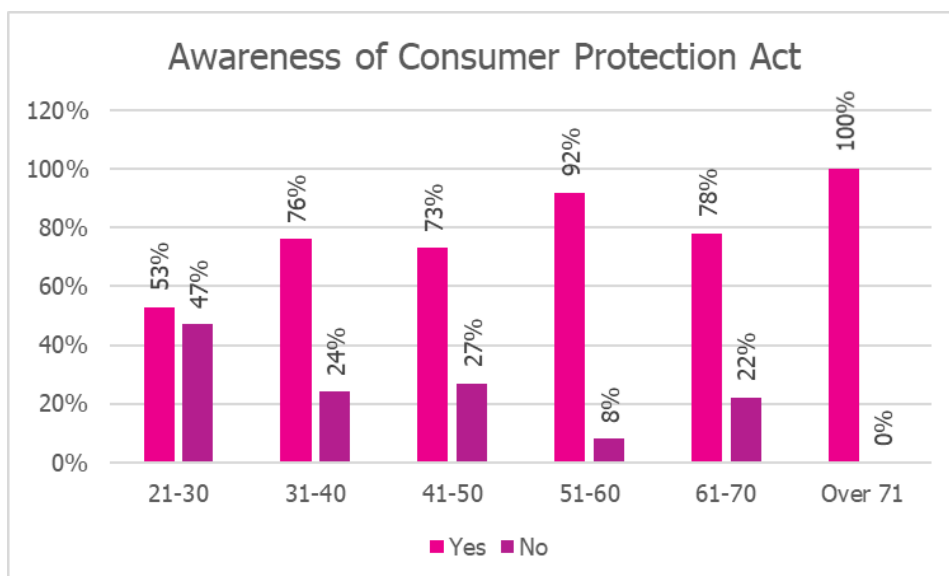


FIGURE 19. Awareness of the consumer protection act (n=205)

Are You aware that according to the consumer protection act the product can be returned if it is not equivalent to what was promised in the advertisement?

Excluding the people aged 21-30, most of the respondents were aware that the product can be returned if it was not equivalent to what was promised in the advertisement (Figure 20.). The hypothesis was that most people are not aware of this matter, so the hypothesis was not true.

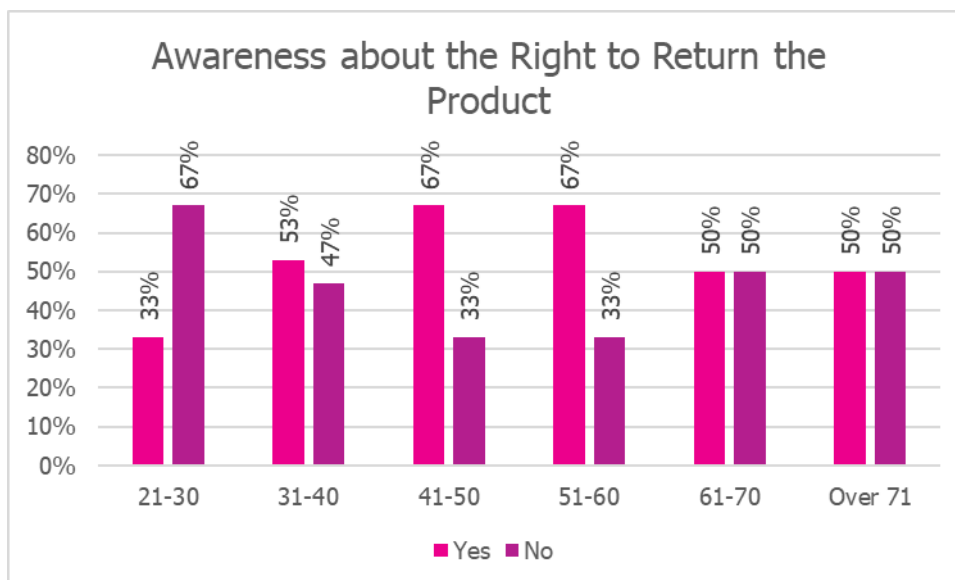


FIGURE 20. Awareness about the right to return the product (n=205)

Of what price would be the product You would consider returning?

As Figure 21. shows, most people would consider returning products priced 31 euros or over (41 per cent). 36 per cent of all respondents would return a product priced 21-30 euros and 19 per cent a product which costs 11-20 euros. Only four per cent of all respondents would consider returning a product which costs 10 euros or under. The hypothesis was that the price of the product is significant when considering returning the product. In this case it can be said that higher price is a bigger motivator to return the product.

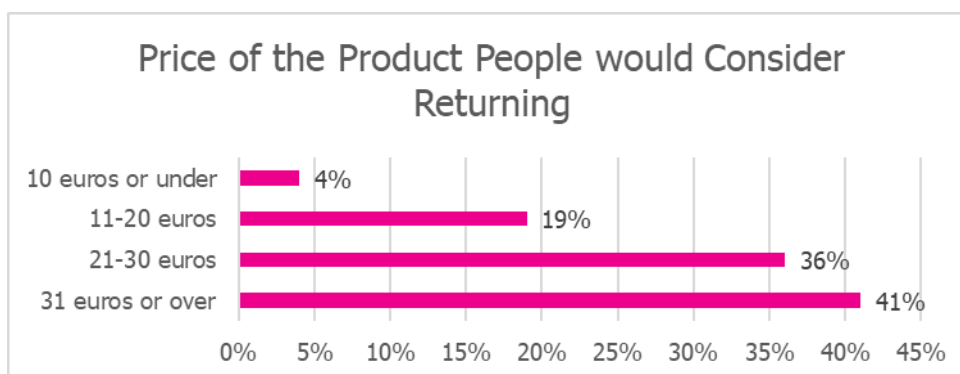


FIGURE 21. Price of the product people would consider returning, all respondents (n=205)

In the age group of people aged 21-30, and also over 71, no one would consider returning a product which costs under 20 euros.

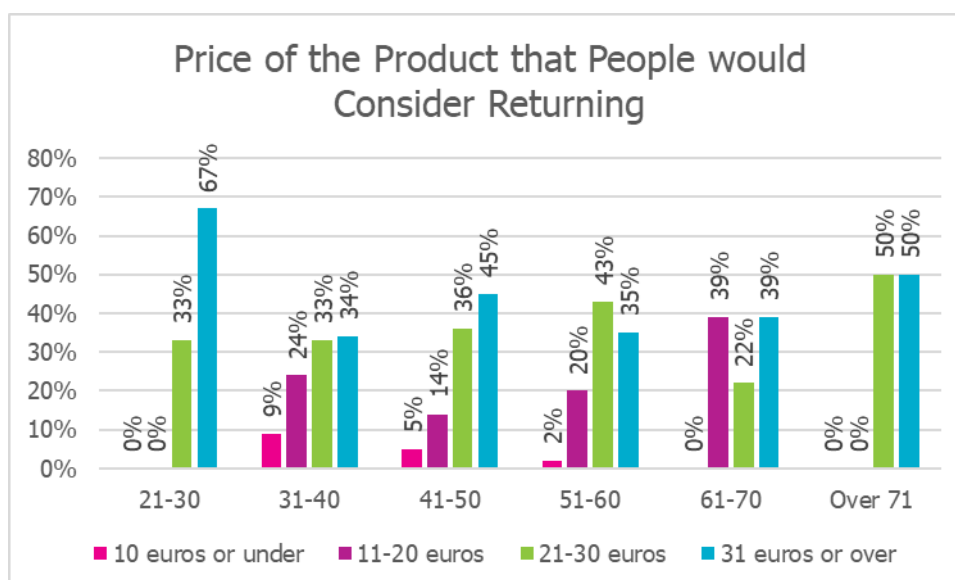


FIGURE 22. Price of the product people would consider returning, variation by age (n=205)

Have you ever returned a product to the manufacturer/seller on the grounds that it did not match what was promised in the advertisement? If you have, what was the response?

In the following table (Table 2.), excerpts from the answers to the last question are presented, translated by the author. The answers are divided by age groups. Respondents aged 21-30 and over 71 did not answer to this question.

TABLE 2. Responses to the Question Above, translated

Age Group	Open Response
31-40	<p>"Yes, I have returned...it was an expensive product...I made a reclamation and received other products from the same manufacturer..."</p> <p>"Yes. The money was returned."</p> <p>"Not cosmetics. As long as I can remember, advertising has been exaggerated and the misleading "has to be understood"...Returning would be somewhat shameful even, did you really think that buying this product would make you look like the girl in the advertisement...Advertisements sell images...They are not supposed to work as led to believe, just to sell a while and then bring another 70% better product to the market..."</p>
41-50	<p>" No, I have not. Somehow I believe that I should have known that there are no miracles..."</p> <p>"Yes, I have returned. Did not get any answer from the manufacturer."</p> <p>"Yes. The first company took it appropriately and thanked for the feedback with a discount coupon. The other questioned my opinion..."</p> <p>"...the company advertised organic cosmetic and ethicalness, but the product was tested on animals. "We are sorry that the product did not meet your expectations."</p>
51-60	<p>" Yes. The product was sent to be inspected, no refund or answer..."</p>

	<p><i>"...Usually returning has gone without problems. Couple of times they have plead to the features of the product but returning has always been successful. I am persistent."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, when I got an allergic reaction from some alpha-hydroxy acids...I would have gotten a deodorant as a replacement, but I passed because there were some acids as well."</i></p> <p><i>"...I was allergic and...gave money back."</i></p> <p><i>"Got the money back."</i></p> <p><i>" No, I have not. And even if it could be returned it has all been used -e.g. when advertisement said that results would be showing after a month or two and by that the jar is empty so there is not much to return."</i></p> <p><i>"Just haven't had the energy...not good of course because then you just let them carry on like that."</i></p> <p><i>" That there is nothing that can be done, and that the effectiveness is individual."</i></p>
61-70	<p><i>" Foisted another product."</i></p> <p><i>" Yes. Got a refund."</i></p> <p><i>" Seller's body language answered. They could not care less. Just took the complaint. Maybe should have addressed the manufacturer directly."</i></p>

6 CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this thesis was to find out people's experiences about misleading advertising of cosmetic products, their awareness about the laws and guidelines concerning it and the effect it has towards the opinion about the company. The subject was studied with qualitative research method, by conducting a survey about the topic to which 205 people aged 21 to over 71 answered. The survey was sent as a public link to networks and to one closed Facebook group, where members were assumed to be interested about the matter. The survey was conducted in November 2019 by the author, and the results are presented in this report. The results show the opinions of a quite small sample group, so in order to be able to draw more comprehensive conclusions, a larger sample group would be required. Also, to get deeper information about the reasons behind the opinions, a more detailed and comprehensive survey would be required. The reliability of the results has been tried to guarantee by allowing the respondents to answer only once, but the possibility of insincere answers cannot be ruled out.

Although the laws and regulations concerning the advertising of cosmetics are very clear, it seems that misleading advertising still happens quite a lot. And although the rules apply to all advertising channels, social media is the place where people consider it happens the most. The reason might be that it is more difficult to monitor all the advertising happening on social media than on television for example. Also, as bloggers and other influencers are becoming more and more important "beauty ambassadors", for an ordinary consumer it can sometimes be difficult to separate how much of what they say is true. After all, the influencers are getting paid to promote the products. In the responses, in the age group of 21-30 years old the amount of "I'm not sure" answers when asking how well people recognise misleading advertising from truthful stood out. It would be interesting to know whether these people are not sure about their own ability to recognise misleading advertising or just were not sure what is meant by it in this case. If the reason is the first one, it could also indicate that the line between what is considered as advertising and what is not is not clear to younger people.

Also, what was interesting to notice was the contradiction between people's opinion about how well they recognise misleading advertising, and the amount of people who had bought products based on an advertisement and found out that they were not what was promised. It raises a question, why this happens? Is it because of brand loyalty? Do people want to believe that their favourite brand will deliver the promise? Or do people want to believe that the promise, even though questionable, would become true in their case? In the results, especially the younger respondents were more likely to give the company the benefit of a doubt even after being disappointed. 73 per cent of people aged 21-30 would continue buying from that company, although with distrust. The older respondents were more likely to stop buying from the company in question. One reason could also be that the younger generations have become more used to the disposable culture, where cheaper products are bought and disposed more easily. This could also be seen from the answers concerning the price of the product which people would return; younger people were less likely to return cheaper products.

In general, anti-age products was the most mentioned category connected to misleading advertising. The percentage share of people choosing makeup as the most represented category in misleading advertisements decreased when the age of the respondents increased. This could be assumed to be natural because makeup advertisements are usually targeted towards younger customer segments rather than for older, and anti-age products vice versa. People also tend to pay more attention to the advertisements which promote products in their interest groups. The society also tends to dictate what products people should use and in what age.

All in all, the effect of age was visible in many questions. In addition to the aforementioned, if we look closer to the responses to the question where people consider seeing misleading advertising the most, the percentage share of people choosing print media as the place where they see it the most increased along with the age of the respondents. The conclusion from this could be that younger people read less, as has been discussed in news recently.

The awareness of consumer protection law was high among all age groups, but still people seem to be uncertain of what it covers. 44 per cent of people did not know that according to it, a product can be returned if it is not equivalent to the promises in the advertisement. It could be assumed that people do not see this as a flaw which would entitle for a refund, but instead an unfortunate mistake they made personally.

From the answers given to the open-ended questions, what stood out was the fact that many people see misleading advertising as something that should be understood, and that it is somehow shameful to even try to question that by returning the products that were not as promised. But why it is so? Why is it the consumers' responsibility to understand that advertising is not truthful, and not the company's responsibility to be sincere? It would be interesting to study this matter even further in the future. The biggest question remaining is: Why did you buy it if you knew it was too good to be true?

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APPENDIX 1: THE QUESTIONNAIRE (FINNISH VERSION)

Harhaanjohtava kosmetiikkamainonta

Tämän kyselyn kohderyhmänä ovat henkilöt, jotka kokevat kohdanneensa harhaanjohtavaa kosmetiikan mainontaa.

Harhaanjohtavalla kosmetiikan mainonnalla tarkoitetaan tässä kyselyssä sellaista mainontaa, joka antaa kuluttajalle virheellisiä tietoja tuotteen

- ominaisuuksista, laadusta tai määrästä
- käytöstä tai käytön vaikutuksista
- tuotteelle tehtyjen testien tuloksista

Kosmetiikalla tarkoitetaan tässä kyselyssä meikkejä, ihon puhdistustuotteita, kosteusvoiteita tai muita **kasvoille** käytettäviä tuotteita.

Kyselyyn vastaaminen vie vain hetken, eikä vastaajien tietoja kerätä mihinkään rekisteriin. Vastauksia käsitellään luottamuksellisesti, eikä yksittäistä vastaajaa pysty tunnistamaan vastausten perusteella.

1. Ikäsi*

- Alle 20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- Yli 71

2. Miten hyvin koet erottavasi harhaanjohtavan kosmetiikkamainonnan totuudenmukaisesta? *

1. En lainkaan 2. Melko huonosti 3. En osaa sanoa 4. Melko hyvin 5. Todella hyvin

3. Kuinka usein koet kohtaavasi harhaanjohtavaa kosmetiikkamainontaa? *

- Päivittäin
- Viikoittain
- Kuukausittain
- Harvemmin

4. Missä koet kohtaavasi harhaanjohtavaa kosmetiikkamainontaa eniten? *

- Televisio
- Painettu media (esim. lehdet)
- Sähköinen media (verkkolehdet, blogit, muut verkkosivustot)
- Sosiaalinen media

- Muu, mikä?

5. Minkä tuoteryhmän mainokset koet eniten harhaanjohtaviksi? *

- Meikit
- Puhdistustuotteet
- Kosteusvoiteet
- Anti age-tuotteet
- Muu, mikä?

6. Oletko joskus ostanut kosmetiikkatuotteen näkemäsi mainoksen perusteella ja huomannut, ettei se vastannut mainoksessa luvattua? *

- Kyllä
- En

7. Miten tuote ei mielestäsi vastannut mainoksessa luvattua? *

8. Jos ostamasi tuote ei ole vastannut / ei vastaisi mainoksessa luvattua, miten se vaikutti / vaikuttaisi mielipiteeseesi yrityksestä? *

- En enää osta kyseisen yrityksen tuotteita
- Ostan tuotteita, mutta suhtaudun niihin varauksella
- Ei mitenkään
- Muu, mikä?

9. Oletko tietoinen kosmetiikan mainontaa säätelevistä laeista ja ohjeista? *

- Kyllä
- En

10. Oletko tietoinen kuluttajansuojalaista? *

- Kyllä
- En

11. Oletko tietoinen, että kuluttajansuojalain mukaan tuotteen voi palauttaa, ellei se vastaa mainoksessa luvattua? *

- Kyllä
- En

12. Minkä hintaluokan tuotteen olisit valmis palauttamaan, jos koet/kokisit ettei se vastaa luvattua? *

- 10 euroa tai alle
- 11-20 euroa
- 21-30 euroa
- 31 euroa tai yli

13. Oletko joskus palauttanut tuotteen valmistajalle tai myyjälle sillä perusteella, ettei se vastannut luvattua? Miten sinulle vastattiin? Jos et ole, voit lopettaa kyselyyn vastaamisen Lähetä-painikkeella.