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# ADVERTISING IN FASHION BLOGS

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## **FOREWORD**

This thesis project has been long and exhausting. The mid-seminar was held some time ago already and after that I have only occasionally concentrated on my thesis while working full-time at the same time. During spring 2012 I eventually got frustrated on my thesis project just hanging undone and started to progress with the writing with an ambition.

I humbly want to thank my always so positive supervisor Ms Rosmeriany Nahan-Suomela for having patience with me and being very encouraging. She pushed me forward when I was questioning my progress and offered help when needed. I also want to thank Ms Maj-Lis Backman who was always very understanding. My special thanks go to Tuukka, Sanni, Virve, Piia and to my loving family, who have experienced this bumpy process with me. They cheered me up when things felt impossible.

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis studied social media, fashion blogs and advertising in them. The subject is extremely interesting and important due to the fast growing, relatively new form of advertising where real people advertise to real people through social media. The aim was to find out how people react to advertising and to understand the power and opportunities of a fashion blog when it comes to advertising in today's world.

This thesis is divided into three different sections: introduction, theoretical study part and empirical study. The theoretical study consisted of blogs, advertising in many different forms and social media. The empirical research consisted of introducing the research methodology and procedures, how the questionnaire was planned and analyzing the results as well as a conclusion.

The empirical study was carried out as a qualitative research. Altogether there were 103 respondents, all readers of fashion blogs. A questionnaire was created on a web page and later introduced to the public by two fashion bloggers.

The findings showed that most readers are disappointed in how advertising is done in fashion blogs at the moment. Many speculations were given about the motivation of a fashion blogger to advertise products. The study proved that less expensive magazines are bought and consumers are about to choose free, more real time fashion blogs over once-a-month published women's magazines. The results of the research are more closely examined at the empirical and conclusion sections of this thesis.

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Keywords Fashion Blog, Online Advertising, Social Media

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä	Jaana Matikainen
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Tämä opinnäytetyö tutki sosiaalista mediaa, muotiblogeja ja mainontaa niissä. Aihe on erityisen mielenkiintoinen ja tärkeä, sillä kyseinen mainontatyyli on alati kasvava ja varsin uusi tapa, jossa oikeat ihmiset mainostavat oikeille ihmisille käyttäen hyödyksi sosiaalista mediaa. Tavoitteena oli selvittää, miten ihmiset reagoivat mainontaan sekä ymmärtää muotiblogien valta ja mahdollisuudet nyky-yhteiskunnassa mainostamisen saralla.

Tämä opinnäytetyö on jaettu kolmeen eri osioon: se sisältää johdannon, teorian sekä empiirisen osan. Työn teoriaosuudessa on käsitelty blogeja, mainontaa monissa eri muodoissa sekä sosiaalista mediaa. Empiirinen tutkimus koostui tutkimuksen metodologiasta, kyselylomakkeen suunnittelusta sekä tulosten analysoinnista sekä johtopäätöksistä.

Empiirinen tutkimus toteutettiin kvalitatiivisena tutkimuksena, jota varten haastateltiin yhteensä 103:aa muotiblogin lukijaa. Kyselylomake luotiin internetsivulle, jonka linkin kaksi muotibloggaajaa jakoi päivityksen yhteydessä.

Tuloksista ilmeni, että useimmat lukijat ovat pettyneitä siihen miten mainonta muotiblogeissa hoidetaan tällä hetkellä. Monet spekuloiivat sitä mikä saa muotibloggaajan mainostamaan tuotteita. Tutkimus osoitti, että kalliita lehtiä ostetaan vähemmän kuin ennen ja lukijat valitsevat yhä useammin tiheästi päivittyvän muotiblogin lukemisen kerran kuukaudessa ilmestyvän naistenlehden sijaan. Tuloksia käsitellään tarkemmin tämän opinnäytetyön empiirisessä osassa sekä johtopäätöksessä.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the thesis consists of the background of the study and the aims of the research, as well as the reasons why the specific topic was chosen. It will also introduce the basic information of the overall structure and specify the limitations to the thesis. Research problems will also be identified.

This topic was chosen as a result of my own interest towards fashion blogs and advertising in them. The topic is also extremely current and interesting, as we are living in a world where social media is taking place and the possibilities it has to offer are unforeseen. Esa Sirkkunen from Tampere University has studied social media and according to him, some fashion blogs can even be compared to real media, such as women's magazines. Sirkkunen also states that today 15-25 year old women are the most active users of social media, such as Facebook and blogs. (Topelius 2010)

As many companies have already started a blog supporting their own website, some companies have even replaced their original webpage with a blog. It is free to use and a lot easier for anyone in the company to keep it updated compared to a normal website. The future of the internet is social media and companies are starting to realize it by now. (Hay 2011)

Companies are also now sending their products to fashion bloggers for free hoping that they would get advertising space in front of thousands of readers, the exact target group they are craving for to be their customers. Actually this is not even risky for companies: practically products sent to bloggers won't cost anything to them but blog fame can be enormous. Today fashion bloggers also get invitations to the same occasions as fashion magazine agents. We have even come to a stage where it is worth sending just a normal blogger to Paris or New York to a remarkable fashion show. That is how important fashion blogs are today. (Kangasniemi, 2009)



In the beginning the idea was to get answers for the research from both, blog readers and bloggers themselves. The idea was to draw up a questionnaire for readers and ask open questions from bloggers where they could have answered freely. Then answers would have been compared and bloggers' opinion would have added some more value to this thesis. Those bloggers who were working for blog portals had committed on not revealing anything about advertising or how things are done, and the ones blogging privately did not feel comfortable talking about their “business”. Many bloggers were contacted in the beginning but as they politely declined one after another, they were confined out of this research and the main area started to focus only on examining the readers opinions.

Due to the reason of lack of information and the newness of the topic and all that is happening around it makes the research a little bit more challenging but at the same time extremely interesting. As companies realize the endless opportunities when it comes to advertising in fashion blogs, a new way of introducing products to clients will shake the fashion markets.

Advertising as being the main focus in this research, the study is thereby centered on people's opinion about the heavy advertising, which they see when entering to the most popular fashion blogs. Those pioneer companies which have already understood the power of social media are making their brands and products known to thousand of readers just by sending free products to bloggers or offering them a possibility to try their services; bloggers try them out, hopefully write a positive review of the product and that's how companies get a good deal. On the other hand the writers are also able to make the company's life as easy as possible: they just enter into a specific web store page (e.g. Ellos, Nelly) and make a very fast, easy and small trade doubler agreement with the company. As a result company gets their logo on the writer's page, and the writer gets some 10 cents every time a reader presses the company's logo and enters their page.

One attention seeking strategy developed in recent years to increasing levels of sophistication is the startling image (Goddard 1998, 12). Although companies don't have to put shocking images to writers' pages to call for attention, they still know how to make the small banners as desirable to press as possible; usually banners are twinkling and showing many of the new items in the shop in just a few seconds.

Simply put, this research goal is also to find out how people react to this new kind of advertising and marketing of products and if this is possibly going to explode into the same dimensions as in some other countries. There are several forms of advertising in fashion blogs, and they are going to be examined in the upcoming chapters.

After its completion, this research study could assist companies as well as bloggers to develop their behaviour and advertising plan and structure in terms of maximizing customer satisfaction via fashion blogs. The research might also help bloggers to determine if they want to choose heavy advertising, not advertising at all or something between. This research study is made without any help or collaboration from any company.

### **1.1. Research Aims**

The aims of the research are the following:

- To find out how people, more specifically readers, react to the advertising in fashion blogs
- To investigate advertising in fashion blogs
- To try to realize how advertising has affected to fashion blogs
- To understand the state and power of social media and a blog in today's world and future world
- After dealing with the results, to describe the reactions and come up with suggestions and possible alternatives to the existing method of distribution of advertising.

At the end of the thesis the research study will be analyzed and conclusions will be made as well as my own recommendations will be given based on the data information.

## **1.2. Research Questions**

Research questions in this thesis are as follow:

- How do readers feel about advertising in fashion blogs?
- Do they consider advertising as a positive or a negative thing?
- Should advertising in fashion blogs change somehow, and if yes, how?

## **1.3. Limitations**

As mentioned earlier, there is a huge lack of material concerning this specific topic due to fast-growing and -changing world of fashion blogs. The subject itself is also somewhat new and the market niche as well so there has not been too many publications yet (excluding numerous women's magazines, *Iltalehti*, *Iltasanomat*, and some local newspapers) which would handle only and specifically this subject. Although one can find many publications about advertising, they do not necessarily deal with internet advertising, not to even mention fashion blogs. The internet offers many options at the moment and I hope the articles and possible publications will arise during my thesis writing period. If not, the theoretical framework will be worked out with the information available at the moment.

One way to acquire the most up-to-date information is by contacting the actual companies which, at the moment, are involved in this kind of work and offer the best know-how information available right now. The only limitation which I see in this case is the unwillingness or lack of time from the opposite party to answer e-mails, especially in time.

I am not affiliated or providing results with or for any company so I am not concerned about the possible lack of information or these limitations. I do not have to fill up anyone's, except my own, expectations concerning this thesis and the study made. For the purpose of this research study it is limited mostly onto advertising instead of marketing and advertising, due to a too wide a scale to study in one thesis.

#### **1.4. Methodology**

For the purpose of the study the qualitative research method will be used. A questionnaire with many open questions will be planned, and it will be released on a specific web page. Bloggers will be contacted and the idea is to get them to share the link for the questionnaire. The used research method will be more closely discussed in chapter 5.

#### **1.5. Structure of the study**

This part is a brief approach to the chapters and will guide the reader through the entire thesis topic. In the first chapter the introduction to this thesis is given and the background of the research study is explained. A short explanation and an introduction to fashion blog advertising are given and also the reasons why this specific topic was chosen are explained. The aims and limitations of this study are explained as well. Research methodology is also briefly explained in the first chapter of the thesis.

The next chapter is the theoretical part. Theory part will be handled in the following order:

1. Social Media
2. Blogs
3. Advertising

Subtitles are included in every main topic of the theory part and they will guide the reader through the theoretical part of this study.

The following chapter will be about the empirical study of this thesis. The research questions as well as results will be introduced and shortly analyzed. Respondents and data collection methods are also introduced.

The results of the research will be deeply analyzed based on the theoretical study in chapter six. In the last chapter of this thesis a conclusion will be made as also suggestions for further research will be given.

## 2. SOCIAL MEDIA

*"What happens in Vegas stays on Youtube."*

(Qualman 2009)

Blogs and blogging are just a small part of social media. In this chapter social media will be discussed and also most important terms, which are useful to learn regarding the subject, will be introduced.

Social media is hugely expanding and at the moment it is changing nearly everything in our lives. As stated by Paul Gillin (Hay: The Social Media Survival Guide, 2011 19), social media is a great equalizer. "It gives voice to millions of people who, until just a few years ago, were shut out of the media equation". Global audience is reachable for basically everyone today. Social media is also transforming the institutions that have defined our world. People spent six billion minutes on Facebook, downloaded one billion YouTube videos and logged over 1.4 million blog entries every day. This was in the year 2009, so we can assume the numbers to increase every year.

(Hay 2011, 19)

There might be as many definitions for social media as there are users for it. The following one is by Ron Jones:

*"Social media essentially is a category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking, and bookmarking online. Most social media services encourage discussion, feedback, voting, comments, and sharing of information from all interested parties. It's more of a two-way conversation, rather than a one-way broadcast like traditional media."* (Jones 2009). He also states that one unique aspect of social media is the idea that you can stay connected or linked to people, resources and other sites.

Today it is no more the television advertisements that are the biggest influence of purchase intent; it is the people referring products and services via social media tools that are the new things where consumers are counting on. There is also less need to subscribe to expensive newspapers or magazines due to the reason that consumers are actually finding relevant and on-time information via social media. The news are now finding people.

(Qualman 2009, xviii)

The biggest difference, comparing to traditional media, is the two-way conversation. In social media anyone can get involved to sharing and commenting, and that is what traditional media lacks. The Social Web is not the best place for obsoletes. People want to be listened to on the social web and they want to interact with each other. They do not want to hear branders tell how great their products are; they want to read what others have to say about a product or a service. They neither want to be drowned with offers and different event announcements.

(Hay 2011, 387)

The key aspect of social media is the ability to tag items. Via tagging users can help each other make sense of all information that is available on the web: cataloging the internet for other potential readers of some specific topic. This tactic helps everyone surfing the internet to find exactly what they are looking for.

(Qualman 2009, 19)

The power of social media is still hard to understand by many of us. Students have been kicked out from universities for collaborating on Twitter, hi5, Facebook and MySpace, and many potential employers haven't hired some people due to the content of their social media pages. Some employees have even been fired for the same reason. Social media definitely beats up traditional advertising: they are free to use and placement is more timely and cost effective.

(Qualman 2009, 33, 87)

Some general areas of social media tools can be divided into many different categories as follow:

- Rss Feeds/Blogging
- Podcasting/Video Blogging
- Social Networking
- Micro-Blogging
- Geo-Tagging
- Lifestreaming/Social Pages
- Social Bookmarking
- Crowd-Sourcing
- Image Sharing
- Video Sharing
- Document/Slide Sharing
- Social Calendar/Event Sites
- Wikis
- Virtual Worlds
- Social Media News Release/Newsroom
- Custom Applications/Widgets
- Custom Social Network
- Mobile Site
- Mobile Application
- Distributed Social Networking
- Linked/Structured Data
- RDF/FOAF File

( Hay 2011, 30)

Although some of these forms of social media can seem unfamiliar to many people, most logos are actually everywhere in the internet and easily recognizable. As shown in Figure 6, most of these social media logos are familiar to a lot of people, although people might not really know what is the overall concept behind them.



# Social Media Landscape



Figure 1. Social Media Landscape (Heflin 2010)

This thesis concentrates on blogs, so it is not going to handle all the different social media forms separately as social media is not the main focus. The concept of a blog will be intensively observed and explained in the next chapter. Two things that are closely connected to blogs though, are RSS Feeds and SEO. These are going to be discussed shortly next, just for the reader to get a wider perspective on understanding how effortless the world is around blogs due to these two factors.

## 2.1. RSS Feed

Shortly after finding many interesting blogs, one can realize that it is actually very time-consuming to surf between different web pages to find every possible update of favourite blogs. Many blogs offer an RSS Feed, which makes it easier to read and follow a blog. RSS feed is a format of delivering regularly changing web content to anyone who wants it.

(Kilpi 2006, 19)

RSS is an abbreviation of Really Simple Syndication and it is a way of sharing information across the Internet. It saves time because one does not have to visit each site individually: privacy is ensured all the time, but it is still not necessary to join each site's email newsletter to get the latest news.

(What is RSS)

The process of an RSS Feed is quite simple:

- Content in the form of a prepared file is generated from a website as an RSS feed. Content stands for a blog entry, for example.
- Visitors who have access to a "feed reader", will have the "feed" available for subscription.
- When becoming a subscriber, one can read every post that is added to the website's feed without ever having to return to the original site.
- Every time subscribers open their feed reader they will be informed of new posts that are available for every subscriptions they have made. A subscriber can have endless amount of subscriptions.

(Hay 2011, 53-54)

Web browsers (including Safari, Opera, Firefox, Internet Explorer and Chrome) usually check for feeds automatically when someone visits a website, and display the orange RSS icon when they find one.

(BBC UK 2011)

RSS is not becoming widespread before it is incorporated into a standard software, but it will happen soon in the future. RSS has already been embraced by publishers such as BBC and by visiting their webpage, the potential can be seen. It enables everyone to subscribe to a really specific content of their own interest and then provides an alert when a new story is published to the webpage.

(Chaffey 2007, 100)

## **2.2. SEO**

SEO (Search engine optimization) is a method that helps specific websites to rank higher in search engines, such as Google, Yahoo and Bing. Everyone wants their website to be the first one that people find when they Google keywords similar to the products or services they offer. SEO helps these search engines recognize the relevance between websites and the keywords.

(Buckles)

According to Dave Chaffey (Chaffey 2007, 412), SEO can be defined as follows:

*”Search-engine optimization involves a structured approach used to increase the position of a company or its products in search-engine natural or organic results listings for selected key phrases. It also involves controlling index inclusion or ensuring that as many pages of a site as possible are included within the search engine.”*

In Figure 7 is shown a simplified explanation of the normal SEO process. The process starts by researching the main keywords of the webpage. After that the structure will be developed and the main keywords should be optimized for every existing page. Links will be build to all main pages to easier the process. Search engines may take some time to update the links but when it is done one, rankings and traffic can easily be analyzed.



Figure 2. The SEO Process. (Site Promo Experts)

Analyzing rankings and traffic is actually really important also for fashion bloggers: most popular bloggers want to know where their readers come to the blog, how much time do they spend there and what keywords they used on search engines before entering to their site. By showing interest on how and why people find their way into a specific blog, they can optimize the amount of new, keen visitors.

In the next chapter term blog will be deeply explained as well as contents and appearance of a blog will be studied. A short history of a blog will also be studied which helps to understand the massive change in life cycle of a blog.

### **3. BLOGS**

Blogs are about to give a totally new meaning to word-of-mouth: as readers consider bloggers as "one of us" due to active interaction and easy accessibility, it is understandable what an affect they can actually have on readers. This chapter will give an overall but still deep understanding of a modern blog.

#### **3.1. Short History**

The Internet was already full of home pages in the year 1997, and the same year was a huge step forward in the history of blogs. A modern blog was actually a continuation for online diaries, which people were able to write anonymously. The term "weblog" was then created by American Jorn Barger in the year 1997. Very shortly after the term began to get new forms such as "blog" and "blogger". The first weblogs were list of links. They contained varying degrees of links, commentaries, personal thoughts and essays. Prior to these services, weblogs were actually created only by those who knew how to build a social networking site. A weblog keeper had to learn how to code a HTML weblog, and many built their own sites after a long day on a voluntary basis.

(Sedergren 2004.)

Blogging started to gain popularity fast after a slow start: during 1998 and 1999 thousands of online diaries opened, until in 1999 Evan Williams and Meg Hourihan (Pyra Labs) launched blogger.com. Later, in 2003 Google purchased the blog page. After that it was easier for bloggers to connect to others who shared similar interests: blogging was free and technically easier.

(Kilpi 2006, 11-12)

In 2004, a search engine specialized on blogs informed that they are already tracking over 4 million weblogs. In 2006, the number was 35,3 and it was continuing to double every 6 months. In April 2006, 75 000 blogs were created daily. (Technorati)

It is clearly obvious that blogging is not slowing down anytime in the near future.

### **3.2. What is a Blog?**

A typical blog is driven by a content management system which features blog posts and comments on them. Blogs come in all shapes and forms: there are personal diaries which are only shared with friends and family and blogs to support political campaigns, media programs and current issues. There are also blogs that are written by just one blogger as well as blogs that have a large community of writers. (Quirk.)

Blogging is one of the most common forms of social media; some sources even suggest that approximately hundreds of thousands of blogs are being created every day. Most of them die right after the beginning obviously, but the number maybe gives some kind of illusion of the popularity of blogging.

Blogs are here to stay. Companies and businesses that want to be taken seriously need to consider starting their actual blog as a company blog or at least listen and follow to what the consumers are saying about them in the blogosphere. Most good quality blogs are interactive, which means the visitors are allowed to leave comments after every post. In that way blogs can actually be seen as a form of social networking and the writers can bond with the readers and other bloggers very intensively. The normal blogging consists of text, but most bloggers share pictures as well as videos with their readers. (Kilpi 2006.)

A blog usually proceeds in a chronicle order: the latest note is first and the older ones following after, without changing and still with a possibility to leave and answer comments. Almost every blog post consists of a title, writing, permanent address (permalink) and date, and in some cases time as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 3. Appearance of a Blog (Blondesalad 2012)

Many bloggers also have their favourite blogs on the side bar, which makes it very easy for the viewer to sail from a blog to another. It is important for the writer that their blog is easy to find information from. The page is always more fun to browse with some "helpers" like a translator for international readers, as also shown in Figure 1, month/history browser where it is easy to view posts from a specific month, and usually bloggers also categorize posts under key words like "clothes", "bags", "hair", "travelling" etc. All this makes reading more pleasant for the reader, and also the clearer the blog is, the less bloggers will receive comments asking about the things they have already answered to many times before. Basically that saves a lot of time from the blogger.

Normally bloggers introduce themselves shortly at the beginning of the first page, so that the reader can get some kind of a clue where to she has clicked herself into.

Almost every popular blogger has a Facebook page for the blog and the reader can follow her almost 24/7 via twitter and other free internet pages like Fashiolista, where one can gather and share all her shopping cravings for the moment. All of this is easily found on the side bars where you just click and you are redirected to the new server. Below in Figure 2 there is an example of this. In Sweden, the two biggest and most famous bloggers Isabella Löwengrip and Elin Kling have even taken a step on from the Internet, and now they both have their own magazines.

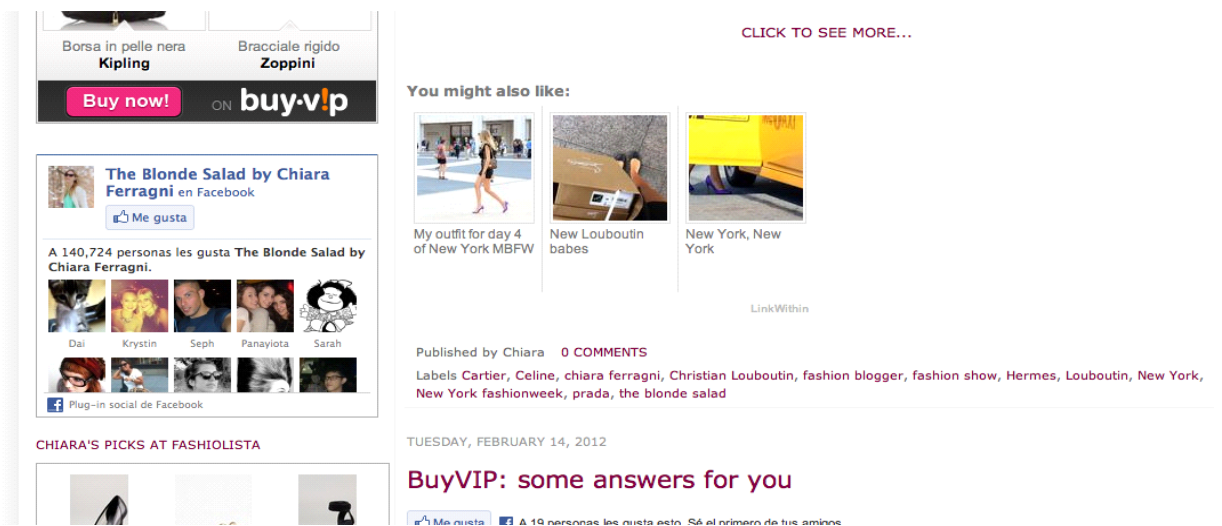


Figure 4. Blog and Social Media

As mentioned earlier, bloggers can easily interact with their readers through a comment box. Via comments the writer can get instant feedback from the viewers and answer to their questions right away. The most popular bloggers get hundreds of comments during just one day, and if the blogger is announcing a competition concerning give-away-products, there might be thousands of comments. Below in Figure 3 is an example of a comment box. Chiara is extremely popular blogger and always get hundreds of comments to her posts.



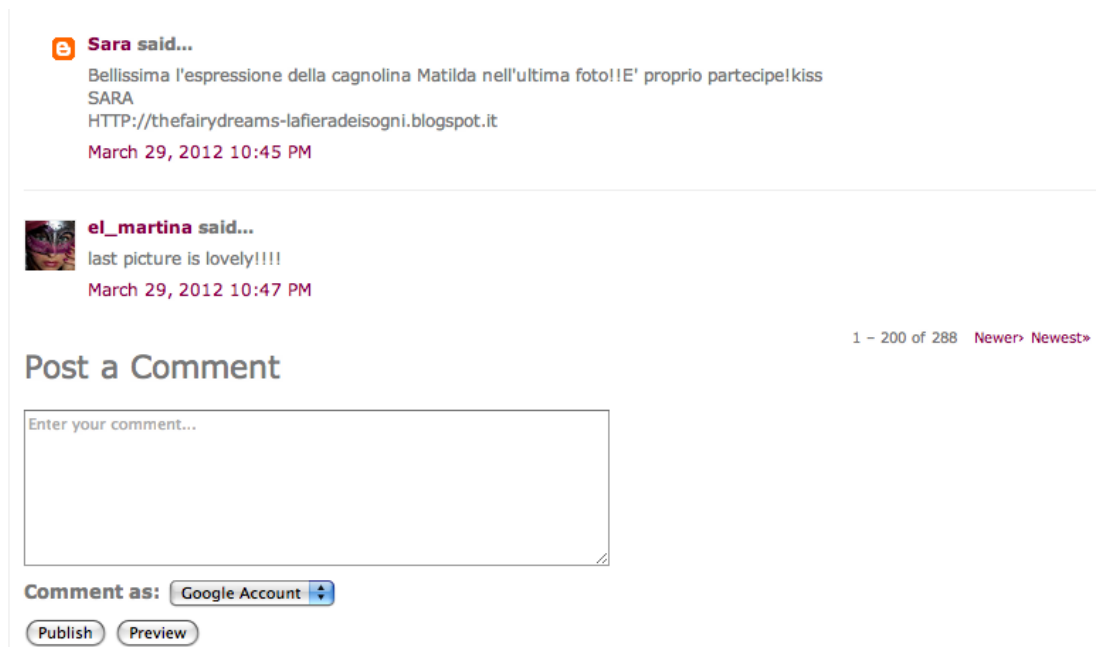


Figure 5. Comment Box

From the example it is also really easy to realize what an impact one blog can have on people, and what kind of possibilities companies see in advertising on them. Considering, for example, Chiara's blog, not any other media can reach thousands of young adults around the world who share the same interests, in just a couple of hours. There are amazing opportunities for companies to get visibility for their products and services somewhere where the target group is exactly what they wish for. It is also totally normal that people advertise their own blogs by commenting on the popular ones. Some do it in a relatively obvious way in order to get as much attention as possible and to get new visitors to their own sites.

There are hundreds of millions of people in the blogosphere at the moment and the number is growing every day. It is the most revolutionary process in the web environment. Every other Internet user reads a blog in Finland and every fifth created content to the social media in the year 2009. Never before in the world's history have people actively produced such an amount in our mutual global cultural environment and even in a real-time process, as today in blogosphere and social media.

(Luostarinen 2010, 18)

The next chapter will handle advertising. The key concepts of advertising and advertising on Internet will be studied. The main focus will be given to advertising in fashion blogs, where different forms of advertising will be deeply looked at and examples will be given. Finnish blog portal Indiedays is introduced, as well as famous international bloggers. The following chapter will be concluded by introducing an example of a blog that openly does business by advertising in a blog.

## 4. ADVERTISING

*"Any fool can make soap. It takes a clever man to sell it."*

(British soap maker Thomas J. Barratt, 1865)

Many people consider Francis Wayland Ayer to be the inventor of modern advertising. With his own advertising business, N.W. Ayer & Son (started in Philadelphia in 1869) Ayer shaped the growth of advertising as a major factor in the business world. He raised ethical standards for the field and he was also the innovator of different devices including trademarks, slogans, and pictorial displays. Some of the major companies and institutes that used N.W. Ayer and Son and copied the tale of time, are De Beer's, Morton Salt, Whitman's Chocolates, Swinger Sewing machines, Camel cigarettes, Ford, Harvard, Proctor and Gamble soaps, Standard Oil, and National Biscuit Company (Uneeda Biscuit).

(La Historia de la Publicidad 2007)

What is advertising then? Although we see it every day on Internet, TV, radio, newspapers and magazines, we hardly ever think about it more deeply. Advertising is trying to generate a desired consumer response based on responding to a set of carefully designed objectives.

(Wells, Moriarty, Burnett & Lwin 2007, XIX.)

*"It's a complex form of communication that operates with objectives and strategies leading to various types of impact on consumer thoughts, feelings and actions. It's about creating a message and sending it to someone, hoping they will react in a certain way."*

(Wells, Moriarty, Burnet & Lwin 2007, 5.)

The next subtitle introduces the key concepts of advertising, which will help to build up the base for understanding the topic of this thesis.

## 4.1. The Key Concepts of Advertising

As shown in Figure 4, advertising includes four different factors: strategy, creative idea, creative execution and creative media use.

### 1. Advertising Strategy

- Logic and planning behind the advertisement, gives direction and focus.  
Who are the target group? What is the message behind the ad?

### 2. Creative Idea

- Central idea that grabs attention and sticks into the memory. Creativity is needed in research efforts and buying and placing of ads in the media.

### 3. Creative Execution

- Photography, writing, acting, setting, printing and the way the product is depicted reflect the highest production values available to the industry.  
Clients obviously demand the best production their budget allows.

### 4. Creative Media Use

- Everything has to be delivered somehow. Most commonly used is media: channels that reach a large audience, such as television, magazines or the internet.

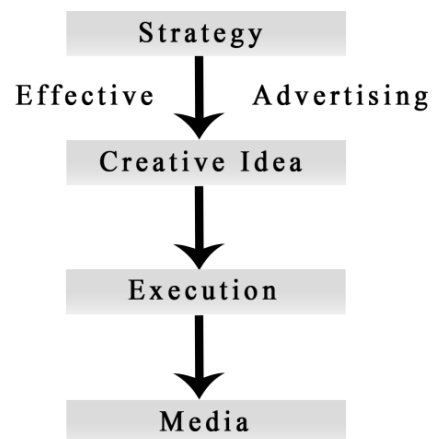


Figure 6. Four Fundamental Elements of Advertising (Wells, Moriarty, Burnett & Lwin 2007, 6)

All these factors determine the effectiveness of an advertisement. How you say something and where you say it is just as important as what you say. (Wells, Moriarty, Burnett & Lwin 2007, 6.). This should also be taken into consideration by bloggers and companies cooperating with them: badly arranged advertising or introducing a new product just dollar signs in eyes is not going to take anyone to anywhere. When Daniel Wellington -just some months ago- introduced their watches to consumers by using bloggers as an advertisement channel, they maybe didn't succeed as well as expected. The company sponsored a watch for these bloggers at the exactly same time, and when bloggers wrote about the watch with a lottery included in a post, not that many people were keen on the watches any more. They sure remembered the brand, but got irritated to the fact that all blogs are raving about the same watch at the same time. Many readers wondered in the comment boxes that if anyone actually even wanted to buy one of their watches after such a crazy campaign. The company maybe should have introduced the new product with more patience.

Most of the time advertising is targeted at mass media where they try to convince people to take a certain action. Types of mass media include television, Internet, radio, news programs, and published pictures and articles. There are several reasons for advertising and the following ones are some examples:

- Increasing the sales of the product/service
- Creating/maintaining a brand identity/brand image
- Communicating a change in the existing product line
- Introduction of a new product or service
- Increasing the value of the brand or the company

(Manohar 2011)

## 4.2. Advertising in Internet

Online advertising has increased massively in the past few years. Ässä-magazine 2012 actually announced that online advertising is passing over the printed ones in the USA during this year. Internet advertising grew 23% up to 32 billion dollars last year in the USA, and it is expected to grow 23,3% this year. At the same time investigation company eMarketer expects printed advertising lower 6,1% at the same time.

When it comes to online advertising, the first step is testing all the options available. Most forms of online ads are cheap and easy to make, so it is cost effective to try as many of them as possible and find out which produces the best results. Online advertising also allows companies to easily review the effectiveness of their campaigns using tools like Google Analytics. (Griffin 2010) Some benefits of online media (can also be implemented on fashion blog advertising), as shown in Figure 5 are:

- Massive reach
- Remarkably educated and affluent audience
- Unparalleled targeting
- Real-time tracking
- Rich media branding
- Direct sales
- Cost per mille, the advert cost per thousand views

	Online	TV	Radio	Print
Scale of Reach	✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓
Demographic	✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Targeting	✓✓✓✓✓	✗	✗	✓
Tracking	✓✓✓✓✓	✗	✗	✗
Lead Generation	✓✓✓✓✓	✗	✗	✗
Direct Sales	✓✓✓✓✓	✗	✗	✗
Rich media	✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	✗	✗
CPM Rates	✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓

Figure 7. Online Advertising. (NetMauritius)

### 4.3. Advertising in Fashion Blogs

As many companies have already taken an advantage out of the blogs, Tiffany Srisook from American Apparel is one of them who have realized the opportunities blogs and bloggers have to offer to companies : *"The blog culture targets an audience that regular online campaigns cannot- real people talking to real people. Bloggers offer an authentic word of mouth. In addition to the conventionally recorded results, I'm really excited about the un-recorded aspects of this advertising - the fact that it's a discussion, not just yelling into a crowd."* (Blogads)

*"Most of these ethical choices revolve around money, notably the issues of advertising and of paid (or otherwise compensated) blog coverage or reviews. There are a lot of opportunities to get free stuff (even cold hard cash) by blogging, and as an independent journalist a blogger should have every right to take advantage of such offers, but to do so in a way that doesn't reflect badly on their integrity."*(Brown 2007)

In this case, where the interest is on investigating people's opinion about advertising in the most popular blogs in Finland, we can even discuss on some kind of celebrity branding: though writers are not really in a celebrity position-yet. This type of advertising focuses upon using celebrity power, fame, money and popularity to gain recognition for some company's products and even promote specific stores or products in their blog. In a long run and especially when things get bigger the use of celebrities can have its downsides also. One mistake by a celebrity, in this case a blog writer followed by thousands and thousands of readers, can be detrimental to the public relations of a brand. (Wikipedia)

If a company gives blogger a sample or give away out of their products, they cannot automatically expect anything as a counterpart: it is not obvious that the blogger writes about the product in a positive way. It is actually not even sure that the blogger writes about it at all. (Kilpi 2006, 95)

There is a teaching example of the power of a blogger. About 6 months ago one of the most popular bloggers in Finland, Anna, who writes a blog called Mungolife, posted a long story about a store called Superupeena. Anna asked and insisted all of her readers to avoid buying anything from this specific store, and wrote how non-professional the entrepreneur behind the store idea is. This caused a huge support for Anna by the readers, and most of them wanted to be "loyal" to her and never step to the store again.

All of this bad publicity for a naive mistake: Superupeena store owner had been in contact with Anna and asked her to present Superupeena web store in her blog. Anna agreed to this, and after that they had some misunderstanding about the time when the specific post would come out. The entrepreneur felt that Anna was not punctual enough and did not do as agreed, and decided to write to a well known forum about all the hassle. She wrote how immature the blog writer is and said that she would not like to do business with her again. Anna found out all this, and decided to blog about it. Superupeena store is now closed, although the entrepreneur stated that the closing did not have anything to do with this bad publicity. (Vanhanen 2011)

The most important thing to readers on advertising in fashion blogs seems to be honesty. The writer should make it absolutely clear if she was being compensated for "job" well done. It also seems to be important that writers have opinions of their own, and they are not influenced in any way by the payment. (Kilpi 2006, 137)

According to Heli Koppola from Cosmopolitan magazine, some bloggers are functioning clearly on commercial basis: for example writing positive advertisements about products that they got for free from the importers. As readers see the blogger as "one of us" and they feel that they can trust on her opinion, it is still hard to know if the blogger and her opinions have been affected by the company behind the brand. (Topelius 2010)



Advertising in fashion blogs is a modern way of doing business. Comparing to 1977, when 67% of people cited that the best source of product and brand information is word-of-mouth, the percent nowadays is 92. Today only 15% rely on traditional advertising and we have come to a stage where customers will actually market the product better than a company can. (Qualman 2009, 99, 118, 129)

There are many ways how a blogger can benefit when writing a fashion blog. Below are gathered some examples including pros and cons.

### 1. Adverts

(Including banner ads, text link ads, RSS ads, and ad networks). All of these can be sold individually or through an ad network.

+ Can be sold on a month-to-month basis

+ Most blog layouts contain the ability to host many ads: that is why there is an option to control the quantity and maximum profit.

+ You can hand over your ad work to a network: just put in the code, they generate the ads passively and you earn income.

-Are banner ads becoming irrelevant? Banner ads are not anymore seen as positive as before. Many consumers suffer from "banner blindness" which means they ignore anything on a website that looks like an ad. (Chaffey 2007, 419.)

-Ads, like text link ads and their networks, can hurt credibility with search engines and losing PageRank (see SEO, which was discussed earlier in this thesis).

-Ads can be cluttering, decrease the load time of the site, make it look cumbersome and overloaded. It is important to try to keep the ads relevant to the site; otherwise the page ends up looking like the site is full of spam.

## 2. Affiliate companies

Affiliate companies, like Commission Junction, Google Affiliates, or Share a Sale, allow to link to products through reputable companies; when readers click those links, a cookie is embedded in the browser. If a reader buys anything through the site (and through the cookie), the site owner earns a commission on the sale (typically 4-8% of the total purchase amount).

+ A passive mean of earning income: while inserting the links can be time consuming, once they are in, there is nothing else left to be done. From this moment it is up to the reader to click & buy.

+ You can earn money on your own purchases

+ Great way to support fellow bloggers—maybe they are affiliates with a company you are not, and you can purchase through their codes.

-In a tight economy, people may spend less money

-Readers can be distrustful

-Should be used consistently to generate long-term and ongoing cash flow

## 3. Selling/creating external products:

Creating and selling own external products can be a great way to monetize a blog. Many bloggers have shops associated with their sites (selling clothing, accessories, jewelry, art, etc.).

+ Monetary gain is pretty high— no split percentages with other companies (like with affiliates).

+ Products can be created/marketed/distributed by own means.

+ Possibility to create own affiliate program– this encourages other bloggers to sell writer's product on their site. While earning less (from paying out their commission), blogger is earning more because of maximizing the audience.

-A large, dedicated following of readers is useful to ensure the product sells.

-Takes most time from the blogger itself. Time-consuming.

-How well the product will sell after all?

#### 4. Trades: Freebies/swag/store credits

While this is not exactly putting money into a bank account, many companies offer store credit, products, or gift cards in exchange for reviews or even working for them. As more and more companies utilize blogs as a mean of outreach, they might hire bloggers to create that content.

+ Who doesn't love free products? By working with a company whose products a blogger would buy anyway, she is saving a lot of money.

-Working for trade/products/credits can devalue the work the blogger does. Once they start accepting products in place of payment, it might be hard to stop.

-Doesn't pay bills, pay off debt, or buy groceries.

( Mischief 2010.)

While subliminal advertising is widely being discussed over the Internet, some fashion blog readers feel that they have been or are victims of it constantly.

Subliminal advertising -which stands for hidden messages embedded on ads- are considered as a deceptive business method by the Federal Trade Commission (Lindstrom 2009.). Subliminal advertising is against law and should definitely not happen in any forms.

#### **4.4. Indiedays-portal**

Indiedays is a portal based on fashion, style and beauty. They have gathered 27 Finland's most popular fashion- and lifestyle blogs under this portal which was launched some years ago. Indiedays offers an easy way to find and follow quality blogs. Below are some brands that have been advertising on Indiedays' sites lately:

- Vero Moda – Clothing and accessories
- Marianne - Candy
- Rimmel - Make-up
- Kluuvi
- Easyjet - Travelling
- Vila the Slam Jeans - Clothing
- Nikon - Electronics
- Lindex Pink Collection – Clothing and accessories
- ED-GRL – Energy drink
- Aleksi 13 – Clothing and accessories
- Marimekko – Finnish clothing and accessories
- Sony Vaio – Electronics
- Nokia – Electronics
- Frank Provost – Hair care
- Vichy – Pharmacy-based skincare products
- JC – Clothes and accessories
- H&M – Clothes and accessories

These are some of the companies that have had their ads on Indiedays blogs so far. Although many of them are still related to clothing and beauty, there are also some other companies that have realized the possibilities of online and fashion blog advertising, even though they do not necessarily meet the normal expectations of a company which wants to cooperate with bloggers.

(Indiedays 2011)

#### **4.5. How do writers benefit from their cooperation with Indiedays?**

Writers get a reward (some earnings) of the contents they produce to their blog. Indiedays founders think this is totally fair because these blogs are the most popular internet pages in Finland. Indiedays gets income by selling advertising space for companies and takes care of the advertising and selling the advertising space from the blogs, while writers can concentrate on blogging. Indiedays founders state they are an impressive net media and because of that they get opportunities to do interesting things, including visiting showrooms and reporting of new things. They say they offer the writer a possibility to improve herself and for some it might even be a stepping stone to new occupations.

(Indiedays 2011)

Indiedays' contact person Esa Suurio was contacted by email in terms of this thesis and asked if he could specify the meaning of Indiedays more than they do on the website. The following questions were asked:

Can you tell more about how the advertising is arranged?

Have many companies realized the potential of advertising in fashion blogs?

Is it still a cheaper way to advertise comparing to other methods?

Are you able to tell what is being paid to the most popular Finnish bloggers at the moment?

What is your hypothesis for future blogging and advertising?

What do you think when people stop reading a blog when it's being "commercialized"?

He was being told that it is not mandatory to answer every question if he felt they were too intimate. He was also being advised that he could comment advertising in the way he thought was proper. His short answer was that these questions and the whole subject is too confidential and he is not able to comment any advertising details.

Also many Indiedays fashion bloggers were contacted, with a bit different questions though; the interest was more on their own opinions about advertising and why they actually wanted to join Indiedays. Just one of them answered the questions, also indirectly. Others either did not answer at all or told that they are actually not able to comment on anything.

The blogger who answered (she did not want her blog to be relieved) told that she is being paid like a part-time worker. She was emphasizing that Indiedays does not control her writings or how regularly she posts. She also stated that in her opinion the advertising must be done in a good sense of style and she does not really know how to feel towards blogs where the writer is willing to advertise anything if she just gets some products for free for doing it.

*"It's crucial to stay true to oneself, like not advertising gothic type clothes if you are totally a flower skirt-type, romantic person. In the worst case scenario it can cause a really bad reaction among readers."*

(Indiedays-blogger)

In addition to normal ads, bloggers are also allowed to take part on Indiedays' co-creation campaigns in case the writer is interested on the brand or product. It basically means that the blogger writes about her own experience -which is obviously positive- with the product or a brand and gets a gift card or other product present from the company.

Not all writers are totally happy in Indiedays though. Some of the most popular Finnish bloggers, including Anna from Mungolife, Nadja from Are you Feeling Fashionable? and Mimmi and Peppi from More to Love announced at the same time and about 1-2 months after launching Indiedays that they did no longer want to be a part of this portal. Reasons were undefined or "I didn't feel the concept was for me".

Some readers have rejected their favourite bloggers when they have moved under Indiedays-portal. The most common opinion is that they don't approve the commercialization the blogs face every day. Many readers still ignore the advertisement and try to focus on the blog itself.

#### **4.6. Famous International Bloggers**

The main interest in this research is observing the development of Finnish fashion blogs, not the international ones. There are still some that need a presentation; they are world's most powerful and yet again, the most monetarized, fashion blogs at the moment. By introducing some of them it might be easier to understand the meaning they have in advertising and marketing field these days. There sure are as many top ten lists as there are readers of blogs, but this following one has gathered all the bests together by researching many international blogs.

##### **1. Fashionista**

Hip updates on news and fashion industry gossip. Their "Splurge & Steals" features the best of what is in at the moment. Founded by the founder of Gawker.com, Elizabeth Spiers.

[www.fashionista.com](http://www.fashionista.com)

##### **2. Frugal-Fashionista**

The idea behind this blog is to take a celebrity look and recreate it with pieces that cost under \$50.

[www.frugal-fashionistas.com](http://www.frugal-fashionistas.com)

### 3.The Sartorialist

Founded by a former fashion buyer Scott Schuman.

Fashion trends handled by a fashion photographer.

[www.thesartorialist.blogspot.com](http://www.thesartorialist.blogspot.com)

### 4.Omiru

All about affordability.

[www.omiru.com](http://www.omiru.com)

### 5.TheCherryBlossomGirl

Written by a French fashion designer and an innovative insider's look at fashion.

[www.thecherryblossomgirl.com](http://www.thecherryblossomgirl.com)

### 6.GoFugYourself

Posts about celebrity fashion written by two girls who recently covered Fashion week for New York Magazine.

[www.gofugyourself.celebuzz.com](http://www.gofugyourself.celebuzz.com)

### 7.Goop

Lifestyle blog, said being created by Gwyneth Paltrow.

[www.goop.com](http://www.goop.com)

### 8.Jezebel

Covers everything from fashion, sex and celebrities.

[www.jezebel.com](http://www.jezebel.com)

### 9.FashionToast

Rumi, the writer, has become extremely famous only through her blog. She is someone who is passionate about fashion: both writing and creating it.

[www.fashiontoast.com](http://www.fashiontoast.com)



#### 10. ManoloTheShoeBlogger

Focused on shoes.

[www.shoeblogs.com](http://www.shoeblogs.com)

(Newlands 2009.)

Some of these blogs are definitely not the traditional types. They might have created their own domain and earn so much through their blogs already that there is no need to sell advertising space for disturbing banners. Some again, even though they are famous, are spammed by many Google ads and cooperating companies.

Fashion blogging is rapidly becoming a highly profitable business, with a mixture of independent blogs and well-funded fashion blog networks competing to dominate the space. Manolo's Shoe Blog, which is also in the previous top ten list, is believed to be the most profitable independent fashion blog in the world. It was rumored to earn around \$700000 a year by 2006. Manolo himself has actually confirmed earning a six-figure salary through blogging. Other commercially successful independent fashion blog, which was not named on the top ten list, includes The Budget Fashionista which reportedly brings in \$600000 per year in revenue. Also some other blogs are generating a six-figure income, mainly from advertising.

(Wikipedia)

#### **4.7. Money-making With a Fashion Blog: Example Stylebyme.net**

Some fashion blog writers are trying to make money through blogging very arrogantly. This site is an example of advertising where the writers are telling straight how much they charge for the advertising space.

Stylebyme.net is stating that it is quickly becoming one of the most popular fashion blogs online.

They now have more than 30.000 visitors per month (The amount is actually not that big, the most popular Finnish fashion blogs might have a lot more than 50.000 followers per week) with growth of 20% to 30% each month.

Stylebyme.net claims to have a number of various advertising opportunities across the site, including the following:

- Top banner - 500\$/month

A site wide reaches in front of every reader

- Text link promotion

40\$-100\$

- Paid article

50\$/article. If a company wants the writers to post an article about the company's product or site

- Permanent link/promotion on a specific post

50\$/post. If a company wants to add a promotion/link to a specific post on a permanent basis

- Custom promotion

(Style by Me 2011)

As very different from Indiedays, these girls are handling the business by themselves and interested companies are asked to contact the girls directly. Some people might find their way to do business too arrogant and straightforward because all the prices are visible for everyone and it is easy to get a feeling that they are only doing business.

At the time this thesis is being written, some Finnish fashion bloggers are already entrepreneurs: they have their own company with a name of their blog, and they are running their blog as a business also.

They sell advertising space to companies, make deals and have co-operation partners. Mungolife- blog writer Anna just made a contract with one of the biggest web stores in Scandinavia. Nelly.com sold clothes designed by Anna a while ago, and their co-operation was a huge success: almost everything sold out in just couple of days.

The next chapter is going to study the empirical part of this thesis. Research methodologies will be introduced and the results of the research will be relieved. A good background information to the study will also be given and many open question answers referenced.

## **5. EMPIRICAL STUDY**

In this chapter the research case will be studied, as also reliability and validity. In addition, different data collection methods and the results of the empirical study will be introduced.

### **5.1. Research Methodology**

Research approaches have multiplied to a point where there are many choices in the recent two decades. The most commonly used research approaches are quantitative research, qualitative research and mixed method research.

(Creswell 2003, 3)

As the word qualitative implies, it emphasizes on the qualities of entities and on the processes and meanings: they are not experimentally examined or measured in any terms which include quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. The qualitative research investigates the how and why of decision making, not only what, where, when. Qualitative research method concentrates on understanding the human behavior and the reasons that lead to that behavior.

(Denzin & Lincoln 2011, 6)

Also, one should always remember that how you collect evidence is as important as the evidence itself: if your results are to be believed, then the way you collect them in the first place must also be believable.

(White 2000, 24).

### **5.2. Qualitative Research**

There is no just one agreed definition of qualitative research. Some definitions state that it is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative researchers study things in natural settings, and they are trying to make sense of a phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

In qualitative research people are observed or interviewed and usually smaller-scale samples are used which are then examined in depth. The focus is more on meaning and understanding.

(Imms & Ereaut 2002, 6-8)

Qualitative research does not examine mathematical procedures. To simplify, qualitative research is usually better for exploring and understanding, whereas quantitative research is better for confirming and clarifying things.

In this thesis the qualitative research method is used. This is because the idea is to understand how consumers, i.e. blog readers, react to advertising and how do they experience the rapid commercialization in fashion blogs. People were able to express their feeling through open questions.

Due to a large scale of answers I hope to get, this research will get some quantitative features. The qualitative method is being used during the whole thesis writing process, in terms of observing, interviews and non-participant observation. Also, simple charts will be used when examining the results of some questions, which again has some features from quantitative research.

### **5.3. Reliability and Validity of the Research**

*"When you feel that you can rely on something, the reason is that it always meet your expectations. It does what you want it to, when you want it to, and in the way you expect. That's when you rely on it."*

(Ronald Blank 2004, 1)

Criteria for the evaluation of qualitative market research outcomes are very diverse and will vary by client as well as by project type.

(Ereaut 2002, 143)

Reliability usually refers to how replicable the result of the finding is or how dependably it will be repeated on another occasion/by another researcher.

Validity refers to how well the test actually measures what it sets out to measure, or how well it reflects the "reality" it purports to represent. Even though there are clearly "reliable" findings, in what way are they all valid? Researchers usually learn through experience that many findings have only some specific validity: they might tell much about social acceptability and cultural norms, but may not relate in any useful way to individual behaviour outside the research setting. (Ereaut 2002 149-150)

Validity can be examined in different ways: for example respondents might understand questions in a different way that the researcher meant to. When the researcher is processing the responses through his own mindset, the results cannot be recognized as valid and this causes flaws in the results. (Hirsjärvi & Remes & Sajavaara 2007, 231-232)

#### **5.4. Empirical Results**

After the questionnaire was finished, a simple webpage was created where people could easily answer to the research questions. The questionnaire can be found in the appendixes.

The only way to get responses from the exact target group (fashion blog readers) was to contact the bloggers. Altogether seven bloggers were contacted by email, but only three answered. One was saying that she did not want to be a part of this kind of research and was afraid of getting negative feedback from readers.

Two bloggers were eager to help and both wanted to get the results also to themselves as to "serve their readers better". These bloggers shared a link to the research questions in their incoming post. Both of these blogs are still so-called low-profile blogs with 65 and 409 registered readers, but growing rapidly.

The blogs which were contacted in terms of the research were carefully chosen by the style and atmosphere of the blog: the goal was to get as large a scale of responses as possible as in terms of age, occupation and world view.

There are a total of 19 formal questions plus three background questions about age, gender and occupation. The questionnaire requires an answer to every question. There is one question with four multiple choices, 10 questions with two available choices (yes/no, positive/negative, with advertising/without advertising) and nine open questions, where the respondents are able to write limitlessly. Five respondents answered in Finnish. There was a humane mistake made when creating the questionnaire: the respondents were able to choose both options on the boxes when answering a yes/no question, and this is why some percentages exceed 100% by somewhat two extra answers. Luckily all the respondents did not realize this and only some question percentages have been exceeded. It will be mentioned in the percentage exceeding in every question this has happened. It was not possible to fix this because the blogger had already posted the link and many responses had been received already.

Open questions are planned so that it would be easy for the respondents to describe their thoughts. The research questions were given only in English, which might have scared some respondents. Open questions might also have reduced the number of responses. Altogether there were 103 respondents.

In the next subchapter, each question will be analyzed more deeply.

## **5.5. Background Questions**

Background questions were introduced to find out the age, sex and occupation of the respondent and did not play a big part in the research. The main idea was just to strengthen already existing hypothesis about the stereotypes of a fashion blog reader. Each of these questions will be examined next.

## 1. Age

As expected, most of the respondents were young adults. Blogging has only been popular for about five years now, and that is why there are not too many older fashion bloggers- yet. Also this is why readers are from about the same age category: people are usually interested in a fashion blog writer who is in a similar life cycle with them and whom they can identify themselves with (high school, pregnancy, university)

There was a possibility to choose from four different age categories which were divided as follow: 15-20 years 43% of the respondents, 21-26 years 45% of the respondents, 27-32 years 10% of the respondents and 33+ years 3% of the respondents as shown in Figure 8.

(Percentage exceeded accidentally)

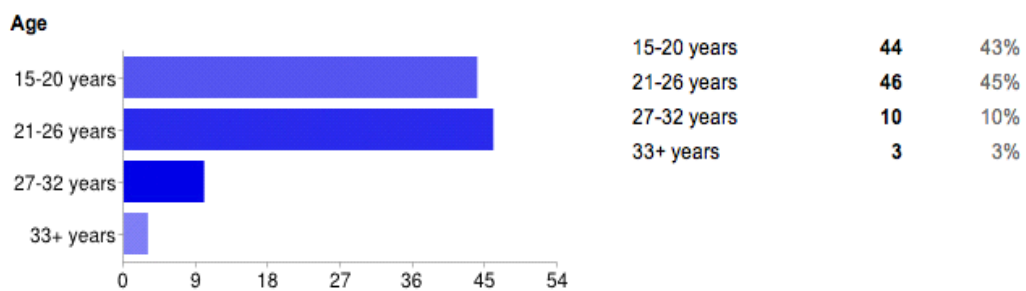


Figure 8. Age

## 2. Gender

Although it was quite obvious that when researching fashion blogs most responses would come from women, the possibility of male respondents was an additional interest. Men usually react more positively on blog advertising than women for some reason, and it was interesting to see if their sentiment differed from women. Only 3% of the respondents were male, as 97% were female, as shown in Figure 9.



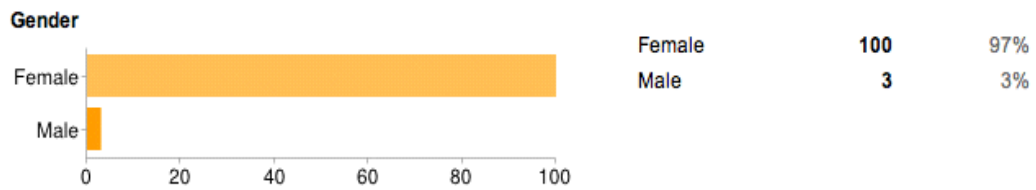


Figure 9. Gender

### 3. Occupation

Occupation was asked due to find it if, for example, students experience advertising in a different way than those in work life. As stated earlier these background questions do not play a big role in this research and the meaning is not to examine how people from different occupations react to advertisement in fashion blogs, but some differences will be lifted up when examining the coming questions.

The question on occupation was an open question and the respondents were able to answer freely. 58 of the respondents were students, a vast majority. There were also a scattered number of sales assistants, officers, bank officers, housewives, nannies, a CEO, an entrepreneur, a specialist export assistant, an accountant, a HR-coordinator, a dental hygienist, a secretary, a teacher, a marketing manager and a photographer. Seven out of the respondents had not understood the question and their answers could not be included.

### 5.6 Questionnaire

As stated earlier, there was a total of 19 questions in the research. All of them will be examined next, and examples of the open question responses will be investigated more closely.

## 1. How often do you read fashion blogs?

In this question there were four alternatives: Every day, every other day, 1-2 times per week and less than once per week. This question aimed to investigate how punctually readers visit fashion blogs and it was also an easy and interesting start for the questionnaire. Surprisingly almost all the respondents, 93%, stated that they read fashion blogs every day. This shows that more and more time is spent at a computer every day and the fact also supports the theoretical study, where social media was discussed: its use has expanded and people are willing to know about each other's lives. This result also proves what a goldmine fashion blogs are for companies to advertise. Comparing to, for example, Cosmopolitan Magazine, which comes out once a month, fashion blogs are able to bring consumers in every day and at any time. Only 6% of the respondents reads fashion blogs every other day, 1% reads then 1-2 times per week and no one less than once per week as shown in Figure 10.

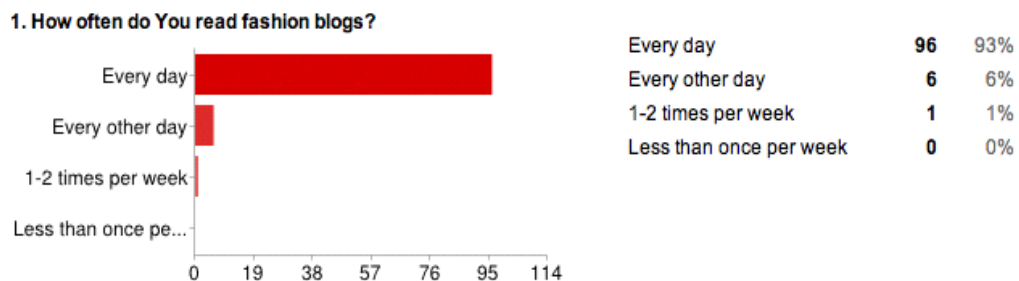


Figure 10. How often do You read Fashion Blogs?

## 2. Why do you read fashion blogs?

This open question cleared out the not so obvious a fact: Why do readers read fashion blogs, what is it that makes them almost addicted to reading them every day?

The most common answer was "to get inspiration" and "to get fashion and beauty tips". Some even stated that they wanted to buy the products fashion bloggers are introducing. Many respondents actually think that their favourite blogger's life is extremely interesting.

It was clearly seen that people are replacing fashion magazines by reading fashion blogs:

*"I prefer them over magazines which I used to buy before! Blogs are free and in some of them the content is actually better than in magazines!"*

*"While being home with a baby, I love to read blogs and see nice pictures, get inspiration, relax...I actually don't buy magazines anymore!"*

*"They are inspiring. Cheaper than a fashion magazine and also more on time: updates faster than magazines."*

*"They are like fashion magazines - but you get a new one every day."*

The many responses about fashion blogs replacing magazines do not actually support the theory (e.g. Kilpi 2006 and Qualman 2009) that even though social media is growing hugely, they will not replace traditional magazines. This might happen to fashion magazines in the future: fashion blogs are free to read and consumers get their fashion tips elsewhere than in magazines.

Some people revealed the truth which was shortly commented also on the theoretical part of this study (social media) :

*"Who wouldn't want to sneak a peek into someone else's life?"*

*"Maybe I'm curious to see how other people dress and live their lives."*

### 3. Which are your favourite Finnish fashion blogs and why?

This open question reveals respondents' preference when it comes to their favourite fashion blog.

Most respondents stated that their favourite bloggers are actually the ones that are already the most popular ones in Finland: only few mentioned some less-known blogs as their favourite.

The respondents' absolutely favourites are Strictly Style, Mungolife, PS. I love Fashion, Motherfuckin' Fashion and No Fashion Victims.

Other blogs that were also mentioned were for example Alexa Dagmar, Nelliinan Vaatehone, Xenia's Day, Yummy! And MouMou.

From this question it can be seen that advertising does not seem to bother the respondents: these are the most popular fashion blogs in Finland and all of them advertise quite much.

### 4. Do You consider give-aways and lotteries as a positive or a negative thing in fashion blogs?

Fashion bloggers get a lot of contacts from companies. Many blogs have lotteries and give-aways regularly. Products are usually sponsored by some company or a brand, and a blogger gets either money or free products for herself also.

As bloggers state it, this is extremely cheap visibility for companies.

As shown in Figure 11, 84% out of the respondents considered lotteries and give-aways as a positive thing, 17% felt it as negative. The number of negative responses could originate from the fact that some bloggers have gone too far: lotteries are held almost every day and they soon lose their appeal.

(Percentage exceeded accidentally)

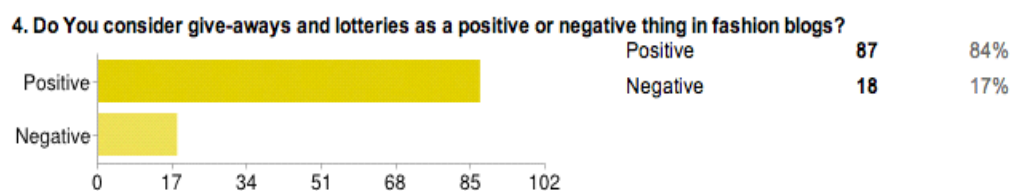


Figure 11. Lotteries and give-aways

5. Do You think a blogger "sells her soul" if she decides to advertise something that is not her style?

When a young woman is contacted by tens of different companies, it sometimes is hard to say no. Only few bloggers have got the courage to advertise something that is absolutely out of her style. This is also supported in the theoretical study: for example Kilpi states in his book that one should be careful when advertising something in a blog because readers might become suspicious easily.

Surprisingly only 66% of the respondents answered "yes", as 35% thought advertising is ok as shown in Figure 12. (Percentage exceeded accidentally)

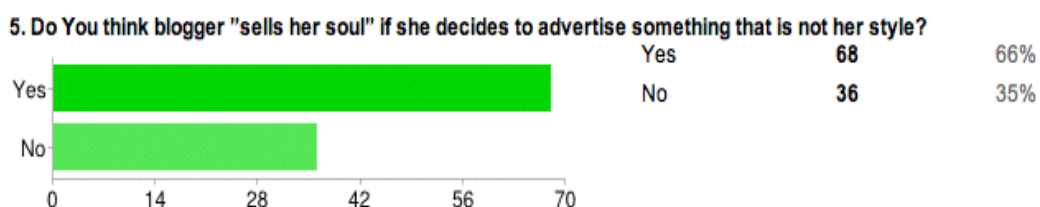


Figure 12. Advertising

6. Do You trust on blogger's opinion about free products that have been sent to her or do You think the opinion might have been affected by a company behind the brand?

As this was an open question, the respondents were able to answer freely about their opinions. It is not unusual that a blogger wants to be involved in every possible cooperation that companies offer.

That is why it is hard for the reader to draw a conclusion if the blogger seriously "loves the product" as she writes, or is it "just ok" and she just wants to praise the product because she got it for free and maybe even got some money for blogging about it. This kind of advertising could be categorized as unethical and the blogger as having a low moral. It should not be the readers' responsibility to conclude if a blogger is talking honestly or not.

There were mixed responses as follow:

*"Of course the company can affect, and I think that every reader has to be clever enough to decide if she can trust or not. A blogger isn't God, she can lie, but it's my decision whether I believe or not."*

*"I think fashion bloggers are quite honest to their readers. Or I hope so..."*

*"I think the opinion will most probably be affected by a company, which is wrong but understandable. It is fake and it happens because they are aware that the companies are reading the posts about their products."*

*"I do not trust the blogger. If they get something for free, of course they have to say "it's great and it really works.""*

*"I have never seen a blogger saying anything negative about a product they have got for free."*

*"I trust that they only recommend products they really like."*

The responses were pretty much divided 50/50. Around 30% of the respondents also stated that it depends a lot on the blog and the writer herself if they trust her opinion or not. Some popular bloggers were mentioned, and the respondents did not like the style of these bloggers: too much praising towards the same companies.

7. Could you buy/have You bought a product recommended by a fashion blogger?

This question is one of the most interesting ones, because it gives a very good overview of if it is worth for the companies to send the free products for bloggers. Even though bloggers might blog about the product (or a product they have bought by themselves), does it also mean that readers believe them and go to buy the same product for themselves?

As seen in Figure 13, 93% of the respondents could imagine buying, or have already bought a product that a fashion blogger recommends. Only eight respondents would not buy anything recommended by a fashion blogger.

It is clearly obvious what kind of power bloggers have on their readers when it comes to product presentation. This kind of visibility is extremely cheap for companies, and by choosing a cooperating blog carefully they get their products in front of the exact wanted target group.

(Percentage exceeded accidentally)

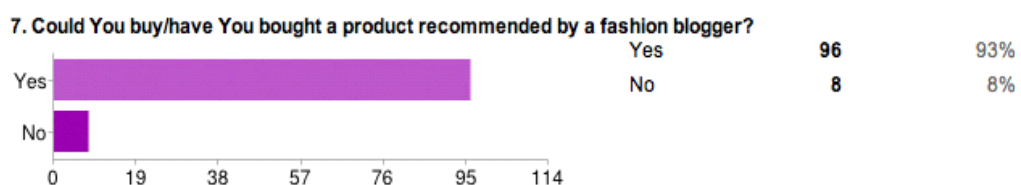


Figure 13. Product recommended by a fashion blogger

8. Can a blogger affect or change your opinions about a brand/product either positively or negatively?

As noticed many times already, bloggers might have an underestimated power on their readers. With the help of bloggers, companies can have their image either pushed up positively, or in a worst case scenario, have their brand destroyed.

There is a good example about pushing up the image of a company. Yves Rocher, "the French Lumene", has been on the market since 1956. They were long known as "grand mom's make up brand", and the company pretty much lost its glamour so that new consumers were not interested on Yves Rocher anymore.

Approximately one year ago, Yves Rocher did a campaign with four popular bloggers from Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. After the campaign they have aggressively cooperated with bloggers, who present their products in blogs. The company has visibly lifted up its imago, and is now more popular than it has been in long time.

As seen in Figure 14, 81% of the respondents agreed that a blogger is able to change their opinion about a brand or a product.

(Percentage exceeded accidentally)

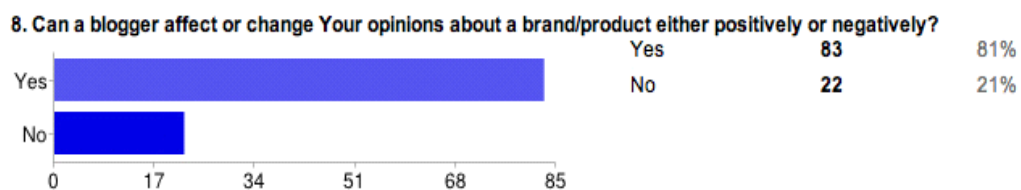


Figure 14. Affect on opinion

9. Do you trust on blogger's opinion about a product/brand unfamiliar to you?

There are new products coming to the market every day. This question was to find out if the readers feel that they can trust a blogger's opinion about a product or a brand that they are not familiar with. If the trust is achieved, a blogger can definitely give her first impressions to her readers (consumers) and in this way help a new company/product/brand to get as strong release as possible.

The majority of the respondents, 75%, said they trust on blogger's opinion, and 28% do not trust on blogger opinion as seen in Figure 15.

(Percentage exceeded accidentally)



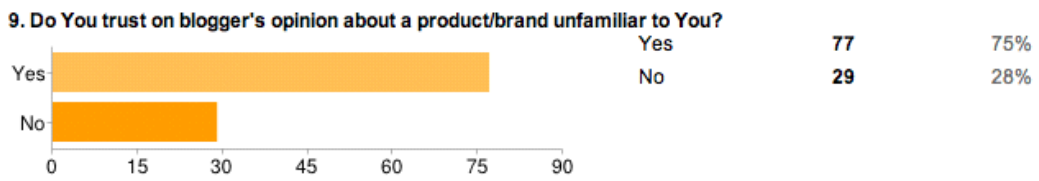


Figure 15. Trusting on blogger's opinion

10. Have you clicked on an ad banner in a fashion blog and actually bought something from the site you have been transferred into?

Most bloggers begin their "ad career" with banners. They are easy to get and ready to use after being installed. When a blog visitor clicks an ad banner, the website verifies the blogger who has the banner and she gets paid: either for just one click or a click that leads to a purchase by the visitor.

The results were quite surprising. As shown in Figure 16, only 21% of the respondents answered "yes", as overwhelming 79% responded "no". This might be a result of a sum of events: Before banners were there but people did not necessarily realize that for every click the blogger might get paid. Now that there has been a lot of conversation about subliminal advertising, many bloggers clearly state if they have ads on their page. Readers are more aware of the function of the banners, and apparently prefer to type the address by themselves than to support bloggers' wallet.

This result does not really support the survey done in the year 2008 by Razorfish in which 76% of the 1006 people surveyed said they did not mind seeing ads when they logged in to Facebook, MySpace or other social media sites. The survey also found out that 40% of the respondents said they made purchases after seeing those ads.

(Qualman, Socialnomics, 2009 171)

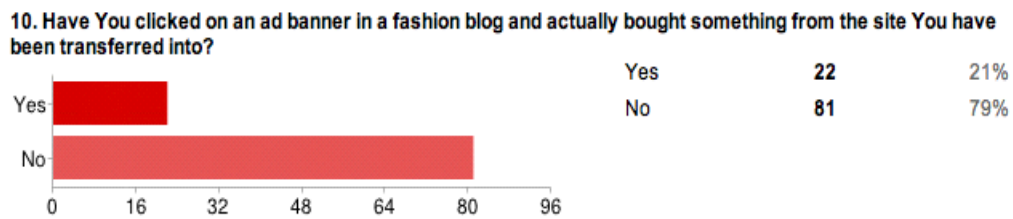


Figure 16. Ad banner

11. Are you able to name any company that actively advertises on fashion blogs? Please name all you can remember.

This question was to clarify if readers actually even note the advertisements in fashion blogs when they enter the sites. The responses gave almost identical names: Nelly, Yves Rocher, Jumpin, Onepiece, Rapunzel of Sweden, H&M, Spartoo, Nokia, Ellos, Citydeal and Roxie. All of them were not recalled in a positive tone, though: approximately 20% of the respondents were totally frustrated by Nelly.com advertising and some even informed avoiding blogs with Nelly ads.

These responses prove that readers actually notice the advertisements and most of them were able to name more than two companies. Some of the respondents stated that they notice all the advertisements but in a way close their eyes from them: that is why they were not able to name any. The same respondents also wrote that there is an obvious difference in how they remember the ads: it is much easier to notice an ad of a new product if the blogger blogs about it than if it is on an ad banner on the side of the blog.

12. Briefly describe your reaction towards any advertising on fashion blogs. (Clarifying questions: Is there some form of advertising you like/dislike? Do you feel all advertising you have seen is appropriate and ethically right?)

Here the respondents were able to express their feelings towards any kind of advertising freely. Open questions are sometimes a risk due to the laziness of respondents, but this question got long answers.

As advertising in fashion blogs being a hot topic, many respondents seemed to really think about their answers. Many respondents stated that too much is too much. There were only a few that commented that all advertising has been ethically done and appropriate, other respondents did not comment them at all. Below are some examples on how readers experience advertising:

*"I think that there is a limit to advertising in blogs. But the limit is different in different kind of blogs. For example, two bloggers I follow have the same amount of ads in their blogs, the other one feels like she's doing it just to get something for it, and the other one really stands behind every ad. Not every post in the blog should be advertising."*

*"I have a very negative opinion towards any advertising that is tried to perform by lying to the audience. Advertising something by clearly stating it is acceptable but I still tend to avoid blogs that advertise a lot."*

*"Banners and other kind of clear advertising is okay, but all the free giveaways mostly irritate me."*

*"Of course it's appropriate because that's where the bloggers mainly get their money, from advertisements. But enough is enough, if you have like ten different advertisements and everyday announce something about a brand or a internet shop, that gets annoying."*

*"Annoying in posts, but otherwise (banners etc) I really don't mind, I'm happy that bloggers can get money from banners when I read them for free. But when they're included in posts it's annoying."*

13. Are you familiar with different forms of advertising fashion blogs have?

Due to the rapid change in the blog world many people might be confused and not familiar with different forms of advertising fashion blogs can have. With this question the aim was to find out how many of the readers think they are holding there. After advertising became more common, readers are also more aware of the situation. This has forced bloggers to tell more openly about their advertising. 76% responded they are familiar with different forms of advertising blogs might have, 26% responded "no" as shown in Figure 17.

(Percentage exceeded accidentally)

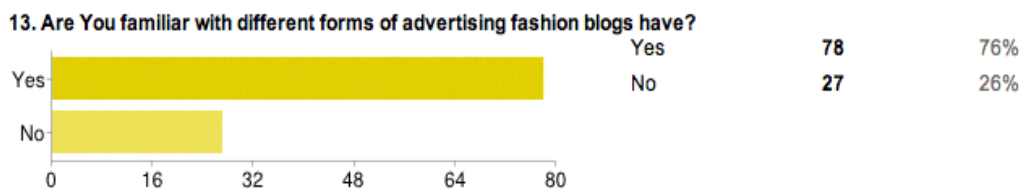


Figure 17. Different forms of advertising

14. Do you feel that bloggers clearly bring out if they are advertising something?

Bloggers not bringing out clearly enough if they are advertising something or not has been a huge debate on comment boxes lately. Readers were especially angry if a blogger took "the outfit of the day"-photos and had a sponsor's clothes on. This question was to find out how readers experience bloggers bringing advertising out today. This topic seems to divide readers, as 52% responded "yes", 53% "no", as shown in Figure 18. (Percentage exceeded accidentally)

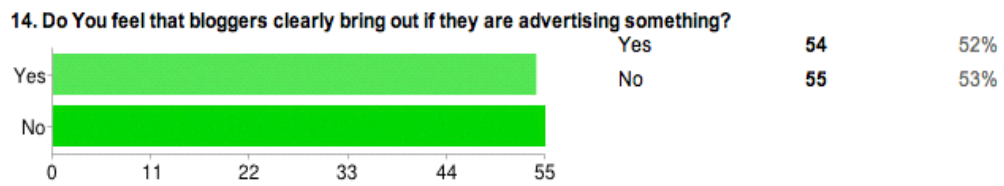


Figure 18. Do bloggers clearly bring out if they are advertising something

15. Do you feel You have ever experienced subliminal advertising in any fashion blog?

Some bloggers are still today accused of having subliminal advertising. Free products are presented without mentioning that they were got for free, outfit pictures taken without telling which pieces were sent for free by brands et cetera. Subliminal advertising is illegal, and it should not exist in any form.

As shown in Figure 19, the results were harsh: 83% of the respondents think that they have experienced subliminal advertising, when again 17% answered "no".

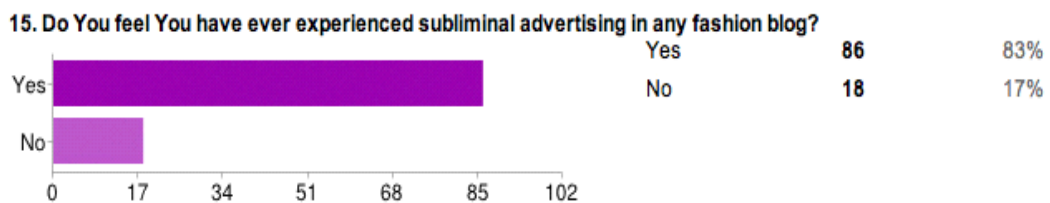


Figure 19. Subliminal advertising

16. What is your opinion about Indiedays?

With the next open question the aim was to find out how readers feel about the Indiedays, which was launched about two years ago. Indiedays is a Finnish blog portal where there are 27 blogs at the moment. Indiedays sells advertising space for companies and has collaboration with different companies. In addition they pay a salary for bloggers. When Indiedays was launched, resistance was obvious.

All the respondents were able to express their feelings towards this blog portal and answers were as follows:

*"Good to have it, bloggers get money for their job. However, I don't like to read many of those blogs because of advertising."*

*"I never click the banners, so the ads don't bother me too much. Getting salary for blogging is okay, if the blog is high-class and the blogger has passion for her/his blog. "*

*"I think it's a nice idea bringing lots of blogs under one portal, but I don't like the fact, that all the bloggers have the same ads, depending on what's the campaign. "*

*"In my opinion it's a good thing, and probably makes the bloggers job easier. However I'd like to be able to read more about how they choose their bloggers and why."*

*"Hate it. I don't really like the "mystery" about their salaries etc"*

*"I think it is awesome that there is a site where you can find some high quality blogs where bloggers are inspired."*

*"I think Indiedays has the best fashion blogs in Finland, and the system seems to be functioning well. However, I find it tiresome to read about the same campaigns in several blogs."*

17. What is your overall opinion about advertising and commercialization in fashion blogs? Briefly explain.

This question gathers everything up. There was some gap seen when examining the results: 15-20-year-old respondents were more tolerant for advertising, some even commented that since they have started reading fashion blogs there has always been advertising in them.

Young adults, again, were more against advertising because they have experienced the time before ads and prefer fashion blogs without any advertising. Some answers listed below:

*"Advertising is ok, if the readers are enough clever to understand it."*

*"I feel it's a good way for companies to advertise, it's cheaper than TV - advertising and it's easy to reach just the right customers."*

*"I think on the other side the companies take rudely advantage of the bloggers. And on the other hand the bloggers take advantage of the companies and in some way also the readers. Pity."*

*"It's gone too far already. I prefer blogs with less ads, and every day try to find some new "fresh" ones."*

*"In my time there have always been ads on blogs. so I don't care."*

*"I think advertising in blogs is usually bad. I feel like when a blogger receives free gifts for advertising space, their judgment on the brand isn't objective anymore. That way it is really hard to know if someone is telling the truth about products. I feel like bloggers are corrupt."*

*"I don't mind the banner advertising but if it is in the bloggers text in every other post that is annoying .I should be running to the store everyday to buy something "really good" or ordering in the Internet a new dress every other day because there has been some new cool clothes in that particular web store and the blogger has ordered something too...no thank you. Most of those are freebies so they don't need to even pay for the clothes."*

*For example Lindex had this new clothing thing coming (Gwyneth Palthrow) and it was hyped in every blog and those blogs except one got to choose 2 items from that collection for free and just two bought something else as well. Not very convincing."*

18. Do you prefer reading fashion blogs with or without advertising?

This was a question to find out how readers prefer to read fashion blogs. The answers were not as straightforward as expected: When considering the responses to other questions, the vast majority should prefer reading fashion blogs without advertising. 70% responded without advertising, 44% with advertising. Some respondents have answered in both options as seen in Figure 20 (This was due to an error when creating the questionnaire).

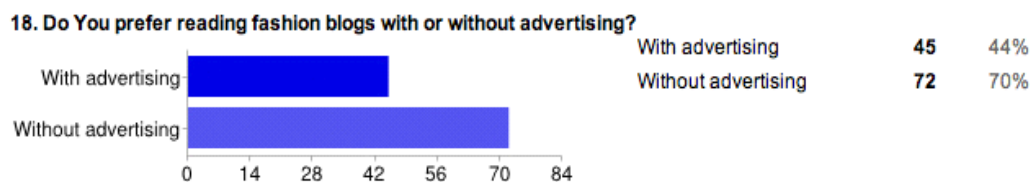


Figure 20. With/Without advertising

19. How you think advertising in fashion blogs will change in the future?

Here respondents had an opportunity to predict the future. How do they think advertising will change gives a good hypothesis for fashion blog experts: the ones that use the blogs day should be the ones that know the best. Almost 100% of the respondents stated that the whole business around blogs will expand; many compared the future of fashion blogs to where Sweden is at the moment. Many wrote that they will stop reading too commercialized blogs. Some examples are given below.

*”It will expand rapidly, and be like in Sweden. Young girls start to blog in hope of free stuff. This all means lower quality.”*

*”With the most popular ones, it will go crazy, like in Sweden. That's just when i will stop reading them.”*



*"It will go worse: less actual every day posts by bloggers, more advertising in every form they can. Compare to Swedish bloggers."*

*"I will think bloggers will more and more start big co-operations with different companies. And became more part of the company for example their blog will be found on nelly.com- website or something."*

*"Advertisers find bloggers an easy way to spread their products and that leads into selling more of them. Some readers may buy those things blindly without questioning the bloggers purposes. I think bloggers will be used even more in advertising and spreading the knowledge of different companies' products to the readers in the future."*

*"I'm afraid it will become more visible in general. But I believe that the blogs which don't get too commercial will be the most popular ones."*

In the next chapter the results will be more deeply analyzed based on the theoretical study of this thesis. Every research problem will be analyzed separately.

## **6. ANALYZING THE RESULTS**

In this chapter the results of the questionnaire will be analyzed and compared to the theoretical part of the thesis. The idea is to find if there are some differences or similarities to the theory presented earlier. The research problems are as follow:

- How readers feel about advertising in fashion blogs?
- Do they consider advertising as a positive or a negative thing?
- Should advertising in fashion blogs change somehow, and if yes, how?

With the responses to the questionnaire planned these research problems are supposed be solved.

### **6.1. Readers' feelings**

When considering about advertising in fashion blogs, one of the most important things for readers is honesty according to the respondents. By being honest about advertising, free products and affiliated companies the blogger can achieve high appreciation among readers. Respondents were extremely irritated about subliminal advertising and cooperations that they weren't told about. They even felt betrayed and not valued as readers. As alarming 83% of the respondents said they have experienced subliminal advertising, this is something that should definitely change as soon as possible. This is also supported by Kilpi (2006) and Indiedays blogger: it is crucial to stay true to yourself and not to get involved to anything you don't believe in. Although readers demand honesty, it was surprising to find out that only 66% of them felt that blogger is not on the right track if she advertises something that is not her style.

Some readers stated that they feel there are too many campaigns in blogs at the same time and therefore they do not pay any attention to them anymore. This can be called "banner-blindness" which was supported noted in the theory part (Chaffey 2007, 419). There were also a noticeable amount of negative comments about advertising in fashion blogs: this fact did actually differ considerably from survey done by Razorfish. According to the survey, 76% of the 1006 people said they didn't mind seeing ads in social media sites. (Qualman 171)

The overall feeling that was felt when examining the results of the questionnaire was definitely more negative than what was expected when working with the theory part. Books and articles gave more of an approving and favourable image of any advertising in today's social media than what it actually was according to this research. The reason behind it might be that all of this advertising is still too new for us Finnish people: we were used to the social media sites being clear and easily readable without having to question if the favourite blogger is telling the truth or not. As fast as the advertising has creased in fashion blogs, the consumers easily feel that they have missed something and are dragging far behind. Secrecy should be avoided and let the people know if they are supporting someone or something unknowingly.

## **6.2. Is advertising considered as a positive or a negative thing?**

As advertising in social media and fashion blogs is here to stay and even growing all the time from what it is at the moment (Hay 2011, Chaffey 2007, Kilpi 2006), it is crucial that the key concepts of advertising are handled carefully. (Wells, Moriarty, Burnett & Lwin 2007, 6)

Consumers are becoming more aware of the situation and when and if they realize they have been tricked, it will be extremely hard to get them back. If they lose their trust on a fashion blogger due to advertising, they probably connect the negativeness also to the companies the blogger was cooperating with. Although increasing numbers of consumers are purchasing products online, it still takes time for individuals to build up confidence. (Chaffey 2007, 157).

If this confidence, which is still not even fully obtained, will be crashed due to e.g. subliminal advertising in fashion blog, the company might face hard times to get the customers back.

As 15-20 year old respondents seemed to be more tolerant to advertising in fashion blogs, over 20 year old respondents again had more negative opinion about it. As also stated when dealing with the questionnaire, this might be due to the reason that younger readers have only seen blogs with advertising: they haven't read fashion blogs five years ago when the situation was different, so they can not really relate to a fashion blogger who would like to keep her blog advertisement-free. Younger adults and teenagers are also more keen on discount codes and used to a society that consumes a lot.

A comment that was repeated many times by the respondents was as follow:

”If a blogger receives a lot of free gifts for advertising space and actually posts about all of them, her judgment on the brand is not objective anymore. They are becoming corrupt.”

The comment gathers up the overall feeling of the questionnaire. Although younger girls were more tolerant on any kind of advertising, the overall opinion was still very negative. 70%, a vast majority of the respondents would prefer reading blogs without any advertising. Advertising was considered more desirable only if readers were also able to benefit financially (discount codes, free products, lotteries). Although not really supported by the theory, readers are extremely frustrated on the amount of advertising and secrecy behind it.

### **6.3. Change in advertising**

As also stated by Qualman (Qualman 2009), social media is here to stay and it has and still will open new possibilities equally to private persons as well as to companies.

Mistakes done in social media can be fatal to both when dealing in social media and word-of-mouth spreads faster in Internet than ever before as we learnt in the theory part (Qualman 2009, 33, 87). The winners are the ones that accurately will examine their possibilities without rushing into doing business in this new world.

The last question in the questionnaire was straightforwardly asking about the respondents' opinion about the future of advertising in fashion blogs. A majority, almost 100% of the respondents, were sure that it will still continue to expand. This is also supported in the theory: according to eMarketer online advertising will be passing over printed advertising during the year 2012 (Ässä 2012). Many compares were made to Sweden where the bloggers are still ahead of us. Sweden and the rest of the blog world will soon show where we will be heading in the next few years. Finland seems to be dragging a couple of years behind the rest of the world when it comes to the development of fashion blogs.

When pondering the question if advertising in fashion blogs should change somehow, there is a clear answer from the respondents' part when analyzing the results: Advertising should be more clear, more easily noticeable and understandable for everyone. Bloggers should get rid of subliminal advertising and avoid misleading the readers. Advertising in fashion blogs would definitely be more tolerated if handled tastefully and if bloggers would be absolutely honest about their cooperations. Also, when deciding about advertising, one should always remember that less is usually more: it is easier to please the readers if credibility is maintained.

In the next chapter this thesis will be concluded as well as suggestions for further research will be given.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the thesis process is being concluded. The theoretical study of this thesis concentrated on advertising, fashion blogs and social media. With the questionnaire the idea was to find out how readers react to advertising, get to know their opinions and how they feel about fashion blog advertising.

When the first fashion and lifestyle blogs started, they were just like normal online diaries without any advertising. Since the use of computers has increased strongly and today people have the ability to use their own computer every day due to good internet connections, many young women spend some hours of the day reading these online diaries. With tens of thousands of readers every week, companies are finally starting to realize the considerably cheap way to advertise on fashion blogs. This sudden increase of advertisements causes problems to readers as well as to the writers: readers feel that there is too much of advertising, and writers want to benefit somehow from the effort they are putting into their blog. Therefore it would be important to find the happy medium between all the hassle.

When starting this project it was commonly known that there has been some objection against advertising in fashion blogs. It was a surprise, however, that the resistance was so intense and readers are genuinely upset by this change. Surprisingly many feel that bloggers do not stand behind what they say and most readers think that things are kept too much in secret. Although this type of advertising is powerful due to fact that there are real people talking to real people, what is going to happen if the writer loses her credibility? There is always a risk that the more you advertise, the fewer readers you will have in a long run. Because blogging is so emotion-orientated and bloggers give their face for many different brands and products, the readers can easily get enough at some point.

There is actually a mysterious gap between fashion blogger advertising and, for example, guys who write a blog about technology: these guys are seriously and openly looking for partners for collaboration and they would generously sell advertising space from their blog. Their readers, who are most men of course, do not mind ads being there and are actually encouraging the writer to look for affiliates. Is all this "we hate when you advertise something"-attitude women's thing after all? This would be an interesting idea to research in detail more.

As learned earlier, when planning some advertising, how you say something and where you say it is just as important as what you say. As some respondents stated on their answers, there has been some inconsideration from many companies. Readers seem to get very irritated if the one and same company continuously advertises in many blogs at the same time: in case a reader has more than just one popular blog that she follows actively (as it usually is), she gets exposed to the same ads blog after a blog. *"There should be a line somewhere, this shows ditzy orientation from the company's side"*, as one respondent wrote.

As many respondents wrote they are already giving up reading women's magazines and as this was also noticed earlier in this thesis, at this time there is definitely less need to subscribe to these expensive magazines. Blog reading is still free, and while it is, the writers should be allowed to charge for good quality text and photos. Blogs offer more real time information about products than any other social media or magazine. Bloggers who post every day say they are spending hours a day on planning, photographing and writing, so it cannot be expected for them to do so if readers are requiring constant quality with no ads. If asked for a suggestions to existing advertising -how to earn money but still keep readers happy and receptive- are easy to be figured out when the results of the research have now been analyzed: Ads should be kept on the side of the blog (for example banners), tell openly about affiliates and only post about sponsored products in maximum once a week. It is not long ahead that readers will be sharing the power with blogger and as being consumers, they will most probably vote with their feet if not happy with the results.

This must just be a beginning for advertising in fashion blogs. Companies have now realized their opportunities, and seem to be more than keen to cooperate with bloggers. Bloggers should not be undervalued but treated as a valuable customer. As social media is changing the life of people, bloggers will be the first ones to feel the change concentrically: more celebrity status, more affiliates and more money. Social media is bringing opportunities for the ones who are able to take an advantage of them.

### **7.1. How to Prevent Problems**

Due to the fact that advertising is still relatively new to fashion blogs, there is some incoherence on how to handle it. As seen in the empirical study, some readers feel that they have experienced subliminal advertising, they feel that there is too much of advertising in general and they think the whole business is kept in secret. It is sure that the ads are not going to disappear, but to keep readers happy the bloggers should think about them, too. Subliminal advertising should be eliminated as a whole, and for readers it should be exactly clear if they are supporting the blogger when clicking a link for example.

To keep the readers bloggers should also think clearly in which opportunities they want to grab on and in which not. A blogger, who advertises anything in hope of money and free products, will soon be criticized. They should always keep in mind that it might be better to post less about sponsored products than do it every day and get negative feedback for that. It is fair enough to get a compensation for a good job, but if every post is written under commercial tag, readers no longer consider it as a job.



As also learned in the theoretical study, both the blogger and the company/entrepreneur should be aware when agreeing on collaborations. Companies should never underestimate the blogger, and they should be respected as a normal client-even more personally if possible. At this point bloggers basically have the power over companies, and the companies can only adapt to whatever the bloggers decide to write about.

## **8. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

As the subject is most definitely going to be an explosive topic of conversations in the future also and the forms of advertising, cooperations and affiliations will probably take more of an aggressive direction, there are going to be a lot of alternatives of different subjects for further research. This industry is extremely interesting and because there has never been anything comparable and similar before, also very difficult to foretell. In the future there is most likely to be more information about the subject, and more books and articles will be written concerning only this specific subject. One option is to make a very similar research to this one, if not even with the same questions. It would be interesting to see if readers see advertising in a different way and if it has become more tolerated in time.

Another option would be doing the research from the writer's point of view: this is what was supposed to be investigated also in this thesis as extra, but due to the secretive nature of advertising in fashion blogs, the bloggers were not willing to participate in any questions considering advertising. Maybe the secretiveness is not a problem in the near future anymore and the writers are able to be more open about business in their blogs.

The third option could be doing a research from the advertisers' point of view and planning a questionnaire for companies: What kind of market do they see in fashion bloggers and are they planning to reduce advertising in other channels while concentrating more on blogs? It would be interesting to hear if companies are willing to invest more on fashion blog advertising and if yes, where will it lead in the future.

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## APPENDIX 1.

# Advertising in Fashion Blogs

Advertising has increased rapidly on fashion blogs: pop ups, banners, collaborations, free products... This questionnaire is all about finding out how readers feel about and react to advertising. Please answer all questions. Thank You!

### Age \*

- 15-20 years
- 21-26 years
- 27-32 years
- 33+ years

### Gender \*

- Female
- Male

### Occupation \*

### 1. How often do You read fashion blogs? \*

- Every day
- Every other day
- 1-2 times per week
- Less than once per week

### 2. Why do You read fashion blogs? \*

**3. Which are Your favourite Finnish fashion blogs and why? \***

**4. Do You consider give-aways and lotteries as a positive or negative thing in fashion blogs? \***

Give-aways and lotteries are usually sponsored by a company or a brand: blogger gets to choose a product/money for herself free of charge, and in addition gets another same or similar product/discount/gift certificate to be raffled among readers.

- Positive
- Negative

**5. Do You think blogger "sells her soul" if she decides to advertise something that is not her style? \***

- Yes
- No

**6. Do You trust on blogger's opinion about free products that has been sent to her or do You think the opinion might have been affected by a company behind the brand? \***

**7. Could You buy/have You bought a product recommended by a fashion blogger? \***

- Yes
- No

**8. Can a blogger affect or change Your opinions about a brand/product either positively or negatively? \***

- Yes
- No

**9. Do You trust on blogger's opinion about a product/brand unfamiliar to You? \***

- Yes
- No

**10. Have You clicked on an ad banner in a fashion blog and actually bought something from the site You have been transferred into? \***

- Yes
- No



**11. Are You able to name any company that actively advertises on fashion blogs? Please name all You can remember. \***

**12. Briefly describe Your reaction towards any advertising on fashion blogs. \***

Is there some form of advertising You like/dislike? Do You feel all advertising You have seen is appropriate and ethically right?

**13. Are You familiar with different forms of advertising fashion blogs have? \***

- Yes  
 No

**14. Do You feel that bloggers clearly bring out if they are advertising something? \***

- Yes  
 No

**15. Do You feel You have ever experienced subliminal advertising in any fashion blog? \***

Subliminal advertising = piilomainonta

- Yes  
 No

**16. What is Your opinion about Indiedays? \***

Indiedays is a Finnish blog portal. Indiedays sells advertising space for companies and pays salary for bloggers.

**17. What is Your overall opinion about advertising and commercialization in fashion blogs?  
Briefly explain. \***

**18. Do You prefer reading fashion blogs with or without advertising? \***

- With advertising
- Without advertising

**19. How do You think advertising in fashion blogs will change in the future? \***

Submit