ARCADA

INFLUENCING BRAND AWARENESS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract:

Consumers' awareness of a brand is essential, as brand awareness is considered one of the main reasons that brand and its products are purchased. The use of social media has been regarded a great possibility for brands to increase global brand awareness, however, with continuously increasing competition for attention and fast commercializing social media, getting noticed has become challenging. The main purpose of this study was to use benchmarking to identify concrete actions that can be used to influence brand awareness in social media platforms Facebook and Instagram. Three Finnish interior brands were selected to be benchmarked based on their popularity in social media. Brand posts that were published by Balmuir, Pentik and Vallila Interior between October 2016 and March 2017 were collected and compared to identify concrete actions that can be used to influence brand exposure, customer engagement and electronic word-of-mouth. Based on findings, brand awareness cab be influenced by e.g. posting content (brand posts) regularly; encouraging number of #brandname mentions; utilizing hashtags strategically; co-operating with social influencers and encouraging electronic word-of mouth. However, it is difficult to estimate how *much* and how *fast* use of such actions could influence brand awareness.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a mass media (Grapevine 2017a). Not any other traditional channel has a similar audience worldwide than Facebook with its over 1.86 billion active monthly users (Zephoria Inc 2017). The number of social media users is further expected to grow in Facebook, but also across other social media platforms. According to Statista (2017a), the amount of social media users will go up to 2.67 billion by the end of 2017; and, it is forecasted that by 2020, there will be 2.95 billion social media users. Success in social media has become one of the main goals of companies' overall marketing strategy.

Despite the uncertainty of measuring return on investment (ROI) from social media marketing activities, Especially, when being combined with traditional digital approaches, such as email marketing. Social media marketing is found to be especially valuable when a company strives to increase audience engagement and brand awareness, or wants to generate traffic to its website(s). (Statista 2017a) Additionally, social media advertising is regarded cost-efficient compared to traditional media, especially due to its versatile targeting opportunities. (Valtari & Kärkkäinen 2016)

Although, the primary purpose of social media has been bringing people together, many social media platforms have evolved into highly commercialized platforms. Facebook has been one of the leading actors to develop its commercial offerings for business users, yet competitive platforms have followed and unveiled a wide selection of new advertising tools. In fact, investment in social media advertising doubled worldwide between 2014 and 2016, reaching nearly 31 billion U.S. dollars in 2016 (Statista 2017b). Yet, investment in social media advertising is further expected to grow. According to Gartner's Digital Marketing Channel Survey, 38 percent of respondents (250 marketing leaders in North America) currently had social media program in place, and additional 42 percent planned on starting social media advertising efforts for the first time in the coming twelve months. This means that, 80 percent of the respondents believed they will have ongoing social media advertising programs within the year to come. (Business Wire, Inc. 2016)

While paid advertising is expected to become more vital for being successful in social media, today's savvy consumers are becoming more intolerant and sceptical towards di-

rect advertising and overly promotional content. (Valtari & Kärkkäinen 2016 p. 15). According to Sprout Social (2016), the most annoying thing that brands can do in social media is posting too much promotional content. Even 46 percent of the 1.000 Facebook, Instagram and Twitter users who responded the survey, had unfollowed brands that posted too many promotional messages. As product and service evaluation, criticism and all kind of rating has become a norm within Internet societies, marketing communication in social media is always affected by consumer audience behavior and opinion towards the brands. (Wijaya 2012)

1.1 Background

Consumers' awareness of a brand is regarded essential for any brand's success (see. e.g. Teixeira 2014). As competition and use of paid advertising in social media is further expected to increase, gaining attention and making audiences aware of a brand will become more and more challenging. Limited financial and time resources create challenges especially for small companies for keeping up with continuously developing platforms and utilizing all the potential commercializing social media platforms offer for businesses, such as the wide selection of paid advertising opportunities. To stay in minds of current followers and to attract new ones, clear objectives are required for social media marketing communication. (Valtari & Kärkkäinen 2016) Additionally, it is important to understand how social media can be utilized to influence consumers' awareness of a brand.

In Finland, the attitudes towards social media marketing have been somewhat skeptical and social media has not always been considered as a serious marketing channel. If still a few years ago, pure presence in social media was understood as a great possibility for smaller brands to increase global awareness and connect with consumers, with fast commercialized social media platforms, the situation has changed dramatically. (Grapevine 2017a) The massive potential social media offers for reaching consumers, increased competition for attention, and trend towards paid advertising, combined with advertising-critical and empowered social media users, forces also smaller companies to consider their social media presence and marketing activities more strategically than before (see e.g. Valtari & Kärkkäinen 2016)

1.2 Aim of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to use benchmarking to identify concrete actions that can be used to influence brand awareness in social media platforms Facebook and Instagram. The following two (2) research questions were formulated to investigate the topic:

    1) *How can brand awareness be influenced through social media?*

and

    2) *What concrete actions can be used to influence brand awareness through Facebook and Instagram?*

1.3 Theoretical Framework

To form an understanding of what brand awareness means in social media context, the central concepts, such as *brand*, *brand awareness* were defined. The importance and *role of brand awareness* in *consumer behavior* was discussed by presenting selected traditional marketing and advertising theories, such as AIDA and purchase funnel theories, and presenting how such theories have evolved to better suit social media environment.

Based on several studies, use of social media does positively affect brand awareness (see e.g. Abdelmoety & Gounaris 2014; Hutter et al. 2013). Bond (2010) has suggested that brand awareness is an outcome of customer engagement in social media context. Xu and Chan (2010), on the other hand, argue that word-of-mouth has direct relationship with brand awareness. Such findings were supported by a research made by Shojaee and bin Azman (2012), who suggest that *brand exposure*, *electronic word-of-mouth* and *customer engagement* have positive correlation with brand awareness in social media context. These factors form a theoretical framework to further investigate concrete actions that can be used to influence brand awareness through social media platforms Facebook and Instagram.
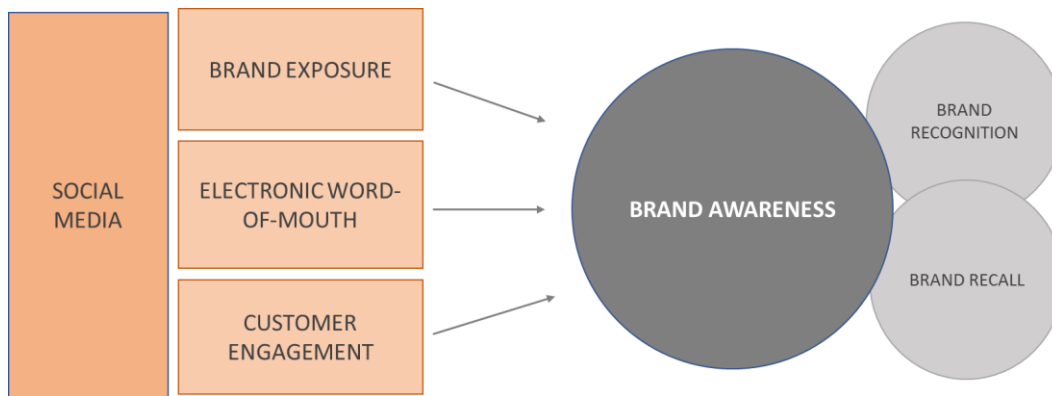
Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

1.4 Method

This thesis is a case study with a focus on developing certain business area – social media marketing communication - of the case company, BEdesign Oy. The topic was investigated via inspirational benchmarking research. The author was interested to investigate how Finnish interior and lifestyle brands utilize social media, more precisely Facebook and Instagram, on daily basis to influence brand awareness. Three Finnish brands were selected to be benchmarked based on their ranking in Brandsome.fi, a site that ranks companies based on their popularity in selected social media platforms. Balmuir, Pentik and Vallila Interior were chosen, as they are the three most followed Finnish brands within the interior stores category. (Brandsome, week 16/2017)

Author collected all brand posts that were published in Facebook and Instagram by the three brands and the case company between October 2016 and March 2017. Facebook and Instagram are actively used by all four brands. As brand posts published in Facebook and Instagram are visible to everyone even without logging in as a user, this offered an opportunity to collect comparable data and analyze how different brands utilize social media for awareness marketing. Information regarding brand posts, such as date of post, number of likes, shares, and comments, motive, was collected to Microsoft Excel and converted to quantitative form for further analysis and comparison. The sample consist of 432 Facebook and 457 Instagram brand posts, meaning that the total sample size was 889 brand posts.

1.5 Limitations

Social media consists of hundreds of different platforms and applications, that are all used differently and often enable reaching different audiences. Thus, investigating concrete ways to influence brand awareness overall would be extremely challenging or even impossible. Facebook and Instagram brand posts were selected to be investigated as they are visible for everyone. Decision was supported by the fact that Facebook and Instagram are regarded as some of the most important social media platforms worldwide, and actively used for marketing purposes by the case company and benchmarked brands.

This study does not take into consideration the reputation of the benchmarked brands, their history or other marketing procedures that may affect the level of brand awareness, the number of followers or engagement rate, in Facebook or Instagram. Additionally, investigating the matter outside the companies does not enable all statistics regarding brand's performance across social media. Therefore, such metrics as total reach, the number of followers who have truly seen or clicked (acted on) the posts cannot be compared. Compared and discussed is only such information related to brand posts that can be gained outside the companies and is visible for everyone without logging into Facebook or Instagram user account.

1.6 Definitions

Social media

"Social media are web-based services that allow individuals, communities, and organizations to collaborate, connect, interact, and build community by enabling them to create, co-create, modify, share and engage with user-generated content that is easily accessible" It involves several different social (online) channels in several forms, including Internet forums, message boards, weblogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures and video. (Sloan & Quan-Haase 2017, p. 17)

Brand Post and Brand Post Elements

Facebook and Instagram offer brands a possibility to easily share brand or industry related content and information to their followers. In this study term *brand posts* refers to all

visible content that is published in brands' Facebook and Instagram feed. *Brand posts elements*, in this study, refer to such marketing communication activities and elements that are related to brand posts, and may be used by brands to influence brand awareness, such as, use of location, hashtags (#hashtag) and other user mentions (@username).

1.7 Introduction of the Case Company

BEdesign Oy is a Finnish furniture company, founded in 2012 by sisters Bette and Cilla Eklund. Bette is responsible for the product design and development of artistic vision, and Cilla for business development. Company headquarters are in Turku, and all products are currently manufactured in Finland. The company has roots deeply in Finnish architecture, arts and design. Design philosophy is to create well-crafted products that are modern yet timeless, aesthetically pleasing and functional. The materials - mainly wood and metal - used in production are chosen carefully to ensure long durability and sustainability. (BEdesign 2017a)

The product line consists of furniture and interior products, such as shelves, clothes racks, hangers, bowls, stools and posters. Most expensive product is a wooden deer shelf, priced at 2.700 Euros, yet most of the furniture is priced between 60 to 400 Euros. Posters and tote bags are priced from 15 to 20 Euros. (BEdesign 2017b) According to Cilla Eklund (2016), company is continuously designing new products, and there is a strong focus to increase the amount of smaller interior and lifestyle products, such as scarves or candles, to make purchasing of products more available for larger crowds. Due to current pricing, most furniture pieces are more suitable for targeted audience. The main target market is women, aged between 25-40 years old, with relatively high income and interest in interior design and lifestyle.

Products of BEdesign are currently sold via retailers and company owned web page (web store www.bedesign.fi). In Finland, the products are sold via 17 retailers, such as Design-verkkokauppa, Cobello and Stockmann Helsinki; and, internationally via 37 retailers located in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Spain, UK, France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Luxembourg, USA and Australia. (BEdesign 2017c) Owners have participated several design fairs, exhibitions and events, both in Finland and within Europe to

promote company products. Especially the Deer Shelf, has been presented in several Finnish and international design magazines. (Eklund 2016)

BEdesign has a company website with a web store (www.bedesign.com). Additionally, social media platforms Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest are used for marketing purposes and engaging with target audiences. Instagram is the most followed social media platform of BEdesign with approximately 4.300 followers (May 2017), whereas Facebook brand page has approximately 2.500 followers and Pinterest 200 followers (Brandsome 2017a). BEdesign has worked in co-operation with selected bloggers and some of their products have been presented by bloggers without contract. BEdesign does not have a clear social media plan, yet there is a strong will to further develop social media presence and communication, to share the story of the company and increase brand awareness among target audiences (Eklund 2016)

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This study consists of six chapters. First chapter is the introduction. In chapter 2, a theoretical framework is formed to investigate the topic. In chapter 3, research methodology is explained. Findings of the research are presented in chapter 4. In chapter 5, findings are further discussed, and eventually author gives recommendations to case company to influence brand awareness in Facebook and Instagram. Conclusions are presented in Chapter 7.

2   BRAND AWARENESS IN SOCIAL MEDIA CONTEXT

2.1 Definition of a Brand

Traditionally, a brand has been understood mainly as an identifier of goods and services, that enabled company to separate its products or services from competitors. For instance, American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors". (Keller 2013 p. 30)

Today, however, brands are seen to reflect a lot more than just the products of the company. A brand is believed to be one of company's most valuable assets presenting the face of the company and making it recognizable in the eyes of the public (Alhaddad 2015 p. 74; Investopedia, LLC 2017a). For instance, Jeffery (2010 p. 53-54), describes a brand as "a consumer perception of a product or service" that "may encompass the whole company, such as Disney or Apple". He highlights that branding drives consumers to take their first look at the company's products and services, yet reminds that consumer perception is not only affected by marketing operations, but also by personal experiences and other people's recommendations. Similarly, Kapferer (2008 p. 2) states that "a brand encapsulates in its name and its visual symbol all goodwill created by the positive experiences of clients or prospects with the organization, its products, its channels, its stores, its communication and its people." A visual brand identity, meaning the way business wants to be perceived by consumers (Investopedia 2017b) - whether being as memorable and appealing as ever - is not enough, if consumer perception of a brand is negative for some reason.

The importance of consumer perception is also expressed in Keller's (1998) classical definition: "a brand is a set of mental associations, held by consumer, which add to the perceived value of a product or service" (Kapferer 2008 p.10). Instead of only encompassing product attributes, brands are seen to have intangible assets, such as organizational associations, symbols, brand-customer relationships, and emotional benefits (Aaker 2002 p. 73-74). These assets are at its best unique (exclusivity), strong (saliency) and positive (desirable) (Kapferer 2008 p. 10) and create awareness and reputation (Keller 2008 p. 10).

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In an extremely competitive world, it has become essential for brands to somehow stand out from the crowd. It is argued that "it's the end for average brands" that lack of identity, and suggested that only brands that maximize satisfaction - e.g. by offering extremely low prices or rewarding experiences - will survive. It can be even questioned if companies are able to brand something through paid marketing procedures. (Kapferer 2008 p. 2) Especially in social media context, brand can be understood as the relationship between an organization and its audience. For instance, Gardner (Brandisty), states that "a brand is earned, it is a reward for the hard work of building real, passionate relationships with the audience." According to this view, brand-consumer relationships forms a foundation for the creation and delivery of value in today's competitive marketplace.

2.2 What is Brand Awareness?

Awareness as a noun, refers to knowledge that something exists; understanding of a subject, issue or situation or the state or condition of being aware, conscious about something (Dictionary.com 2016; Cambridge University Press 2017). In marketing, awareness refers for a measure of how well known a brand, firm or product is (WebFinance Inc 2017a). Brand awareness, therefore, relates to the "extent to which a brand is recognized by potential customers, and is correctly associated with a particular product" (WebFinance Inc 2017b).

Brand awareness is related to consumer's abilities and the strength of brand traces or nodes in his/her memory that enable to identify a brand under different conditions. It gives the product an identity by linking the brand elements into a product category. Meaning that, it helps potential customers to understand in which product category the brand competes, what kind of products (and/services) are sold under the brand name and what type of needs they fulfill. Depth of brand awareness measures, how likely these brand elements come to consumers' mind and how easily it happens. For instance, brand name awareness reflects the likelihood that a brand name will be memorized and the ease with which it does so. (Keller 1993 p. 3; Keller 2008 p. 60-61.) Even though brand awareness is a necessity and a key asset for a brand, awareness itself cannot create sales for a company. For most customers, other considerations, such as the meaning or a brand image, also affect sales decisions. (Keller 2008 p. 373).

When a brand is known, people in general are aware that it is known. In this sense, brand awareness is a collective phenomenon. In fact, awareness can be considered as value for a brand as it correlates with valuable image dimensions such as high quality, trust, reliability, closeness to people and a good quality/price ratio. (Kapferer 2008 p. 21.) Familiarity with a brand and its characteristics may positively influence consumers' perceived risk assessment, further increase their confidence and this way help to reduce search times in the purchasing process (Clow & Baack 2012 p. 49; Keller 1993 p. 8-9; Moisescu 2009 p. 103). Therefore, brand awareness is one of the primary goals of advertising in the first months or years of a product launch (WebFinance Inc 2017b).
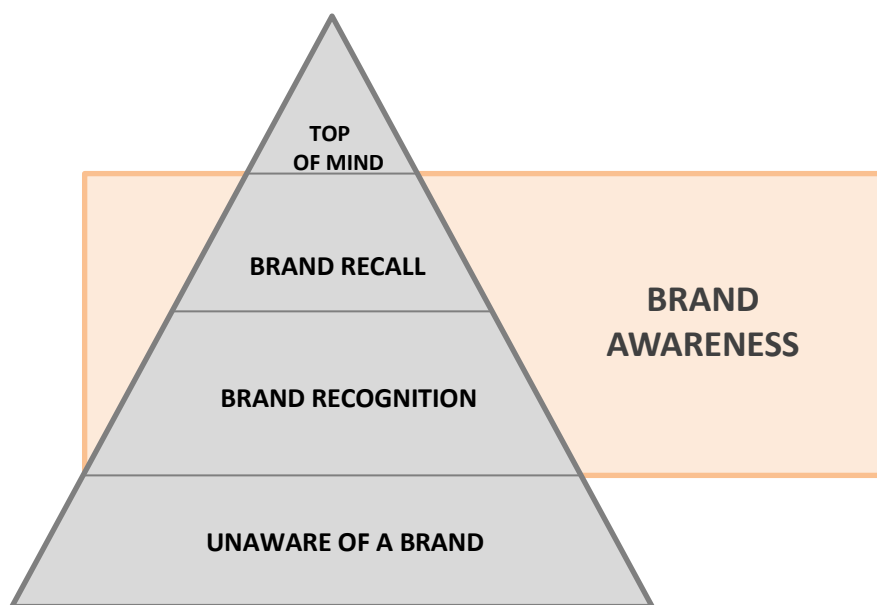
Figure 2: Different levels of Brand Awareness (based on Aaker 1991, 62)

Higher level of brand awareness strengthens brand relationships and increases consumer loyalty and commitment to the brand (Keller 1993 p. 8-9; Moisescu 2009 p. 103). Strong brand relationship, on the other hand, has multiple advantages. It enables higher pricing, repeated and/or increased sales and gathering of valuable feedback. Strong brand relationship also increases marketing communication effectiveness and decreases the vulnerability to competitive marketing actions. (Duncan & Moriatry 1997 p. 43-44,52; Keller 1993 p. 8-9.)

In fact, researchers have identified different levels of brand awareness. These levels are presented in figure 2. Consumers might be completely unaware that a certain brand exists. And, even if a consumer is aware of a brand, the depth of brand awareness may differ.

According to Keller's (1993 p. 7) Dimensions of Brand Knowledge, brand awareness consists of two different dimensions: *brand recognition* and *brand recall* performance. Aaker (1991 p. 610-62), on the other hand, represents three levels of brand awareness in his Brand Awareness Pyramid. As an addition to brand recognition and brand recall levels, the highest level of awareness is called *top-of-mind* awareness.

2.2.1 Brand Recognition

Brand recognition, also known as *aided recall*, refers to consumers' ability to confirm prior encounter with a certain brand when given the brand as a cue. Meaning that, a consumer can identify, in different circumstances, that a brand has been seen or heard previously. Memories can be based e.g. on a word, visual symbols or an image. Brand recognition may also include identification of additional brand elements or consumers may be able to recognize a brand when they encounter it e.g. at the point-of-sale. However, brand recognition does not necessarily involve remembering the brand name, where the brand was encountered, how it is different from other brands or even to which product category the brand belongs to. (Keller 1993 p. 3; Keller 2008 p. 374-375; Aaker 1996 p. 10)

Brand recognition is understood as the minimal level of awareness (see figure 2) and can be measured using an aided recall test, a marketing research technique that is used to determine how well a brand or e.g. its advertisement is remembered by a test audience when they are given suggestions or cues about it (WebFinance Inc. 2017d). Brand recognition is most successful when the public, or company target market, can state a brand without being explicitly exposed to the name of the company, but rather through other attributes or visual signifiers such as logos, slogans or colours (Investopedia, LLC 2017b). However, attempts to communicate brand attributes are seen useless unless brand has established a name to which consumers can associate the attributes with. Potential customers can be only informed about the features and benefits of a brand if it has received recognition within its target market. Brand recognition is also essential to affect consumers' purchase decision. (Aaker 1991, p. 63)

2.2.2 Brand Recall

Brand recall, also known as *unaided recall or spontaneous recall,* refers to consumers' ability to retrieve a certain brand based on a product category, the needs that the category fulfills, or some other type of probe as a cue. Meaning that, a consumer can correctly generate a brand from memory (Keller 1993 p. 3). Consumers store in memory a variety of information, feelings and past experiences, that can be recalled when decisions are being made (Wijaya 2012 p. 80). For instance, a slogan or jingle can creatively pair a brand and appropriate cues, and other brand elements such as logos, symbols, and packaging aid recall (Keller 2008 p. 55-56). To create brand recall, either an in-depth learning experience or many repetitions are required. Furthermore, the brand name must be more salient and the linkage between the brand and its product category must be stronger. While recognition may persist even after a few exposures, recall decays with time. (Aaker 1991 p. 76)

Overall, brand recall is a more demanding memory task than brand recognition. This is since brand recall requires more detailed memories of a brand, rather than just the identification that a brand has been seen or heard before. A brand that is easily recalled by consumers has a deeper level of brand awareness than a brand that is recognized by consumers only when they see it. (Keller 2008 p. 55-56, 61, 375-377.) Brand recall can be measured with an unaided recall test, a marketing research technique, that is used to test e.g. the effectiveness of advertisements or the familiarity of a brand. In unaided recall respondents are given no cues (or the minimum number of cues needed to conduct a research) to test their level of recall. (AllBusiness.com.)

Some product categories have limitless number of recognized alternatives, which might leave consumers overwhelmed. There is shown to be a relationship especially between recall and consideration set (see 2.3.2); if a brand does not achieve recall, it will not be considered as an potential alternative for purchase. (Aaker 1991 p. 67.) The relative importance of brand recall and recognition is, however, dependent on the extent to which consumers make their decisions in store (where they may be potentially exposed to the brand) versus outside store, among other factors. According to Keller (1991 p. 3), brand recognition is more important when product decisions are made in physical stores. On the

other hand, the role of recall can be crucial especially for frequently purchased products and with purchase decisions that are made before entering a store.

2.2.3 Top-Of-Mind Awareness

The highest level of brand awareness, is called the *top-of-mind awareness* (e.g. see Aaker 1991 p. 62). This position has been achieved if the brand is first-named when measured by unaided recall test. In the purchasing cycle, top-of-mind brands are the first brands (or first products and services) that come to consumers' mind when a purchase is considered (Jeffery 2010 p. 54-55). Meaning, that they dominate consumers' mind and pop up at first whenever applicable (van Haaften 2017). Top-of-mind awareness has a significant role especially in low-involvement categories or with impulse purchases, that are done with fast phase by choosing between competing brands or products (Driesener etl.al. 2004 p. 70-80).

2.3 The Role of Brand Awareness in Consumer Behavior

There are several marketing and advertising theories that strive to simplify the processes on how consumers make their decisions. Selected examples of such theories are presented to explain the role and importance of brand awareness in consumer behavior.

2.3.1 Hierarchy of Effects Models

Theories and models that are based on an idea of consumers going through cognitive (thinking) and affective (feeling) stages before moving to the conative (doing - e.g. making the purchase) stage, are collectively known as *hierarchy of effect models*. (Egan 2007 p. 42-43) Although hierarchical models have been widely adapted and developed, brand awareness (or attention) is a standard feature in these models, and often represents the first stage - the beginning - of the overall process, such as presented in figure 3.

For instance, **AIDA- model** as one of the major advertising theories. It addresses the behavioural dimensions of consumers' decision making process, and has been used as a basic framework to explain how persuasive communication works. AIDA-model suggests

that consumers pass through four different stages - Awareness (Attention), Interest, Desire and Action - on the way to purchase. Simply put, to encourage consumer action, companies are required to attract and get attention (cognitive), maintain and hold interest and create desire (affect). The desired consumer response is expected to be reached via marketing communication and effective messages. (Kotler & Armstrong 2008 p. 404-405; Wijaya 2012 p. 76.)

	KNOWLEDGE	FEELING	MOTIVATION -> ACTION
AIDA STRONG 1925	ATTENTION INTEREST DESIRE		ACTION
DAGMAR COLLEY 1961	AWARENESS CONVICTION COMPREHENSION		PURCHASE
LAVIDGE AND STEINER 1961	AWARENESS LIKING CONVICTION KNOWLEDGE PREFERENCE PURCHASE		
WELIS ET. AL. 1965	AWARENESS PERCEPTION UNDERSTANDING		PERSUATION
	COGNITIVE	AFFECTIVE	CONATIVE

Figure 3: Hierarchy of Effects Models (Egan 2007 p. 43)

Attention refers to attracting and/or capturing consumer attention, for instance with some visual stimuli in a way that a potential customer becomes aware of a brand, its products or services, and wants to search more information about it. **Interest** refers to developing interest against the product or a brand, keeping a potential customer interested by creating some sort of need or special offering that cannot be passed. **Desire** refers to confirming potential customer that the product or a service is the perfect solution for his/her problem, in a way that deepens the desire to make a purchase. And, **Action** refers encouraging potential customers act, e.g. by offering a gift or a discount if a purchase is made. (Hearst Newspapers, LLC. 2017)

2.3.2   Consumer Purchase Decision Process

Whether being called as *a sales funnel* (see e.g. Safko & Brake 2009 p. 121-122), *a purchase funnel* (see Evans 2008 p. 39) or *a purchase decision process* (see e.g. Kotler & Armstrong 2010 p. 177), traditional funnel-models describe the imagined thoughts of consumers as they move through their purchase cycle - from the moment a need for a

product or service is realized until the actual purchase. Such models define touch points where companies and/or marketers can affect consumers' decision-making as they move towards the goal, the purchase. (Court et al. 2009; Safko & Brake 2009 p. 121-122)

As an example, Kotler and Armstrong (2010 p. 152-153) present a purchase decision process with five stages: *problem/need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior* (see figure 4). Simply put, the process begins by recognizing a need (or a problem) for a certain product or service. Need generates an information search, which leads to evaluation of alternatives and finally to decision to make a purchase. It is suggested that consumers pass through all the stages with every purchase, especially with new and complex purchase situations. With routine purchases, however some stages (especially information search and evaluation of alternatives) may be skipped.
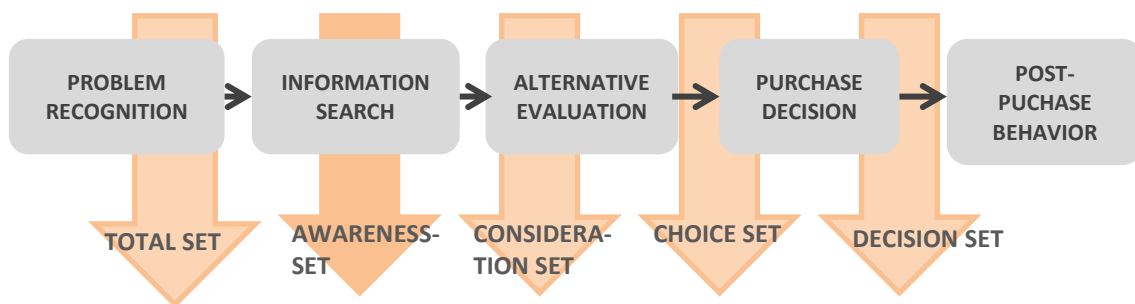
Figure 4: Consumer Purchase Decision Process (based on Kotler & Armstrong 2010 p. 152)

Within funnel theories, brand awareness is connected to information search. Before making purchase decisions, consumers will generally search required information either internally or externally. An internal search is based on memories and prior experiences. If a solution to a problem or need is not found from memories, meaning that consumer does not have enough information to make a purchase decision, new information is required and consumer will need to use external sources, such as personal contacts, social networks or commercial sources. Usually, the number of external sources increases together with the importance of purchase decision. (Masterson & Pickton 2014; Sudweeks & Romm 1999 p. 151.)

The results or internal and external search will lead consumer to become aware of a selection of different possibilities. The list of potential brands or products that could solve consumers' problem or satisfy his/her need is called the *awareness set*. (Masterson &

Pickton 2014) After a satisfactory level of awareness is reached, consumer evaluates his/her alternatives, and forms a *consideration set* - a smaller selection of brands or products that are seriously considered to be purchased (Sudweeks & Romm 1999 p. 154). Brand awareness is, therefore, understood as a prerequisite of consumers' buying decision, as it one of the main reasons to include a brand in the consideration set (Keller 2008 p. 60-61). Similarly, products with a higher level of brand awareness are more likely included in consumer's set of alternatives (Clow & Baack 2012 p. 71). Reaching consumers at the moments that most influence their purchase decisions is one of the main goals of marketing communications and advertising (Court et al. 2009). This, to increase the likelihood of a brand getting included in the consumer's consideration set, and potentially being purchased.

2.3.3 Social Media Impact on Advertising Theories

Due to information technology development, marked by the rise of social media, the ways people communicate and socialize has changed drastically (Wijaya 2012 p. 77). Social media has several characteristics that make it fundamentally different from traditional media (newspapers, television, books etc.), yet the most prominent difference is its participative nature (Evans 2010). For consumers, social media enables free interaction with other people, companies and organizations, and allows e.g. to share and create content and make reviews and ratings. From being a listener, consumers have become active participants of the discussion (Singh & Sonnenburg 2012), and outreach from consumers to marketers has become drastically more important than marketers' outreach for consumers (Court et al. 2009).

As a result, advertising media and marketing communication strategy is strongly affected by consumer audience behaviour towards advertised brands (Wijaya 2012 p. 77). The shift away from one-way communication - from marketers to consumers - toward a two-way conversation, has forced marketers to work a more systematic way to satisfy customer demands and manage word-of-mouth *(*Court et al 2009). It has become essential to maintain an active presence in social spaces where target customers "live", engage in social communities, publish interesting content and encourage word-of-mouth communication and consumer reviews.

Due to the explosion of product choices and digital channels, coupled with the emergence of an increasingly well-informed consumer, traditional funnel concepts fail to capture all the touch points and key buying factors (Court et al. 2009). Although social media usage has enabled companies to interact and engage with consumers at different points of the purchase cycle, consumers have also become more intolerant with social media advertising and branded content (Kärkkäinen & Valtari 2016 p. 15). Marketing procedures cannot be "pushed" towards the consumers at each stage of the process to influence their behavior via traditional advertising or direct marketing actions (Court et al. 2009). In fact, pure one-way advertising from company to customer - especially if being too obvious - can be considered negative in followers' mind. (Kärkkäinen & Valtari 2016 p. 15; Tuten & Solomon 2013.)

From AIDA to AISDALSLove

To emphasize the importance of affection and consumer experience in the advertising process, Bambang Wijaya (2012) has developed the traditional AIDA-model. Wijaya has added four elements to the model: Search (S), Like/dislike (L), Share (S) and Love (Love/hate), and grouped advertising effects to short-term effect and long-term effect in relation to the development of an advertised brand (see figure 5).
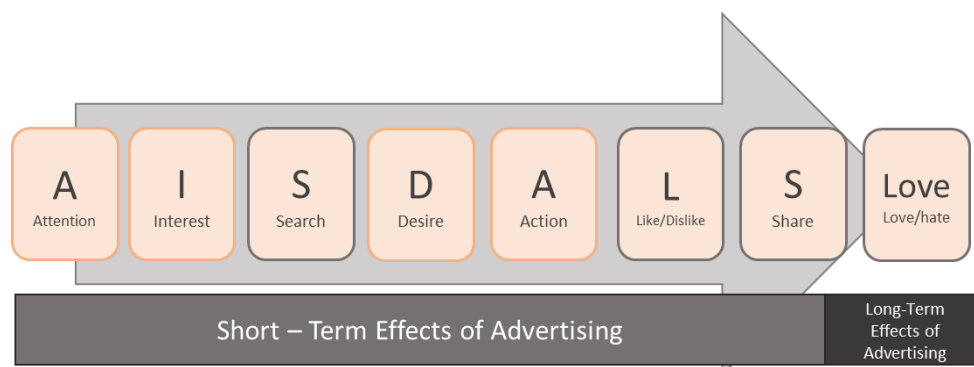
Figure 5: AISDALSLove-model (Wijaya 2012 p. 80)

Search (S) refers to the importance of information search. Due to consumers' critical attitudes towards advertising, information obtained via advertising is not accepted directly. Rather, other information regarding the product or service is required and searched internally and externally (see 2.3.2) before purchase decision. **Like/Dislike (L)** is related to consumers' experiences after making a purchase or using a product after being tempted by an advertisement. Consumers evaluate a brand, product or service performance based

on their expectations and previous experiences. If experience is as expected, consumer will feel satisfied. Unpleasant experiences that are not in accordance with the promises of an ad, however, will lead to consumer dissatisfaction and the possibilities on repurchase decrease. Similarly, positive experiences where product or service is experienced to be better than expected, may lead to repurchase or reorder. (Wijaya 2012 p. 81)

Share (S) in related to consumers' possibilities to share and express their experiences to other people. By sharing positive or negative experiences and comments about purchased products via social media, consumers have power to impact other consumers' actions and image of brands. Word-of-mouth communication is powerful, as it does not necessarily require a large sample and still drives business results; people tend to have confidence that the opinions of friends and family are more reflective of the majority than they truly are. (Wijaya 2012 p. 81-82)

Love/hate refers to long-term effect of advertising. Because of advertising, combined with consumers own experiences, perception about the brand or its product(s) is formed. Positive experiences are potentially shared for others, and in time satisfactory experiences, or for example connection with a company and its story or advertising concept, turn into feelings towards the brand. At its best, experiences may create deep feelings of love towards a brand. However, on contrary, negative experiences may lead consumers to experience and share negative feelings, such as hate. Instead of focusing on short-term effect of marketing and raising purchase action, Wijaya (2012 p. 82-83) suggests that marketers focus on long term effects of advertising.

From Purchase Funnel to a Consumer Journey

Similarly, as AISDALSLove model, more contemporary representations of the purchase funnel incorporate the Social Web and take account of the impact of consumer-generated media during the process (see e.g. Court et.al. 2009 or Edelman & Singer 2015). For instance, Evans (2010 p. 38-42, 83) represents a social feedback cycle (see figure 6). He suggests that, as an opposite to traditional media, social media connects with and involves consumer from awareness all the way through consideration. The feedback loop connects past-purchase conversation back to purchase funnel. Within this open model, the data generated by users and current customers can be gathered and analyzed to understand *where* and *how* to influence the social conversations that are important for brand success.

Additionally, information gathered via word-of-mouth can be recycled to benefit the next wave of shoppers, as well as to strategically develop the marketing actions of a company.
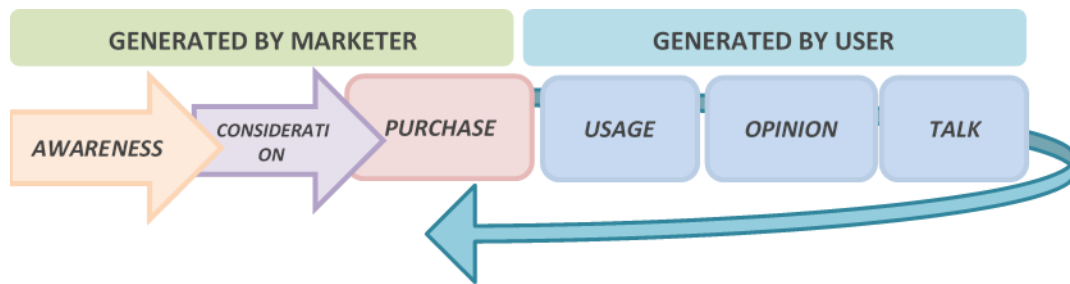
Figure 6: The Social Feedback Cycle (based on Evans 2010 p. 42)

2.4 Establishing Brand Awareness Through Social Media

A brand must establish awareness to be recognized and remembered. Achieving brand awareness - brand recognition and recall - involves creating salience with customers, gaining brand name identity and linking it to product category. This is necessary especially for a new brand. The approaches to create, maintain and increase awareness, however, depend upon the context. Often, creating brand awareness requires increased familiarity of the brand through constant or repeated exposure. (Aaker 1991, p. 65, 72-76.)

Continual exposure, whether it's advertising or promotion, sponsorship and event marketing, that leads consumers to "experience" - to see, hear and think about - a brand, increases the possibility that the brand and its accompanying message is strongly registered, stored in long term-memory and recalled. Especially brand recognition can be improved via repetition, yet improving brand recall also requires linkages in memory to appropriate product categories or other purchase or consumption cues (Keller 2008, p. 55-56).

Based on former research, Abdelmoety and Gounaris (2014) propose, that the use of social media is positively related to brand awareness, e.g. due to increased customer-to-customer communication, consumer word-of-mouth, and companies' possibilities to enter consumer conversations and interact with them. Bond (2010), on the other hand, suggests that brand awareness is an outcome of customer engagement in social media context. Bond's findings were supported by a research made by Shojaee and bin Azman

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(2012), who suggest that brand exposure, electronic word-of-mouth and customer engagement have positive correlation with brand awareness in social media context. Of these three factors, customer engagement was found to be the most effective in relation to brand awareness.

2.4.1 Brand Exposure

Advertising exposure refers to presenting advertisement to consumers, with attempts to achieve company objectives, such as motivating target consumers to buy a product (Hearst Newspapers, LLC 2017b). Similarly, brand exposure can be understood as presentation of a brand to target consumers to achieve company objectives. Exposure is related to familiarity (and recognition). The Mere Exposure Effect, also known as the familiarity principle, describe a phenomenon that causes people to rate or feel things and people more positively if being exposed to them frequently and consistently (Joshua Kennon 2012). It is a potential theory to describe brand exposure relationship with brand awareness: familiarity grows via consumers' unintentional participation in marketing communication procedures, as an example, as followers get exposed to a brand in social media (see Shojaee & bin Azman 2012 p. 73).

However, familiarity is just one part of the overall challenge of gaining brand awareness. It is important that a brand is remembered for the right reasons instead of wrong reasons. How much a product is known, does not necessarily make it relevant to a chosen market, nor esteemed or preferred by consumers. (Aaker 1996, p. 17; Keller 1993, p. 10) One of the biggest enemies of branding is overexposure - consumers get tired with the "buzz" easily and are always searching for something new. (Gobé 2001 p. 306.) As an example, the respondents of Sprout Social Index (2016), considered posting too much promotional content as the most annoying thing that brands can do in social media. Even 46 percent of the respondents had unfollowed brands that posted too many promotional messages and 41 percent brands that posted irrelevant information.

Although social networking sites enable repeated exposure, brands need to consider what kind of content and how much content is published. Brand awareness and familiarity towards the brand can be increased with an appropriate marketing strategy, yet strongest

brands are managed for strategic awareness instead for general awareness. (Aaker 1996 p. 17; Keller 1993 p. 10)

2.4.2 Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM)

Word-of-mouth is an unpaid form of promotion, in which consumers tell other consumers about brands, products or services (Entrepreneur). Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), therefore, refers to consumer-based brand or product promotion within digital channels. WOM has direct relationship with brand awareness (see e.g. Xu & Chan 2010), and it has become one of the most powerful marketing tools, as people have greater trust towards brands and companies that are recommended by friends and family. 84 percent of global consumers believe that WOM is the most trustworthy source of product recommendation. And, 77 percent of consumers are more willing to buy a new product when they learn about if from family or friends. (Goehring 2016)

Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels (2009), argue that electronic WOM is linked to the number of new members who subsequently join brand sites (sing-ups). Additionally, Trusov et al. suggest that carryover effects from WOM are longer than of traditional marketing activities, and produce substantially higher response elasticities. Therefore, encouraging WOM may be beneficial for a brand. One possibility is to create a competition, a reward system or offer some sort of incentives that will be also compelling to new customers. Consumers might need a reason to share information, and having incentives attached to a campaign may increase the feeling of sharing something valuable. Incentives are dependent on the company, yet some of the incentives that are most likely shared include free shipping, samples or trials. Incentives may be expensive, and therefore not suitable for companies with limited resources. (Bailey 2014)

However, increasing the number of followers by offering incentives does not necessarily affect engagement positively, as it may lead increasing the number of followers that are not truly interested in a brand (Sprout Social 2016). Additionally, it needs to be remembered that not all word-of-mouth is positive. Negative word-of-mouth may increase negative brand awareness. Therefore, social media actions, content and brand communication should be promptly considered to avoid mistakes that may hurt brand image.

Building own following from scratch is time-consuming and creates a lot of work. Marketing with or through consumers and social influencers has become a vital part of gaining awareness in social media. Social influencers represent independent third party endorsers, who have abilities to shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets and other social media (Freberg et al. 2011). Bloggers and other social influencers have already built an audience of target buyers, and connecting with non-competing influencers with a way that benefits both parties, may offer opportunities to reach target audiences. (Hodkinson 2014)

2.4.3 Customer Engagement

Customer engagement in social media context refers to mixture of intellectual and emotional interactions that characterize customers' contextual and brand-related state of mind (Hollebeek 2011). Engagement is related to consumers' real feelings about brands - consumers' own brand relationship that is extended to other customers (Haven 2007). Meaning that, engaged consumers are more willing to promote and recommend their preferred brands to other people e.g. via liking, commenting and sharing brand related content or information. Customer engagement, is therefore a prerequisite for positive word-of-mouth. Engaged users and brands form a community to share their interest, which further increases the memorability of the brand. Memories of a brand then positively affect brand recognition and recall (Bond 2010; Shojaee & bin Azman 2014).

According to Sprout Social (2016), 86 percent of the social media users want to and do follow brands on social media. Main actions that made people follow brands on social is their interest towards products and services, interest towards brand promotions and entertaining content. However, following a brand does not directly correlate with engagement. According to Haven (2007 p. 8-9), engagement contains of four components: involvement, interaction, intimacy and influence. The level of engagement elements can be tracked by following e.g. site visits, time spent, page views and search keywords (involvement), contributed comments, discussion and reviews (interaction), sentiment tracking (intimacy), ratings and content shares (influence).

2.5 Marketing Awareness in Facebook and Instagram

Facebook is a social networking site that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos and keep in touch with selected contacts. Facebook has worldwide over 1.94 billion monthly active users (March 2017), of which even 1.28 billion people log onto Facebook daily. Despite the huge reach, the number of users is growing continuously, worldwide, even five new profiles are created every second. Mobile use has grown significantly, by 23 percent, within a year, and there are already 1.15 billion mobile daily active users. Almost 30 percent of the users are aged between 25-34 years old, which is the most common age demographic. Just as for BEdesign Oy, this is the prime target demographic for many businesses' marketing efforts, and there is a lot of competition to engage with such age group. (Zephoria Inc. 2017)

Instagram, on the other hand was launched in 2010 as an online mobile photo sharing social networking site. Visually, the platform is known for its Polaroid inspired square format photos, that can be also shared across other platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. Like Facebook, Instagram is nowadays one of the most popular social networks worldwide. The mainly mobile photo sharing network has approximately 700 million (April 2017) monthly active users, of which 200 million are daily active users (April 2017) (Statista 2017c). 90 percent of Instagram users are aged under 35. And, it is more likely used by women than men.

Within the Nordic region, more that 75 percent of the internet population are Facebook users, Facebook being the most used platform in both Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The second and third most used platforms differ between countries. In Finland, the three most used social media platforms are Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram - all three of which are, in fact, owned by Facebook. (Audience Project 2016 p. 2-3) Facebook has approximately 2.6 million users and Instagram over 1.2 (June 2016) million Finnish users. (Audience Project 2016 p. 5; Valtari 2016) The main reason to use Facebook among Finnish users is to keep in contact with friends, while Instagram is mainly used for entertainment. 19 percent of Finnish Facebook and 26 percent of Instagram users are using platforms to follow brands and/or companies. (Audience Project 2016 p. 9). This indicates, that for Finnish users, Instagram is more important source of brand information and inspiration than Facebook.

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2.5.1 Brands on Facebook and Instagram

Facebook has over 60 million active brand pages, and even 50 million active business Pages. Although 75 percent of the brands pay to promote their posts, only 2.5 million businesses pay to be active advertisers (Smith K. 2016). As an addition to social media presence for a brand, Facebook offers a wide range of different advertising possibilities that may be used to accomplish different marketing objectives of a company. Also, due to Instagram's visual nature and high user engagement rate, it has been regarded as a valuable marketing tool. The number of brands using Instagram has continuously grown. Approximately 50 percent of brands use Instagram, yet the number is expected to grow to over 70 percent in 2017. (Myers 2017)

Instagram has activated its advertising business especially within the last year, and typical users are following more accounts than before. This, together with the increased number of active brands is Instagram, has created more noise within the platform and increased the amount of content in users feed. As a result, brands' organic reach and engagement levels have decreased form what they were earlier. (Cohen 2016) However, according to latest statistics, brands are still getting three times more engagement in Instagram than in Facebook, which encourages marketers to put more emphasis on Instagram. Still, Facebook is regarded unbeatable in terms of scale and reach. (Heine 2017) Combined use of these platform, is therefore, justifiable.

2.5.2 Brand Exposure in Facebook and Instagram

Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, enable repeated audience exposure, especially among those consumers that follow the brand. Brands can create brand pages to Facebook and Instagram to ensure being easily found, to share information, attach links to company owned sites (such as webstore), and publish brand related content. Publishing brand posts frequently and consistently, increases the overall exposure of the brand among its followers. Additionally, via earned shares, likes and comments (e-WOM) posts can be (at least to some extent) seen by followers' contacts (in Facebook). As potential customers see and experience a brand numerous times, they become more familiar with it and potentially form more positive attitude towards the brand (see e.g. Halliburton 2013).

Statistics support the use of Facebook and Instagram for brand exposure. According to Sprout Social (2016) survey with over 1.000 users of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, nearly 58 percent of the respondents were more likely to buy from a brand that is followed in social media, and over 60 percent needed to see posts two to four (2-4) times before making a purchase. Only 15 percent of the respondents said, that seeing a post only once was enough to make them act on it.

Brand Posts

Facebook and Instagram offer brands a possibility to easily share brand or industry related content and information to their followers. In this study term *brand posts* refers to all visible content that is published in brands' Facebook and Instagram feed. *Brand posts elements*, in this study, refer to such marketing communication activities and elements that are related to publishing of brand posts, and may be used to influence brand aware-ness, such as, location, hashtags (#), other user mentions (@user), call-to-action (CTA).

With endless amount of content, standing out from the crowd, however, is challenging. Especially, as both platforms are mainly used by mobile phones and tablets. When plat-forms are used in mobile, different posts are scrolled down the feed. It means that brands have less than second to catch someone's eye. (Isaac 2016) Also the time spent within the platforms matters. According to Infodocket (see Zephoria Inc. 2017), average time spent per Facebook visit is 20 minutes. This means that brands have limited time to make im-pression, which means that brand posts must somehow be relevant, interesting and have unique features to gain attention. Additionally, content and how consumers react to it does matter as Facebook and Instagram use algorithms that affect the visibility of posts (see e.g. Grapevine 2017b).

Hovde (2014) emphasize the importance of educational content, that contains useful and interesting information about the industry. Isaac (2016) argues that for brands it is im-portant to post content that reflects the business and speaks the core values of a brand. According to Alhaddad et al. (2015), awareness, memorability and engagement can be positively influenced by sharing and creating enjoyably and involving elements which are clearly linked to the brand. Instead of letting audiences become bored, brand should strive to surprise consumers and create a feeling that something interesting is on-going.

No all posts in Facebook or Instagram need to be promotional, such as links or articles. Instead, brands may let their audiences know something about their everyday life. This helps followers to connect the brand with more personal level. However, it is suggested to keep most of the posts business related. One example is to follow the 80/20 rule: 80% of the posts should be related to the brand or business, while 20% of the content may have something to do with personal life. (Hovde 2014.)

As consumers are sceptical towards overly promotional content, maintaining quality content and communicating with an authentic and natural voice that suits to target audience, is essential. Too formal communication might be considered negative, yet too casual conversation might be regarded unprofessional. Criticality towards published content is essential, as any mistakes in consumer communication can go viral and this way either increase positive or negative brand awareness. (Valtari & Kärkkäinen 2016; Grapevine 2016)

Based on just Finnish statistics, content shared in social media has potential to influence consumer opinion and decisions. Finns are active in utilizing social media content: approximately 60 percent of the Finns have read or watched published content within the last month, and even 47 percent of Finns have read or watched such content weekly. The percentages are higher especially within younger age groups: 92 percent of the Finns, aged between 16-34 years, have watched or read content that was published in social media by other users. Approximately 79 percent of Finns in the same age group have watched/read shared contents weekly, and approximately 47 percent daily or almost daily. (Statistics Finland 2016a; Valtari 2016).

Call-to-Action (CTA)

Sometimes a sense of urgency is required to give a reason to visit company website or proceed with a purchase. Whether sharing a promotional item for a limited number of buyers, or sharing information that is only available for a limited time, these limitations to respond to CTA may affect their actions. (Hovde 2014.) To activate followers, call-to-action posts should clearly state what the person should do, as an example in Instagram, where links cannot be used in posts: "click the link in the bio to…". Additionally, it is suggested (see Havens-Woodcock 2015), that the link must drive traffic directly to the

desired end location. For instance, to a webstore where the product shown in the post, can be bought.

The combination of engagement and actions is critical. Engagement posts are used e.g. to receive a positive reaction, whereas CTA-posts are used to get target consumers moving from social profiles onto company owned websites or stores. (Hodkinson 2014) Although call-to-action does not directly increase engagement, it can encourage followers to get more familiar with the brand and its product offering etc., and therefore more aware of the brand and its offering.

#Hashtags

Hashtags are related to discoveries within Instagram, and allow brands to gain exposure to niche groups and specific areas of interest. While they do not exponentially increase engagement, they enable audiences to discover branded content on an organic way. Branded content can be found as audiences go through the topics and forums of their interest. (Simply Measured 2014 p. 12) To increase awareness, it is suggested that brands use hashtags that have received enough mentions to reach audiences, yet not too many mentions. If a hashtag has tens of millions mentions it might be difficult to become discovered by audiences and not being lost in the noise. It is suggested using hashtags that have been mentioned between 10.000 to 500.000 times. (Stringfellow 2013) Additionally, trending topics offer an opportunity to link your own content to a subject that has heightened interest. "Newsjacking" enables brand to attach their story to something "of the moment". (Hodkinson 2014)

Max number of hashtags per post in Instagram is 30 hashtags. According to Simply Measured (2014 p. 12), 88 percent of the brands used at least one hashtag in post. 91 percent of posts of top brands included sever or less hashtags. Meaning that most top brands used one to seven hashtags per post. Post with at least one hashtag earned on average 12.6 percent more engagement.

Location

Tagging a location to a post, gives users another possibility to find content. Several third-party apps also exist that enable users to search by location, which may lead to increased

engagement. Although location tagging is not widely or regularly used, it is found that posts tagged with a location have earned 7 percent higher engagement than posts without location. (Simply Measured 2014 p.13)

@Mentions

Posts that include another user handle at least one @Mention have proven to caption net 56% more engagement than posts without @Mention. Despite, only 36 percent of brands used another user mentions in 2014. Use of other user mentions can be successful as it enables reaching and interacting with wider audiences. Especially, if not used relevantly and without spamming. (Simply Measured 2014 p. 11)

The use of mentions can be related to social influencer marketing. Building own following from scratch is time-consuming and creates a lot of work. Bloggers and other types of social sites have already built an audience of target buyers. Connecting with non-competing influencers with a way that benefits both parties, may offer an opportunity to reach target audiences. (Hodkinson 2014)

Photos & Videos

Highly visual posts are better recognized and recalled, and more easily shared what makes the use of them an effective advertising technique. According Alhaddad (2015), it is important, to offer various types of content, such as links, videos, audio files and photos, to create awareness. Such awareness increases the abilities of potential buyers to recognize and recall the marketing elements in social media under different conditions.

Use of photos and videos is also expected to increase engagement and reach of posts (see e.g. Saric 2016) According to Gizmodo (see Zephoria Inc. 2017), over 300 million photos are uploaded to Facebook daily, and already in May 2013 4.75 billion pieces of content were shared daily in Facebook (source: Facebook, see Zephoria Inc. 2017). Similarly, over 95 million photos and videos are shared on Instagram daily, and even 100 million users use the "stories" feature daily. Since Instagram was concepted, over 40 billion photos and videos have been shared on the platform. (Lister 2017)

Such statistics further highlight the competitiveness of social media platforms. With hundreds of millions daily photos loaded to Facebook and Instagram, content must somehow

catch target audiences' attention. Facebook and Instagram offer also other types of posts, such as carousel and slideshow ads, yet these options are forms of paid advertising.

Post Frequency

During the first Quarter of 2017, worldwide 1.28 billion people logged onto Facebook daily. Of these users, 1.15 billion were mobile daily users. (Zephoria Inc. 2017) Just among the Finnish Internet population, Facebook is used several times a day by 53 percent, and daily by 28, which means that 81 percent of Internet population in Finland visit Facebook daily. Instagram is used daily by 65 percent of the Finnish Internet population. (Audience Project 2016 p. 5) Especially via mobile phones, visiting social media platforms is easy and fast, and can be done basically any time of the day.

Such statistics support sharing content daily or several times a week to ensure consumer attention. As so many people are viewing Facebook and Instagram every day, it means they most potentially encounter large amount of content during each visit and chose to read/watch mainly those post that interest them or someway other attract their attention. With a lot of content available, active and/or regular posting in Facebook and Instagram may be essential to stay in consumers' mind. In fact, at least in Instagram, engagement rate is related to brand activity. (Simply Measured 2014 p. 6) However, despite the number of posts, the challenge of catching consumers' attention remains. Instead of focusing on the number of posts, brands should focus on sharing quality content that maximized the possibilities to accomplish company objectives.

The average number of brand posts on Instagram was 121 per quarter (Statista 2017d), which means that brands posted on Instagram average more than once a day (1,3 times a day). Similarly, average number of daily posts by brands on Facebook was 1.48 posts (Smith 2017). Especially for smaller brands with less products and limited resources, creativity might be needed to keep account active regularly. One opportunity is to post updates related to on-going projects or share positive consumer reviews. It might be cost-effective to also share content that has not been self-produced. Sharing other content (pictures, news stories, links) is a possibility to increase the amount of material on your account without additional costs. However, it is important to thoroughly examine the sources of shared content, as brands should avoid driving consumers to competitors of connecting themselves with matters or other companies with controversial reputation.

2.5.3 E-WOM and Customer Engagement in Facebook and Instagram

Marketing communication actions related to brand posts and use of brand post elements are decisions that brands can make to influence brand exposure. However, as mentioned in section 2.5.2, the use of brand post elements may also positively influence customer engagement. For instance, in Instagram posts that include at least one other user @Mention have proven to caption net 56% more engagement than posts without @Mention; posts tagged with a location have earned 7 percent higher engagement than posts without location and post with at least one hashtag earned on average 12.6 percent more engagement than posts without hashtags. (Simply Measured 2014 p.11-14) On the other hand, CTA and incentives can be both used to influence brand exposure as well as encouraging e-WOM, which is regarded as engagement. Although actions and brand post elements were presented separately in section 2.5.2, in fact all factors are strongly linked together.

Comments, Shares and Likes

(Positive) reactions, such as comments, shares, likes and mentions, are followers and social media user's way of showing engagement towards a brand and/or the content of the post. Liking and commenting on brand posts is understood to reflect brand post popularity (de Vries, Gensler & Leeflang 2012). Positive and unpaid reactions (e-WOM) earned from followers or other users of Facebook and Instagram, are some of the most influential marketing for brands, as people more willing to trust other people's recommendation more than paid advertising. E-WOM is also important in terms of brand exposure. Facebook enables friends to see which companies, pictures and videos others have liked (at least to some extent). Especially content that earns a lot reactions and is shared by private users of Facebook and Instagram, receives better exposure than brand shared content, due to latest algorithm changes. Especially Facebook has made it more difficult for brands to gain attention without paid advertising (see Grapevine 2017b.)

Reactions, such as comments are often earned quickly after content is published, usually within 48 hours, which means that brands notice fast which posts earn more engagement from followers. High performing content is exception, and has longer shelf life than average posts. (Simply Measured 2014 p.8) There are different drivers influence the number of likes, comments and shares. According to de Vries et al. (2012), the share of positive

comments positively relates to the number of likes, and number of comments can be enhance by interactive brand post characteristics, such as questions.

It is said that in social media, 1 percent of the users create the content (creatives), 19 percent of the users add comments and vote (contributors) and 80 percent of the users are passive consumers who basically just follow others doing (Pönkä 2016). Considering this, the number of likes, comments and shares does not tell the whole story. There are many consumers who have seen the post and potentially clicked the links etc. without leaving a visible trace that can be seen by looking at the brand sites from outside the company. Companies themselves can better follow the number of reactions compared to number of people who have seen the post via insider statistics.

Incentives

Competitions and lotteries enable better allocation of money that is invested directly, yet simple contests can positively affect the consumer base. In social platforms, the contests that offer something for a friend as well, have potential to receive more entries/comments and grow more quickly. (Bailey 2014) Although competitions do not necessarily translate directly into Euros for the company, they offer a great chance to improve brand exposure and increase e-WOM. However, brands should be aware of the rules regarding competitions and lotteries. For instance, in Facebook, audiences may be asked to like or comment a post, yet brands are not allowed to ask followers to share a post on their friend's wall to participate. Meaning that, others' walls cannot be used for such purposes. (Grapevine 2017b)

Engagement Rate

Engaged users in Facebook and Instagram, are those users that have liked, commented or shared posts. Facebook and Instagram analytics allow business users also to follow the number of clicks and reactions of posts in relation to number of people who have truly seen the posts. (Mikkola 2017) Yet, such insight data is not available when the posts are viewed from outside. However, engagement rate for posts can be counted also without insight as engagement as a % of total fans. Meaning that total number of likes, comments and shares is shared by total number of fans (Smitha 2013)

> ENGAGEMENT RATE = TOTAL ENGAGEMENT (LIKES + COMMENTS + SHARES) / TOTAL FOLLOWERS

Figure 7: Calculating engagement rate for posts without insight data (Smitha 2013)

3   METHODOLOGY

3.1 Case study

Case study refers to a method of analysis and/or a specific research design to examine a problem, such as a person, event or phenomenon or other type of subject, to e.g. provide means for understanding a research problem with a greater clarity. Case study research is suitable when research is looking answers for questions that start with how, who and why. It suits especially for investigating events that occur in a contemporary context. A case study research paper often examines a single subject of analysis. (Dawes Farquhar 2012; USC University of Southern California) This paper is a case study with a focus on developing certain business area of a case company. In this case, social media marketing communication of BEdesign Oy.

3.2 Benchmarking

The primary method of this study was benchmarking. According to Shively (2016), there are four types of benchmarking related to social media. *Aspirational benchmarking* relates to learning from social leaders; *Trended benchmarking* to learning from previous activities; *Earned benchmarking* means comparing campaign and promotional efforts against standards of success; and *Competitive benchmarking* – also called *Inspirational benchmarking* – relates to learning from competitors. In social media, competitive benchmarking can be used, for instance, to comparing factors such as engagement rate against competing brands to set goals for performance. Inspirational benchmarking was used to investigate how Finnish interior and lifestyle brands utilize Facebook and Instagram to influence brand awareness. More precisely is was compared and analyzed what concrete

ways are used to influence brand awareness, customer engagement and electronic word-of-mouth through Facebook and Instagram.

3.3 Selection of Brands for Benchmarking

Three Finnish companies - Vallila Interior, Pentik and Balmuir - were chosen to be benchmarked due to their rankings in *brandsome.fi*, a site that ranks brands based on their popularity – popularity understood as number of followers - in social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Pinterest and Google+. Vallila Interior, Pentik and Balmuir are the three Finnish brands that are ranked highest (week 16/2017) within interior store (*sisustusliike* in Finnish) category, as presented in figure 8.

	BRÄNDI	KATEGORIA	SEURAAJIA YHTEENSÄ	f	▾	◉	▶	ⓟ	g+
1	Vallila Interior	sisustusliike	65.2K	44.7K	2.0K	16.8K	117	1.6K	5
2	Pentik	sisustusliike	54.8K	33.1K	0	21.7K	0	0	3
3	Balmuir	sisustusliike	30.0K	16.6K	179	13.2K	0	0	0
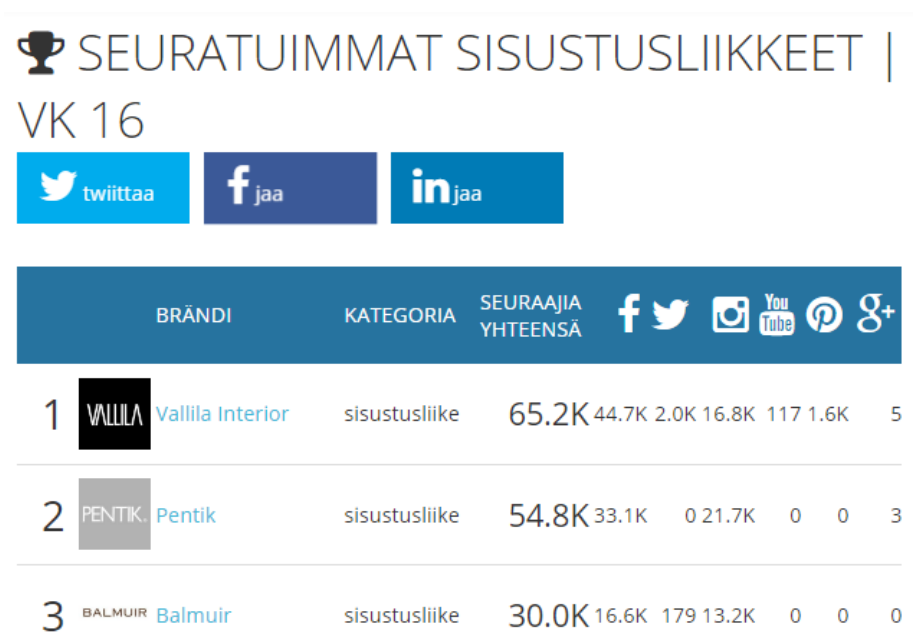
Figure 8: Most followed interior stores in Finland, week 16 (Brandsome 2017b)

3.3.1 Vallila Interior

Vallila Interior Oy is a leading Finnish design house, with special focus on interior design and textiles. The company was founded already in 1935 by Otto Berner. Originally named as Finnish Silk Ltd, the company started as a quality silk product producer. Company headquarters were built in the Vallila neighborhood in Helsinki in 1939, and the company

is still operated from the same premises. In-house textile designing was started in 1967, and since that company has had several collaborations with leading designers, such as Howard Smith. In the 1980s Vallila began working with public spaces and importing leading interior brands. 1987 company name was changed to Vallila Interior to better reflect its current business. (Vallila Interior 2016a & b)

Today, Vallila Interior is an employer to approximately 125 people. The company represents over 100 (a hundred) international design brands, and is a well-known interior partner with public spaces. New Vallila Collections are launched twice a year, in Spring and Autumn, and consist of home textiles, rugs, shower curtains, bedding and kitchen accessories. In Finland, Vallila products are sold both via Vallila Concept Stores and all over Finland in a wide selection of interior stores and department stores. Internationally, products are sold via retailers in more than 40 countries worldwide, and since 2016 via Vallilastore.com within the entire EU region. (Vallila Interior 2016b & c)

3.3.2 Pentik

Pentik is an international interior design retailer, with a desire to bring northern beauty and coziness into peoples' homes. The company was founded in 1971 in Posio, due to founder Anu Pentik's enthusiasm for ceramics and leather crafts. Company owned ceramics factory is still located in Posio, and manufactures approximately 300 000 ceramic products yearly with unique production technology. Pentik offers a wide selection of tableware, textiles, decoration and furniture pieces and delicacies. As an addition to permanent collections, seasonal collections are launched four times a year. Pentik products are sold via Pentik stores, Outlet stores and web store. Most Pentik Stores are in Finland, yet there are brand stores also in Russia and Hungary. In 2016, Pentik Oy employed 300 people, and made a turnover of ca. 30 million Euros. (Pentik a, b & c)

3.3.3 Balmuir

Balmuir is a luxurious Finnish lifestyle brand that offers a wide selection of interior decoration items and fashion accessories. The brand "Balmuir" was founded in 2007 by Heidi and Juha Jaara, the owners of Wheslyn Group Oy. The products cherish traditional craftsmanship and are made from the finest natural materials, such as Mongolian cashmere, kid

mohair -wools, first grade buffalo leather and stone washed 100% European linen. All products are manufactured by Finnish and foreign family run companies, that have been selected carefully based on their craftsmanship skills, ethical and ecological values, reputation and abilities to process raw materials. Balmuir follows and controls the entire production chain. According to the owners, corner stone of the business are high product quality, excellence in customer service, flexibility and joy of creation. (EY; Balmuir 2017)

Balmuir products are sold in more than 70 countries, mainly in high-end department stores and specialized stores. Added to that the brand works in co-operation with selected five star hotels and high quality restaurants, and has an international web store for retail customers. Within the last two years the company has been able to raise its turnover by 100%, and at the beginning of 2016 the turnover was 4,3 million Euros. In 2016, Balmuir was chosen as the winner of Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year competition, in Kauppa (Retail) -series. (EY 2017; YouTube 4.11.2016)

3.4 Selection of Social Media Platforms

Social media consist of tens if not of hundreds of different platforms, and thus investigating all of them would be impossible. Facebook and Instagram were selected to be investigated firstly, because both platforms are actively used for marketing purposes by BEdesign Oy as well as by the brands that were selected to be benchmarked. Secondly, Facebook and Instagram brand posts are visible for all Internet users without logging into personal user account, which enables to investigate their use outside the companies and collect comparable data of brands' actions and use of brand posts elements that may influence brand awareness in Facebook and Instagram. Thirdly, Facebook and Instagram are some of most well-known and platforms worldwide, that enable affordable possibilities also for small companies to reach target audiences.

3.5 Data Collection and Comparison

All brand posts of BEdesign, Balmuir, Pentik and Vallila Interior, posted between October 2016 and March 2017, were collected to Microsoft Excel for comparison. Data was collected manually, which was time-consuming. However, as Sloan & Quan-Haase

(2017, p. 582) argue, "working with the user interface and the standard hashtag, location, or username search functions forces researchers to engage with images/videos, captions and hashtags, in the manner that users envisioned when they created the content." Additionally, by looking at each post during data gathering, researchers gain better understanding of the visual intent of posts and other users experience when exposed to Instagram content, which breeds greater familiarity with the data. According to Sloan & Quan-Haase (2017, p. 582-583) researchers should not to use their own personal Instagram log-in when collecting data, as it may result in the inclusion of data from private accounts. This considered, all information was gathered without logging in to either Facebook or Instagram account during data gathering.

The sample was collected between April 1st and 26th. The number of likes, comments and shares can change anytime in social media; or, posts may be managed, made private or deleted by users after being collated. Therefore, the number of posts, likes, comments and shares was updated on March 30th. Update considered all posts of all brands in both Facebook and Instagram. This said, the numbers presented in findings (chapter 4) are representative of the situation on April 30th. Sloan & Quan-Haase's (2017 p. 583) recommendation to give sufficient time for users to reflect on posted content after it has been published. Author suggests that one month time lap after the last post (April 30th) is sufficient with brand posts, as most reactions are often received within the first 48 hours.

Overall, the sample size was 432 Facebook posts and 457 Instagram posts, which makes a total of 889 posts. Three shared events had disappeared from Balmuir's Facebook wall between the original sample gathering and sample update (April 30th). Because of that, these posts were deleted from the sample. Data collected from brand posts was converted into quantitative form using Microsoft Excel for further comparison and analysis. To identify concrete actions that influence brand awareness, it was investigated what actions and brand posts elements are used by selected brands to influence brand awareness. Additionally, it was compared how often such activities or brand elements were used, and compared how engaged the followers of these brands are based on the number of likes, comments, shares brand posts have earned in Facebook and Instagram.

3.6 Validity and reliability

Author does not have any personal relationship with the investigated brands and, none of the benchmarked brands was contacted related to the research. The data was gathered from outside the companies, more precisely from public Facebook and Instagram accounts of these brands, without logging in on personal account. All posts are, therefore, visible for anyone – unless brands have deleted posts after the data was last updated on April 30th 2017. However, the number of likes, shares and comments may have changed after the data was last updated.

Examined were only such activities, and the use of brand post elements that are visible. Compared are, therefore, such activities and use of brand post elements that can be examined without inside knowledge or statistics regarding the posts. Data is comparable, as all data was gathered similarly from all accounts and updated on a same day. Also, data regarding brand posts of BEdesign was collected outside and does not include inside statistics. Due to manual data gathering and analysis, some errors may be possible. However, as numbers (such as average number of likes) are mainly averages from total posts that were published within six months by different brands, small differences in number of likes, comments or shares would not significantly affect the results. Different emoji's in Facebook related to like/dislike/heart were not separated, therefore "likes" include all these reactions. This to simplify the comparison. Although the use of emoji's was mainly positive towards the brands, some likes may in fact be negative opinions towards brand posts.

4 FINDINGS OF BENCHMARKING

Findings of the inspirational benchmarking are presented in this chapter. The four brands, BEdesign, Balmuir, Pentik and Vallila Interior published a total of 432 brand posts in Facebook and 457 brand posts in Instagram within a six-month period, between October 1st 2016 and March 31st 2017. The total number of brand posts was, therefore, 889 posts. The presented numbers are based on situation on April 30th 2017.

Findings related to BEdesign Oy are presented together with benchmarked brands, as this enables to better compare social media performance with benchmarked brands and notify areas that require development.

4.1 Background Information

Pentik has used Facebook the longest, since April 2010, yet it was the last brand to start using Instagram. Still, Pentik has the most, almost 22.000, followers in Instagram. In Facebook, Vallila interior has the most, over 44.500, followers. Also, if the followers of both platforms are counted, Vallila Interior has the most followers. Balmuir has been the most active on publishing content in Instagram, with almost 1.200 brand posts. This is almost four times the number of posts Pentik or BEdesign have posted during the time they have utilized Instagram. Information regarding the number of followers, likes, review, answering % etc. is presented in tables one (1) and two (2).

FACEBOOK	FOLLOWERS	LIKES	REVIEW	ANSWERING %	FIRST POST
BEDESIGN	2 459	2 487	4.9		03/2012
BALMUIR	16 486	16 738		78	08/2012
PENTIK	32 149	33 163	4.3	86	04/2010
VALLILA INTERIOR	44 510	44 846		70	01/2011

Table 1: Facebook user information (30.4.2017)

INSTAGRAM	FOLLOWERS	FOLLOWING	NO OF POSTS	FIRST POST
@bedesignfinland	4 400	1 590	326	05/2013
@balmuir	13 300	569	1 169	03/2014
@pentik_official	21 800	29	332	05/2014
@vallilainterior	16 800	804	853	02/2013

Table 2: Instagram user Information (30.4.2017)

If considered how many new followers the brands have got on average per month (by sharing the no of followers by number of months), the brands that have received on average most new followers are Vallila Interior and Pentik. Vallila Interior has got on average 575 new followers per month in Facebook, and Pentik on average ca. 620 new followers in Instagram. As a comparison BEdesign, who has the least followers in both platforms, has got on average 40 new followers in Facebook and 92 new followers in Instagram.

Although other factors than just social media marketing can affect the number of follow-ers, this information helps to form an understanding how the number of followers has evolved within time.

Other remarks that can be done based on information presented in tables 1 and 2, is that all brands have earned more likes in Facebook than their number of followers is. BE-design and Pentik have enabled consumers to review themselves in Facebook, and BE-design has earned an excellent score of 4.9 out of 5. Pentik, on the other hand, has the highest answering percentage of the benchmarked brands in Facebook.

BEdesign is following more users in Instagram than other brands. The difference is sig-nificant especially between Pentik and BEdesign. Pentik is only following 29 other users and BEdesign almost 1.600 users. Following others may be useful especially for a smaller brand in terms of understanding how other users are utilizing Instagram, for increasing communication and making other users aware of the brand by following them.

4.2 Findings related to Brand Exposure

4.2.1 Post Frequency

The total number of posts for the six-month period, together with monthly and weekly averages, are presented for Facebook in figure 9 and for Instagram in figure 10. The full number of days between October 1st, 2016 and March 31st, 2017 was 182. With 169 posts in Instagram and 146 posts in Facebook, Balmuir was the most active in posting content of the four brands. On average Balmuir posted 28 times per month in Instagram, which means that content was published nearly daily. In Facebook, Balmuir posted on average six (6) times a week.

Figure 9: Number of Posts in Facebook

	TOTAL OCT 2016 - MAR 2O17	ON AVERAGE PER MONTH	ON AVERAGE PER WEEK
■ BEDESIGN	40	7	2
■ BALMUIR	146	24	6
■ PENTIK	130	22	5
■ VALLILA INTERIOR	116	19	4
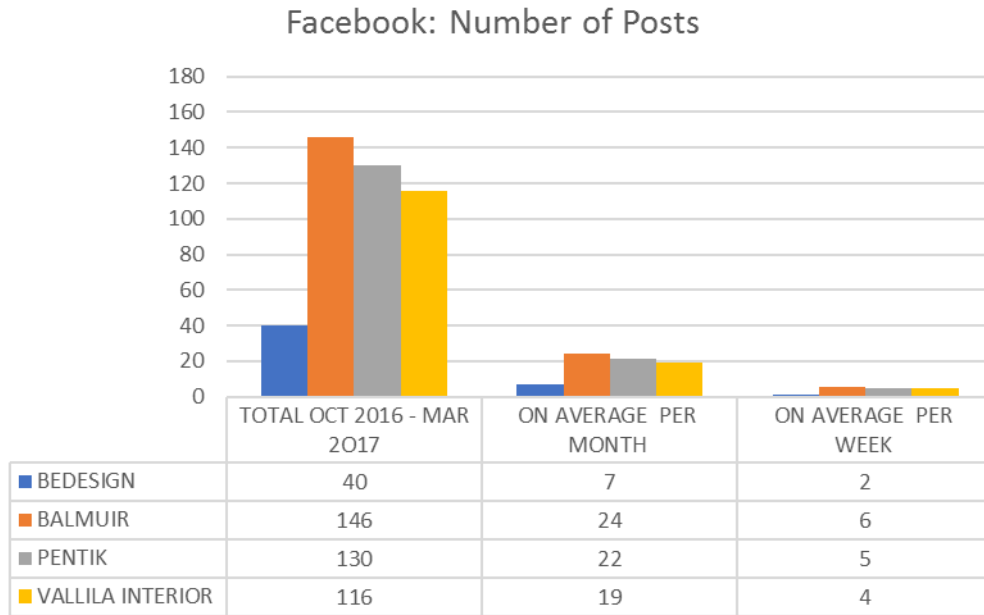
Figure 9: Number of Posts in Facebook

Pentik was the only brand to publish more posts in Facebook than in Instagram – on average 22 posts per month in Facebook and 14 posts per month in Instagram. The average number of posts per week in Facebook was five (5), and in Instagram three (3).

	TOTAL OCT 2016 - MAR 2017	ON AVERAGE PER MONTH	ON AVERAGE PER WEEK
■ @bedesignfinland	61	10	2
■ @balmuir	169	28	7
■ @pentik_official	83	14	3
■ @vallilainterior	144	24	6
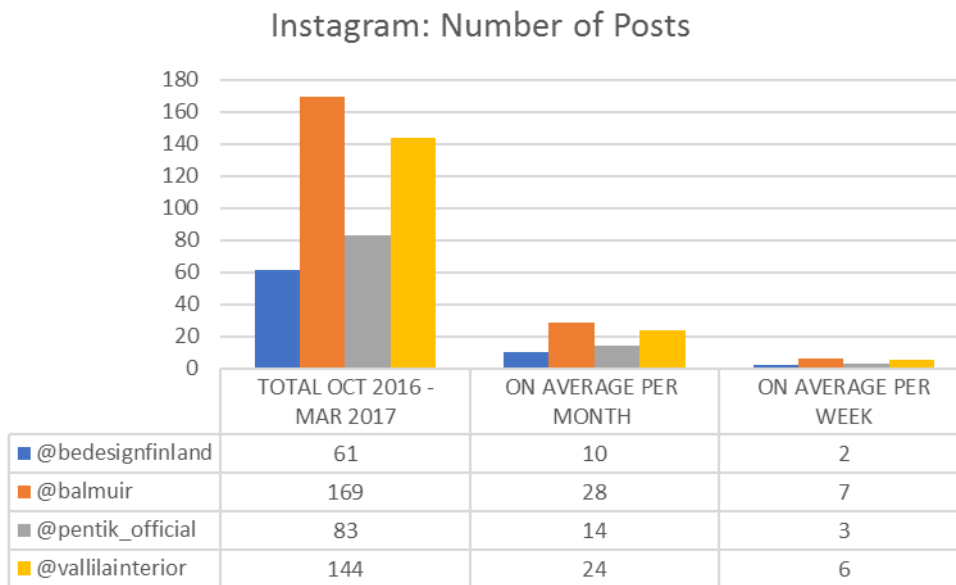
Figure 10: Number of posts in Instagram

BEdesign published the least content both in Instagram and Facebook. As a total, 61 posts were published in Instagram and 40 posts in Facebook. It means that on average content was published two (2) times a week. However, the number of posts was not consistent

between different months. For instance, BEdesign did not post anything in Facebook in March, yet made 20 posts in December.

Facebook: Number of Posts per Month

	OCT 2016	NOV 2016	DEC 2016	JAN 2017	FEB 2017	MAR 2017
BEDESIGN	4	4	20	8	4	0
BALMUIR	25	25	33	21	17	25
PENTIK	12	30	26	23	19	20
VALLILA INTERIOR	23	20	13	17	21	22
ALL	64	79	92	69	61	67
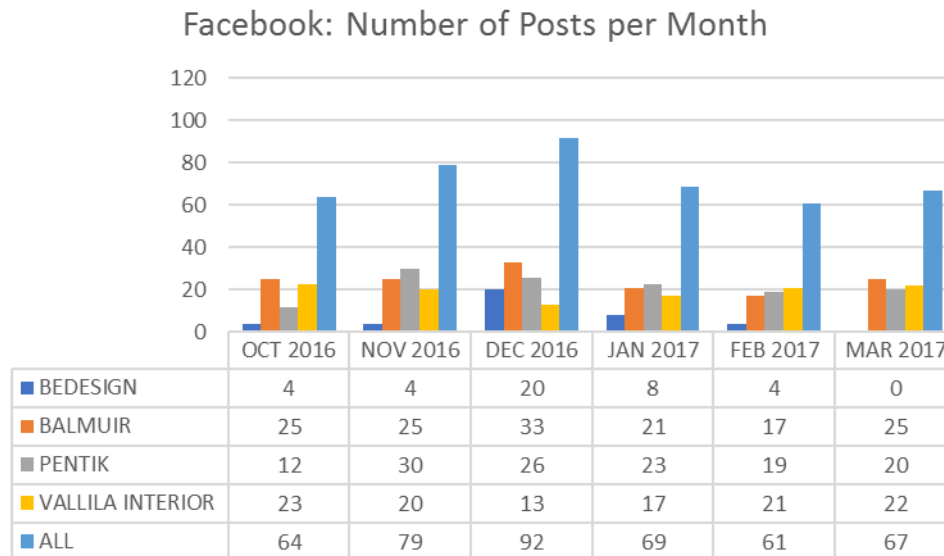
Figure 11: Facebook number of posts per month

Instagram: Number of Posts per Month

	10/2016	11/2016	12/2016	01/2017	02/2017	03/2017
@bedesignfinland	5	8	21	11	9	7
@balmuir	27	30	32	29	19	32
@pentik_official	15	12	28	12	7	9
@vallilainterior	27	32	24	20	17	24
All	74	82	105	72	52	72
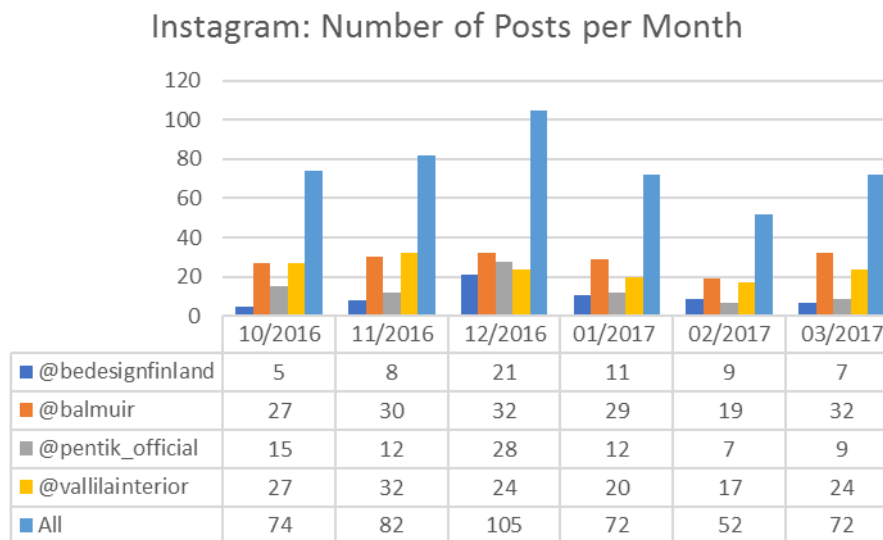
Figure 12: Instagram number of posts per month

Overall, December was the peak month for posting, as presented in figures 11 and 12. Of the total 457 Instagram posts, 105 were made in December. Meaning that 23 percent of all Instagram posts of four brands were made in December. Similarly, out of 432 Facebook posts, 92 were posted in December. This means that 21 percent of Facebook posts were made in December. This was, naturally, related to Christmas. Least posts were published in February both in Facebook and in Instagram.

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4.2.2 Post Content

Although content of posts is not thorough investigated, author made some notices during the data collection and comparison. As mentioned earlier, December was the peak month for posting. Yet, the encouragement to buy Christmas presents was already started in November, especially by Vallila Interior. BEdesign and Pentik posted on each day or almost every day between December 1st and 24th, as in form of a Christmas calendar. Additionally, brands posted inspirational Christmas related photos and ideas for Christmas presents, decoration and table setting. Increased posting in December may ensure staying in minds of consumers, which may be useful as consumers are considering Christmas present. Yet, it seems that competition for attention is more intense on December.

Other holidays, festivities or international "theme days" that motivated brand posts of more than one brand were Black Friday (sales), Cyber Monday (sales), Finnish Independence Day, Hullut Päivät (Stockmann) (sales), Fathers' Day (gift inspiration), Halloween (sales), International Women's Day, New Year's Eve and Valentine's Day (gift inspiration). Additionally, drivers for posting were products from new and/or current collections, seasonal sales and ongoing projects or events, such as Vallila Interior co-operation with Lauri Ylönen in "Laurin talot" TV-program, Balmuir 10th anniversary celebrations in Saint James Albany Hotel in Paris, or Anu Pentik's new exhibition "Kolme tilaa". Several posts were made related to such events.

The style and motive of posts in Instagram was more inspirational than in Facebook, whereas Facebook was used more for sales purposes. This may be related to the fact that direct links (hyperlinks) are not supported in Instagram posts and cannot be used similarly as in Facebook to drive traffic to e.g. company owned pages as in Facebook. Link can be only added to bio section (on user information "banner") in Instagram. Especially Pentik used Facebook for promoting discount sales, and was the most active in utilizing different formats, such as carousel, for promoting sales. In fact, sales were promoted in Facebook in 32 percent of Pentik posts. Sales posts in Pentik account earned on average 135 likes within the six-month period, whereas all posts on average earned over 230 likes.

4.2.3 Post Type

In Instagram, all posts within the six-month period were either photos or videos. Despite videos are understood to gain more attention than photos, brands only used videos randomly. Videos were used 13 times in Instagram, which means that only three (3) percent of the posts were videos. BEdesign was most active in posting videos, as they posted a total of five (5) videos. In Facebook, brands posted a total 17 videos. Pentik was most active with posting and/or sharing videos. Balmuir's high number of views can be explained, due to a video shared of a Finnish singer Jenni Vartiainen with a Balmuir hat (product placement?). This video was viewed over 100.000 times. Other videos shared by Balmuir did were not viewed to same extent. Number of videos and an approximate number of views is presented in table 3. Number of videos or views does not include slideshow ads, that were used 30 times by Pentik, and once by Vallila Interior.

VIDEOS	FACEBOOK		INSTAGRAM	
	No.	Views	No.	Views
BEDESIGN	3	1 900	5	4 700
BALMUIR	3	109 300	3	5 400
PENTIK	10	68 200	1	4 700
VALLILA INTERIOR	1	23 000	4	6 600

Table 3: Video posts in Facebook and Instagram

In Facebook, also other types of posts were used as an addition to photos and videos. In figure 13, the use of different types of posts is visualized. As can be noticed, over half of the posts published in Facebook by all four brands were photos.

Approximately 74 percent of Balmuir's posts were photos. Balmuir was active adding direct links to photo posts' text field. Approximately 42 percent of posts were linked to company webstore, and written CTA was used occasionally. Additionally, Balmuir was the most active of all four brands to share other users' photos. Approximately 14 percent of posts in Facebook were shared photos, where mainly bloggers presented and/or wore Balmuir products. Products were presented by some of the most popular bloggers in Finland, such as Pupulandia, Style Plaza, Alexa Dagmar, Char in the City, Sofia Ruutu, Strictly Style and Kira Kosonen. The use and sharing of such photos is a clear indication that, co-operation of social influencers is vital part of Balmuir's social media strategy.

Pentik was active using call-to-action and links in Facebook. Out of Pentik's 130 posts, approximately 75 percent were linked to Pentik.com, and written CTA was attached to over 60 percent of posts. Overall, Pentik was most active to use different types of posts (as is presented in figure 13). The use of photos, slideshow ads, carousel ads and links ware even during the six-month period. Pentik was especially active in promoting discount sales in Facebook. 32 percent of all Pentik's posts in Facebook were related to discount sales either in webstore or in physical stores. Potentially to gain attention, Pentik used slideshow ads 30 times and carousel ads 23 times.
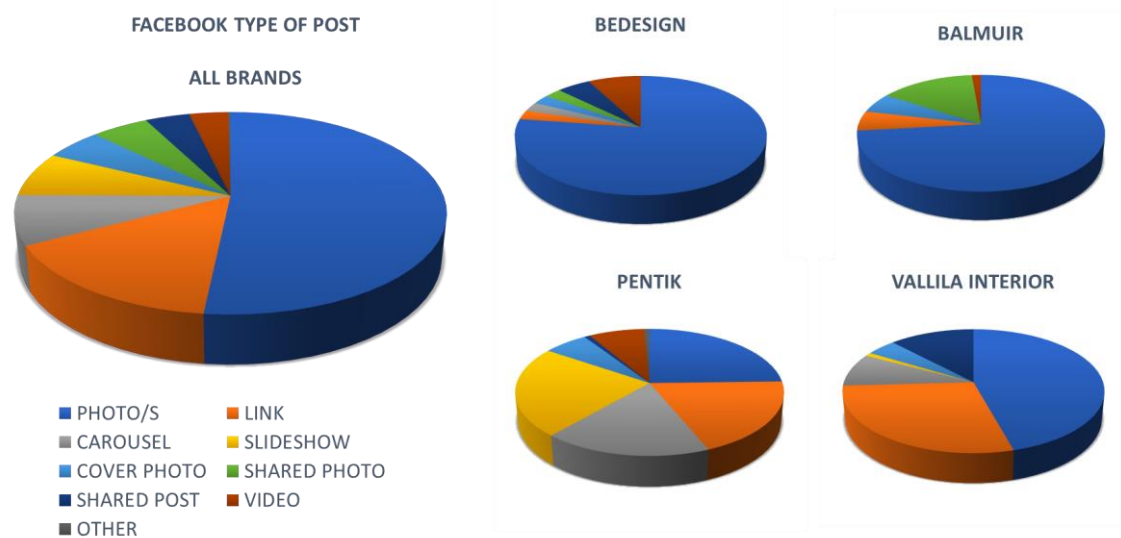
Figure 13: Type of posts used in Facebook – all posts vs. posts by Brand

Vallila Interior used mainly photos, yet also 28 percent of their posts were links – mainly to promote vallila.com blog posts, to drive traffic to company websites or to share an article related to the brand and its current projects, such as Laurin talot TV-program. Approximately 19 percent of Vallila Interior's posts were link and carousel ad posts that were linked to Vallila.com or Vallilinterior.com. Some carousel ads, however, were linked to blogs or other sites, such as Dekolehti or Oma Koti Valkoinen Blog. Oma Koti Valkoinen is the most read Interior blog in Finland (February 2017), and the 14th most popular blog among all blogs in Finland (Cision 2017; Blogit.fi 2017).

Also, BEdesign did used carousel ad once (16.12.2016) within the six-month period, and similarly to Vallila Interior, post was linked to Oma Koti Valkoinen blog. Yet BEdesign used mainly photos in Facebook. In fact, BEdesign was the only brand to mainly use same, Instagram posts also in Facebook. Only five out of 40 posts were such that were

only published in Facebook, and five were modified form the original Instagram posts. Still, 30 out of 40 posts were same as were posted in Instagram. This is most likely explained due to limited resources, yet it can be questioned if it does add value for the brand to use same posts in such extent. The use of same posts may be rationalized if the followers are mainly different than in Instagram. BEdesign used CTA only a couple of time within the six-month period. Mainly CTA was used to encourage followers to participate in lotteries. Followers were encouraged to tag a friend or vote to win e.g. a gift card, yet CTA was not used to encourage followers to get to know the brand better, or to drive traffic to brand website/webstore. Neither did BEdesign add direct links to their website/webstore more than once.

4.2.4 Visibility of Brand Products

Over 99 percent of Vallila Interior's posts included brand products or patterns in Instagram and around 85 percent in Facebook. Balmuir was consistent with product visibility in both platforms, as their products were visible in approximately 95 percent of posts. The products of Pentik were visible in approximately 77 percent of Facebook and 74 percent of Instagram posts. The products of BEdesign were least visible in both platforms. Brand products were shown in approximately 73-74 percent of posts. Considering the 20/80 principal (see 2.5.2 Brand Posts), BEdesign and Pentik could increase the visibility of brand products in posts. This does not mean they should necessarily promote products to increase direct sales, yet brand products could be used more within inspirational posts.
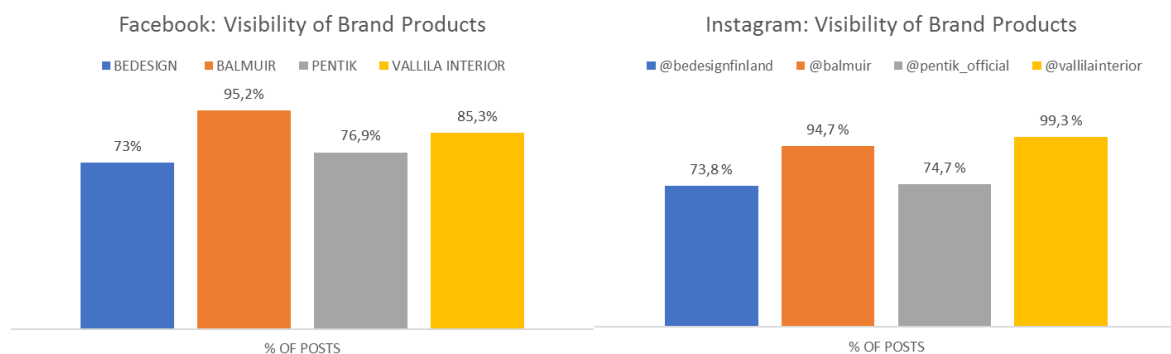

Figure 14: Product visibility in Facebook and Instagram

4.2.5 Language of Posts

The written language of posts was either Finnish or English, or a combination of both languages. BEdesign was the only company to use only English both in Facebook and Instagram. Similarly, Pentik used mainly Finnish in both platforms. As language decisions reflect the target audiences at least to some extent, this indicates that Pentik targets its Facebook and Instagram marketing mainly for Finnish consumers, and BEdesign targets a more international audience. Using just one language helps to maintain consistency, yet in case of BEdesign it can be potentially explained also by limited resources.

96 percent of Balmuir posts were in Finnish in Facebook, yet in Instagram, Balmuir used English in 99 percent of posts. This indicates that Facebook marketing is mainly targeted to Finnish consumers, yet Instagram marketing is targeted to a more international audience. However, Balmuir did only use English if the text was placed on top of a photo. Also, Balmuir does also have "Balmuir International" pages in Facebook, which further explains the decision to use of Finnish in "Balmuir" pages.

Of all companies, Vallila Interior, was the least consistent with language decision. In Facebook, 64 percent of Vallila Interior's posts were in Finnish, one percent in English and 34 percent of posts had some sort of description in both Finnish and English. Similarly, in Instagram, 74 percent of posts were in both English and Finnish, 16 percent in Finnish and 10 percent in English. Potentially the language decisions were based on content. For instance, local events were mainly marketed to local followers. However, if the audience is international, the inconsistent use of languages might be distracting.

Although the written language of posts was either Finnish or English, some other languages were used with hashtags in Instagram. For instance, BEdesign used hashtags #kleidenständer and #hygge. Vallila Interior used several Swedish, Japanese and Chinese hashtags especially during November and December, potentially to attract attention for Christmas related products.

4.2.6 Location

In Instagram, location was most actively used by BEdesign; location was mentioned in 36 percent of their posts. Pentik did not use location at any of their posts. Balmuir used

location on 11 percent of Instagram posts, mainly when posts were related to travelling to luxurious destinations, such as Paris, Switzerland and Dubai. Vallila Interior used location on approximately 10 percent of posts, mainly in relation to events or sales in Sisustusmaailma, which is part of Stockmann Helsinki. In Facebook, Balmuir was the most active in using location, as they used location nine (9) times within the six-months. Vallila used location two times, yet BEdesign and Pentik did not use location in their Facebook posts.

According to statistics, the use of location might increase engagement (see 2.5.2 Location). The average number of likes for posts with a location for Balmuir was 258 likes, compared to the average number of likes of all posts, which was 212 likes. Additionally, BEdesign earned on average 163 likes for posts that included location in Instagram, whereas the average number of likes for all posts was 156 (see figure 17). However, in Instagram, the average no of likes for Balmuir posts with location was 330, while average no of likes for total posts was 337.

4.2.7 Use of Hashtags

Hashtags were mainly used in Instagram, although they can be used in Facebook as well. BEdesign was the only brand to use hashtags in Facebook continuously. This was, however, related to the fact that most of their posts were published in Facebook and Instagram without being modified.

The strategies to use hashtags differed significantly between brands. Vallila Interior was most active using hashtags: hashtags were used over 1500 times during the six-month period. Just in November, Vallila Interior used hashtags over 500 times. Overall, Vallila Interior used over 370 unique hashtags. For Vallila Interior, the average number of hashtags per post was ten (10), yet in November, on average 16 hashtags were used per post. Although Vallila Interior used the most hashtags, their engagement rate (as if average number of likes shared to number of followers) was the lowest of the four brands (see Table 6). This indicates that extensive use of hashtags does not directly increase engagement.

Balmuir was the second most active using hashtags. Hashtags were used 570 times, and the number of unique hashtags was circa 220. The average number of hashtags per post

was four (4). Similarly, BEdesign used approximately four (4) hashtags per post in Instagram. Overall, BEdesign used approximately 230 hashtags, of which 128 were unique. Pentik used hashtags almost 290 times. yet with the use of 90 unique hashtags, Pentik used the least unique hashtags of the brands. Pentik used on average three (3) hashtags per post.

Top 5 hashtags

The five most used hashtags from each of the brand are presented in Table 4. Additionally, on the right side of each hashtag is presented the number of times hashtag has been mentioned in Instagram (by 4.5.2017). Brand name hashtag was one of the top 5 hashtags used by all brands. Balmuir and Pentik used their brand hashtag most actively: Balmuir used hashtag #balmuir in 86 percent of Instagram posts, and Pentik used #pentik in 95 percent of Instagram posts.

@bedesignfinland		@balmuir		@pentik_official		@vallilainterior	
#letsneverforgetthefirsttimewemet	130	**#balmuir**	9800	**#pentik**	30 891	#vallila	401
#bedesignfinland	563	#scarf	5 985 124	#tunnelmoi	116	**#vallilainterior**	5140
#repost	243 298 416	#kidmohair	6046	#joulukalenteri	61 171	#interiordesign	25 560 173
#deershelf	241	#beanie	3 213 930	#suomi100	89 542	#finnishdesign	115 929
#stockmann	46 224	#linen	956 261	#madebyfinland	401	#vallilaaw16	119

Table 4: Top five hashtags per brand and their number of mentions

As discussed in section (2.5.2 Hashtags), brands could select hashtags based on their objectives. If hashtags are used for brand awareness, it could be beneficial to select hashtags that have been mentioned between 10.000 to 500.000 likes. Hashtags that have just a couple of hundred mentions are not enough to increase awareness. On the other hand, hashtags that are too commonly used will not enable to be easily noticed. However, as can be noticed form table 4, most of the top hashtags that were used by BEdesign, Balmuir, Pentik and Vallila Interior, have either just a couple of hundred mentions or millions of mentions. A more strategic use of hashtags that enable reaching target audiences could be useful to generate brand awareness. Also, brands should select hashtags that will not increase wrong kind of attention. Small mistakes in words may harm brand image. For instance, BEdesign may have done just a small typo error with popup, and written #poup in one of their posts. However, mentions in category #poup are full of photos related to use of hasis, which is not the kind of awareness that is required for a brand.

4.3 Findings Related to e-WOM and Customer Engagement

4.3.1 Earned Likes

The number of likes brands earned are presented in figure 14 and 15. All brands earned more likes in Instagram than in Facebook. In Instagram, the 457 posts from four brands earned over of 188.000 likes. Total number of likes for 432 Facebook posts approximately 94.000 likes. The difference is significant considering that only 25 less posts were published in Facebook. Such findings support the statistics of Instagram posts receiving higher engagement than Facebook (see 2.5.1).

Facebook: Monthly Number of Likes

	OCT 2016	NOV 2016	DEC 2016	JAN 2017	FEB 2017	MAR 2017
■ BEDESIGN	92	97	581	232	223	0
■ BALMUIR	5482	4959	8528	4496	4172	3303
■ PENTIK	2355	5604	8035	4826	3362	4771
■ VALLILA INTERIOR	6514	7839	5197	4723	3584	4648
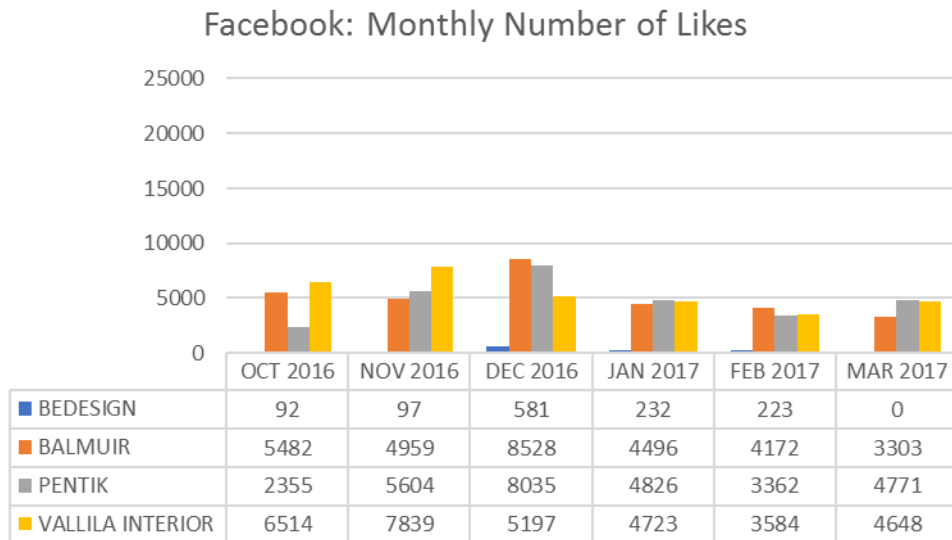
Figure 15: Facebook monthly total number of likes

Pentik earned most likes in Instagram, yet Vallila Interior and Balmuir earned more likes than Pentik in Facebook. Pentik earned almost 68.300 likes in Instagram, which was approximately 36% of all likes the four brands earned together in Instagram. Similarly, Vallila Interior earned approximately 32.500 likes in Facebook, which was approximately 35% of the likes the four brands earned together in Facebook.

The number of likes BEdesign earned was lower than of benchmarked brands. BEdesign earned nearly 8.900 likes in Instagram and 1.200 in Facebook, which means the total number of likes was approximately 10.100. The brand that received most likes if likes from both platforms were counted together, was Pentik with over 97.000 likes. Vallila Interior earned over 87.000 likes, and Balmuir nearly 87.000 likes.

Instagram: Monthly Number of Likes

	OCT 2016	NOV 2016	DEC 2016	JAN 2017	FEB 2017	MAR 2017
■ @bedesignfinland	408	1385	3396	1376	1586	742
■ @balmuir	9236	8827	11239	9960	6416	10198
■ @pentik_official	9272	9968	23585	11763	6682	7012
■ @vallilainterior	9781	12681	9777	8037	6495	8221
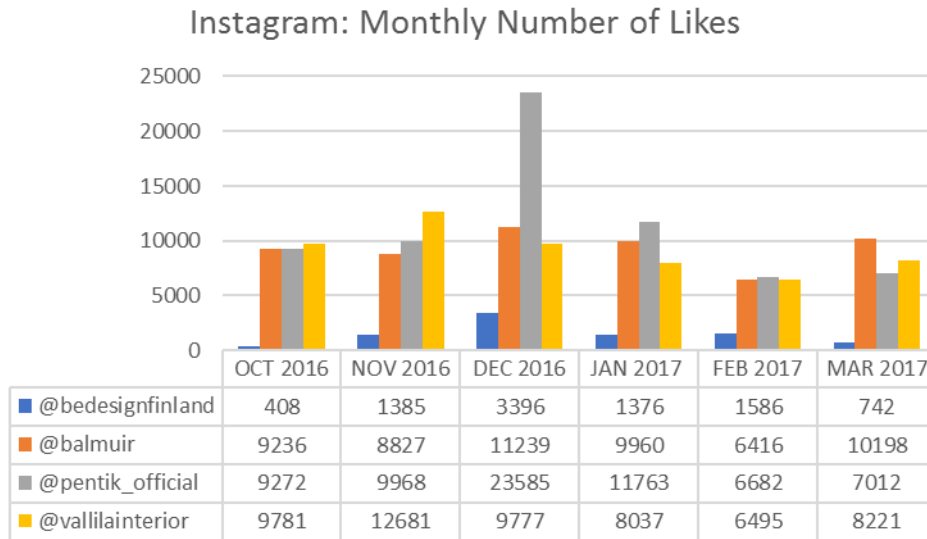
Figure 16: Instagram monthly number of likes

When comparing the monthly number of likes (compare, 15 and 16), with number of posts per month (figures 10 and 11) it can be noticed that BEdesign, Balmuir and Pentik earned their highest number of likes in December in both platforms. December was also the busiest month for posting for these companies. Similarly, Vallila published November, also earning the largest number of likes in November in Instagram. These findings indicate that the monthly number of posts may positively influence the monthly number of likes.

Average Number of Likes per Post

All brands earned on average more likes per post in Instagram than in Facebook. The most significant difference between the average number of likes per post was with Pentik, who earned during the six-month period on average 223 likes per post in Facebook and on average 833 likes per posts in Instagram. In Instagram Pentik earned significantly more likes on average than other brands, yet in Facebook Vallila Interior earned on average most likes – 280 - per post, (see figures 17 and 18).

Facebook: Average Number of Likes per Post

	AVERAGE	% OF FOLLOWERS
■ BEDESIGN	31	1,2%
■ BALMUIR	212	1,3%
■ PENTIK	223	0,7%
■ VALLILA INTERIOR	280	0,6%
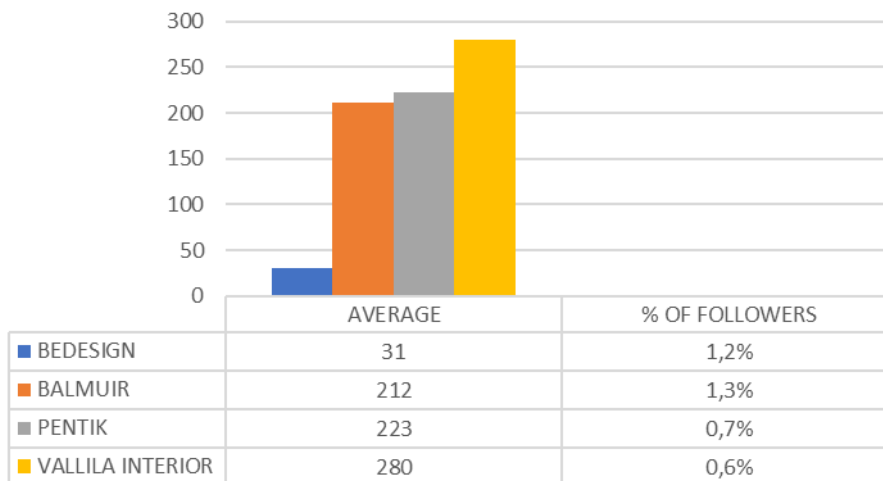
Figure 17: Facebook on average number of likes per post

Instagram: Average Number of Likes per Post

	AVERAGE	% OF FOLLOWERS
■ @bedesignfinland	156	3,5 %
■ @balmuir	337	2,5 %
■ @pentik_official	833	3,8 %
■ @vallilainterior	393	2,3 %
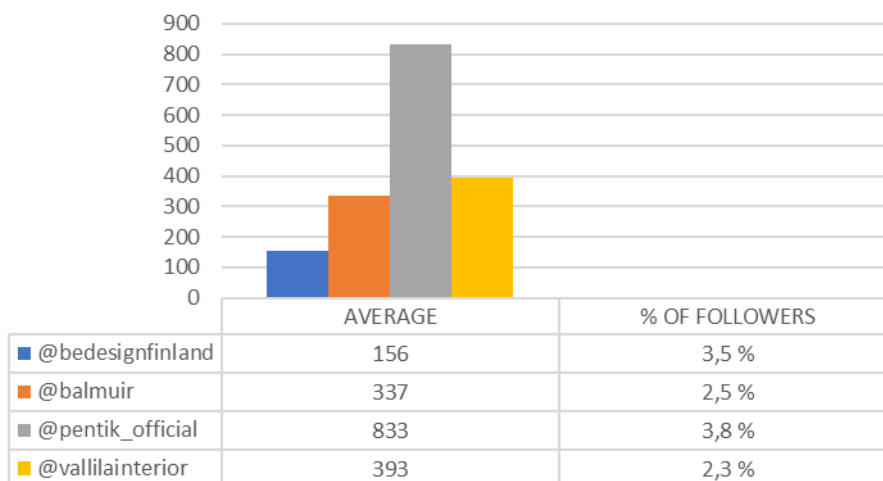
Figure 18: Instagram average number of likes per post

Since all the brands have different number of followers in Instagram and Facebook, their average number of likes per post does not say anything about the level of engagement. However, if the average number of likes per post between October 2016 and March 2017 is shared with the number of followers, this gives some indication of the followers' engagement towards the brand. By using this logic, all brands have more engaged audiences in Instagram than in Facebook – which is in line with statistics (see 2.5.1).

Among the four brands, Pentik had on average the most engaged audience in Instagram as on average 3.8 percent of followers liked the posts, yet Balmuir had on average the

most engaged audience in Facebook as 1.3 percent of followers liked the posts on average. BEdesign had the second highest engagement rate (when compared the average number of likes to the number of followers) in both Facebook (1.2 percent) and Instagram (3.5 percent), which indicates BEdesign succeeded well compared to the benchmarked brands. In fact, it was suggested that brands receive three times higher engagement in Instagram than in Facebook (see 2.5.1), which is well in line with engagement BEdesign earned in Facebook and Instagram. Vallila Interior had, based on the research, least engaged followers. However, all brands should strive to increase the level of engagement in a long run, especially in Facebook.

Highest and Lowest Number of Likes

In Facebook, Balmuir earned at its best, 1529 likes for a post (11.12.2016). Compared to the number of followers, if means that 9.3 percent of the followers liked the post. The number of likes, comments and shares, however, was positively influenced by a competition; by tagging a friend on a comment field participants had an opportunity to win a gift card worth of 200 euros. As a comparison, the engagement towards posts of Vallila Interior was at its highest 3.8 percent of followers.

Facebook: Highest vs. Lowest No of Likes per Post

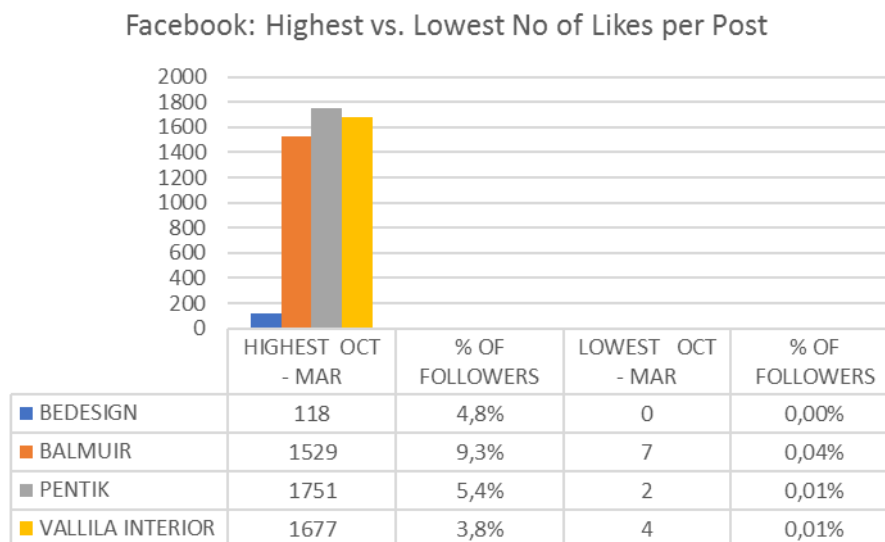|	HIGHEST OCT - MAR	% OF FOLLOWERS	LOWEST OCT - MAR	% OF FOLLOWERS
BEDESIGN	118	4,8%	0	0,00%
BALMUIR	1529	9,3%	7	0,04%
PENTIK	1751	5,4%	2	0,01%
VALLILA INTERIOR	1677	3,8%	4	0,01%

Figure 19: Facebook highest vs lowest no of likes per post

At its highest, Pentik earned over 1920 likes for a post in Instagram (see figure 20 and 21). This means that almost 9% of followers liked the post. In fact, 18 out of 83 posts,

meaning approximately 22% of their posts between October and March earned over 1000 likes (4.6 percent or more of followers liked the posts).
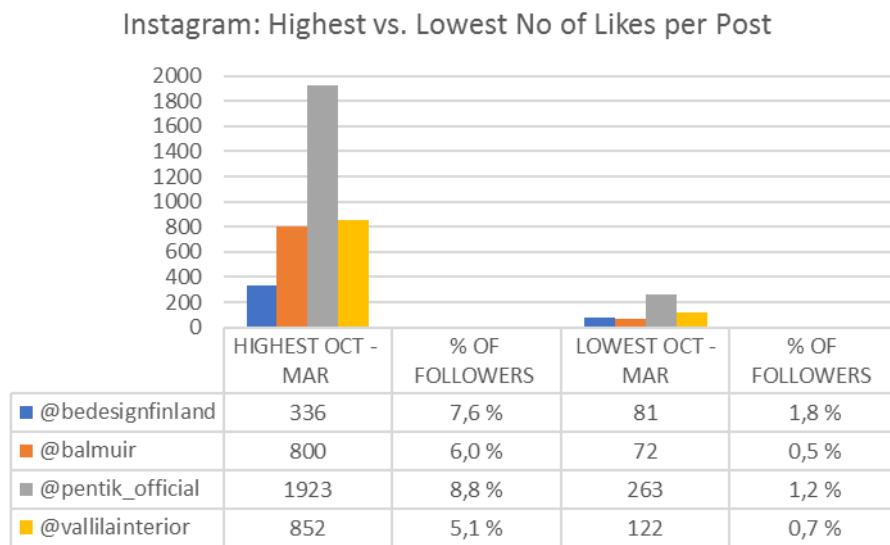

Instagram: Highest vs. Lowest No of Likes per Post

	HIGHEST OCT - MAR	% OF FOLLOWERS	LOWEST OCT - MAR	% OF FOLLOWERS
■ @bedesignfinland	336	7,6 %	81	1,8 %
■ @balmuir	800	6,0 %	72	0,5 %
■ @pentik_official	1923	8,8 %	263	1,2 %
■ @vallilainterior	852	5,1 %	122	0,7 %

Figure 20: Instagram highest vs lowest no of likes per post

In Instagram, the highest number of likes BEdesign earned per post was 336, which means that 7.6% of brand followers liked the post. In fact, the percentage was second highest out of the four brands, which means that BEdesign at its best received more likes than Balmuir or Vallila Interior when compared the amount of likes with total number of followers. Also, the post of BEdesign that earned the lowest number of likes, earned still more likes (if compared the number of likes to the number of followers) than the posts that earned the least likes from benchmarking brands. This means that between October 2016 and March 2017, in Instagram, all BEdesign posts were liked by minimum of 1.8 percent or maximum of 7.6 percent of followers.

It was noticed that in Instagram, 5 out of 10 most liked posts of Pentik were related to yearly festivities, such as International Women's day, Valentine's Day and Independence Day. Independence Day photo was also among top 10 most liked posts of Balmuir, and the most liked post of BEdesign was a photo related to first advent with a photo of Turku Cathedral. Such posts may be easy for followers to like, as they present something that is familiar to them and they can relate to such things.

Figure 21: @pentik_official at Instagram 24.1.2017

4.3.2 Earned Comments

Vallila Interior earned over 2200 comments, which compared to total posts means they earned on average 20 comments per post. Balmuir earned over 1700 comments in Facebook, which was 12 comments per post on average. BEdesign and Pentik earned a lot less comment in Facebook. Overall, posts received significantly more comments in Facebook than in Instagram (see figures 22 and 23). However, BEdesign was the only company to receive more comments in Instagram than in Facebook.
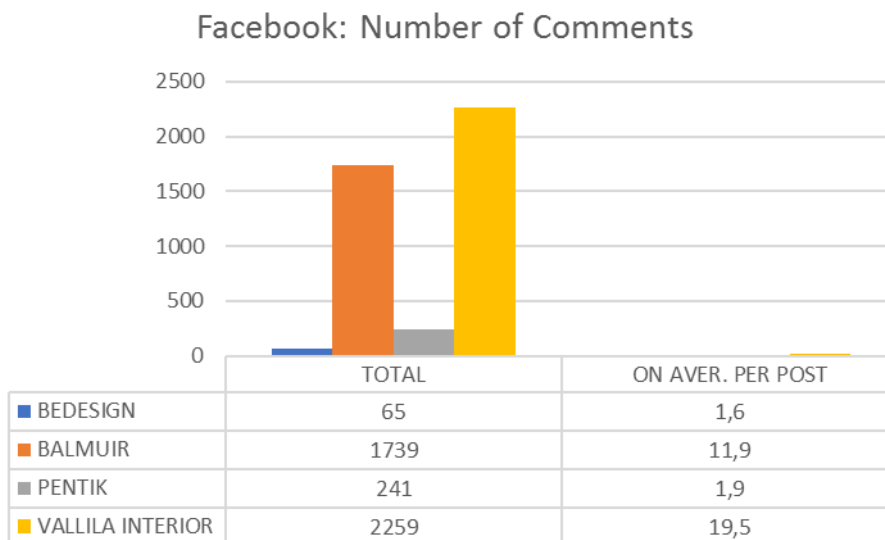

Facebook: Number of Comments

	TOTAL	ON AVER. PER POST
■ BEDESIGN	65	1,6
■ BALMUIR	1739	11,9
■ PENTIK	241	1,9
■ VALLILA INTERIOR	2259	19,5

Figure 22: Facebook number of comments

Balmuir earned the most comments in Instagram, approximately 270 comments. However, if the total number of comments was compared to the number of posts, BEdesign earned on average most comments per post. The average number of comment per post was approximately 2 comments for all brands. However, if the decimals are compared, BEdesign received on average 2,5 comments (see figure 23).
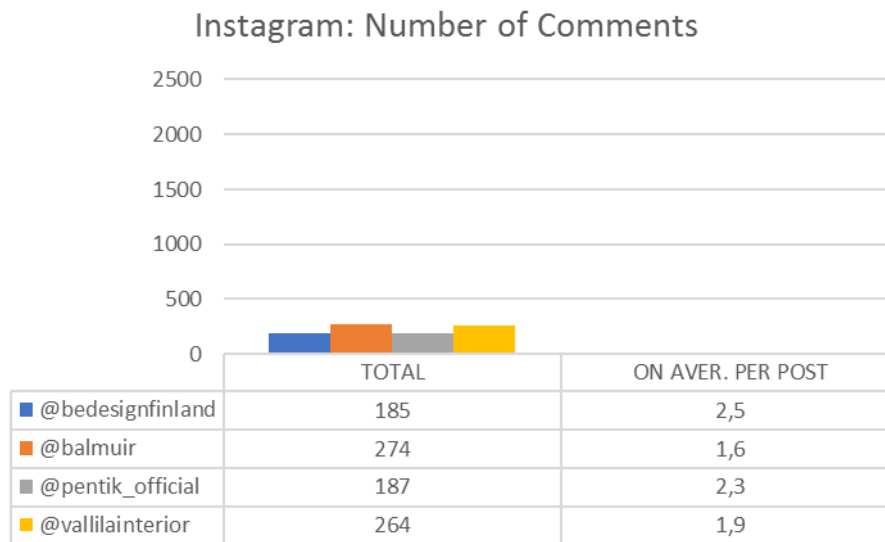
Instagram: Number of Comments

	TOTAL	ON AVER. PER POST
■ @bedesignfinland	185	2,5
■ @balmuir	274	1,6
■ @pentik_official	187	2,3
■ @vallilainterior	264	1,9

Figure 23: Instagram number of comments

The number of comments was positively affected by incentives, such as lotteries or competitions. For instance, in December, BEdesign earned a total of 96 comments, of which were mainly earned based on two lotteries (10. and13.12.2016). Followers were asked to tag a friend with whom they would like to share a price (gift card and a brunch at local bakeries), and potentially increase the visibility of the company within the followers' web of contacts. Similarly, Vallila Interior earned over 1 700 comments with their new tray collection lottery (5.10.2016), where followers were asked to choose a favourite to take part in a lottery.

Balmuir earned over 670 comments with their Valentine's Day lottery (14.2.2016) to comment a heart to win pair of wine glasses; and almost 500 likes with a co-operation lottery with Alexa Dagmar (8.3.2017), where followers were asked to comment which of Balmuir accessories is their favourite to win a keyring and a book written by Alexa Dagmar. Additionally, the number of comments was positively influenced by questions. On March 5th, Balmuir asked followers: "What is your favourite Helsinki scarf colour?" and

earned 12 comments in Instagram (which was the second highest number of comment on Instagram among the four brands).

4.3.3 Shares

Shares are not shown in Instagram similarly as in Facebook posts. In Instagram content is basically shared by tagging people that are wanted to see a certain post, or reposted in own account. However, the post itself does not tell the number of shares in Instagram. Therefore, here it is only discussed the number of shares in Facebook.
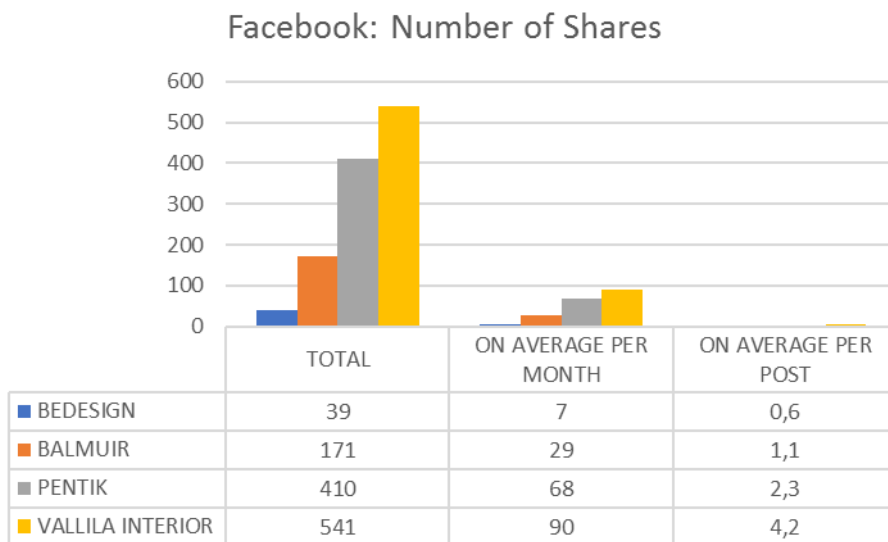
Facebook: Number of Shares

	TOTAL	ON AVERAGE PER MONTH	ON AVERAGE PER POST
■ BEDESIGN	39	7	0,6
■ BALMUIR	171	29	1,1
■ PENTIK	410	68	2,3
■ VALLILA INTERIOR	541	90	4,2

Figure 24: Facebook number of shares

The posts of Vallila Interior earned the most shares, a total of 541 shares within the six-month period, as can be seen from figure 24. If compared to total posts, it means that on average each post was shared approximately four (4) times. The posts that earned most shares were related to Laurin Talot TV-program (such as the commercial of Laurin Talot program 6.3.2016) and the collection that was created together with Lauri Ylönen and Alvardag (23.1.2017), both of which earned 60 or over 60 shares. Content was shared, for instance, by several international fan pages of Lauri Ylönen and The Rasmus. Third most shared post was a competition related to Suomi 100 -campaign, where Vallila Interior promised to fulfill design dreams (1.12.2016), which was shared 45 times.

However, the most shared post was published by Pentik (1.12.2016) It was announced that the company is searching for new employees for its ceramics factory in Posio. This

video was shared over 100 times. Additionally, Balmuir's competition (11.12.2016) to win gift cards worth of 200 Euros, was also shared over 50 times. BEdesign Oy earned a total of 39 shares in Facebook. Shares were mainly related to three competitions/lotteries that were organized in December. Such findings indicate that the number of shares can be increased with incentives. However, the most shared posts may not be the most commented posts – nor other way around.

4.3.4 Mentions

As mentioned in section 2.4.2, creating audience from scratch might be time-consuming and challenging because of the competition. One possibility is to co-operate with social media influencers, and/or use the posts that have been created and shared by other users. Strategic use of influencer posts, and (potential) co-operation with well-known bloggers, was seen especially in the way Balmuir used Instagram. Balmuir was active sharing the posts that social influencers have taken with Balmuir products.

Within the six-month period, Balmuir attached @mention to a post 65 times. Meaning that up to 40 percent of the photos were originally posted and/or created by another user, and/or related to another brand or location that Balmuir wanted to be connected to. 43 users that were mentioned in posts included, for instance several well-known Finnish blogs/bloggers, such as Sofia Ruutu, Char and The City, Mariannan, Strictly Style, Kira Kosonen and Pupulandia. Overall, the mentioned users have over 1.3 million followers in Instagram. BEdesign was the second most active attaching other users, and used 20 different @mentions. Mentioned users have a reach of over 100.000 followers.

The use of other user @Mentions in Instagram was also statistically proven to earn more engagement than posts without such mentions (Simply Measured 2014 p.11), however this was not supported by the findings. Balmuir brand posts with @Mentions earned on average 320 likes whereas total posts earned on average 337 likes in Instagram. Similarly, Vallila Interior posts with @Mentions earned on average 317 likes, whereas total posts earned on average 393 likes.

Such strategy enables visibility for both parties. At least partially, the sharing is most likely based on contract between both parties, yet some Instagram users - such as bloggers - might use #brandname to get noticed by the brand to potentially become shared at the

brand feed (as they have seen being done). On the other hand, each post with #brandname increases the number of mentions and gives a brand the opportunity to follow how much their brand hashtag is used in Instagram. By following what has been posted with a brand name, a brand can select and repost photos that best suit their identity and increase activity of the account. Seeing brand products being used by other, stylish people may additionally increase the desire to search more information about the products and potentially purchase such products.

4.3.5 Brand Related Hashtags

In Instagram, is can be easily followed the number of mentions a selected hashtag has received just by adding a hashtag into the search field. In Table 5, in first row it is presented the number of times brand hashtag has been mentioned in Instagram (by 4.5.2017), and on the second row, how many posts brands have done overall (by 30.4.2017). Third row shows the difference between brand hashtags and brand posts. For instance, @bedesignfinland has published a total of 326 posts in Instagram, yet their brand hashtag has been used 563 times. Even if BEdesign would have used brand hashtag in each of their posts, they would have still earned over 200 brand mentions from other users of Instagram.

#bedesignfinland		563	#balmuir		9 800	#pentik		30 891	#vallilainterior		5140
@bedesignfinland		326	@balmuir		1169	@pentik_official		332	@vallilainterior		853
MENTIONED BY OTHER USERS	237			8631			30559			4287	

Table 5: Brand hashtag mentions vs. number of brand posts

If compared the number of mentions between the four brands, it can be easily noticed that #pentik has been mentioned over 30.000 times, yet the brand @pentik_official has only posted 332 posts in Instagram (by 4.5.2017). This indicates that other users have mentioned the brand in their post over 30.000 times, which further indicates that among Instagram users the engagement towards Pentik is higher than towards other brands, as their customers are willing to share the word. By following the mentions related to a brand and its products, may also help to find potential photos that could be reposted and/or potential other users to start a co-operation with.

One option to increase the number of mention is to use incentives and/or encourage followers to use #brandname hashtag e.g. as part of a product launch or a campaign. For

instance, Balmuir asked followers to post a selfie with a Balmuir product, and finally selected one winner whose photo was released at their account and who received a price.

4.3.6 Engagement Rate

In Instagram, the average engagement (average number of likes and comments shared by total followers) rate does not really differ from engagement rate based on likes (average number of likes shared by total followers), as the number of comments in Instagram was not significant and shares cannot be counted (or are not visible) similarly to Facebook. However, it can be said that, the average engagement rate in Instagram is highest, 3.8 percent for Pentik and second highest, 3.7 percent for BEdesing (see table 6). This indicates that their followers are on average more engaged than of Balmuir and Vallila Interior in Instagram.

ON AVERAGE	BEDESIGN	BALMUIR	PENTIK	VALLILA INTERIOR
LIKES	159	337	833	393
COMMENTS	2,5	1,6	2,3	1,9
TOTAL	161	338	835	395
% OF FOLLOWERS	3,7%	2,5%	3,8%	2,3%

Table 6: Average engagement rate in Instagram – comparison of brands

In Facebook, the average engagement rate for all brands was lower in Facebook than in Instagram. Balmuir earned the highest engagement, yet also in Facebook BEdesign earned the second highest engagement.

ON AVERAGE	BEDESIGN	BALMUIR	PENTIK	VALLILA INTERIOR
LIKES	31	212	223	280
COMMENTS	1,6	11,9	1,9	19,5
SHARES	0,6	1,1	2,3	4,2
TOTAL	33	225	227	304
% OF FOLLOWERS	1,3%	1,4%	0,7%	0,7%

Table 7: Average engagement in Facebook – comparison of brands

5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of this study was to use benchmarking to identify concrete actions that can be used to influence brand awareness through social media. To investigate the topic, two research questions were formed: how can brand awareness be influenced through social media? and, what concrete actions can be used to influence brand awareness in Facebook and Instagram? Findings of the study are further discussed as follows.

Brand awareness refers to target consumers' abilities to recognize (identify prior encounter with a brand) and recall (generate a brand from memory) a brand. According to advertising theories, awareness is the first stage or one of the first stages that consumers go through within their purchase process or journey. Awareness is related to information search stage, where consumers internally and externally consider potential brands or products that could fulfill their needs or wants. Awareness is essential for brand's success: unless consumers are aware of a brand, they cannot purchase brand products or services. Therefore, brands are required to make consumers aware of their offering via different marketing procedures.

Shojaee and bin Azman (2012) identified three factors that positively influence brand awareness in social media context. These are brand exposure, electronic word-of-mouth and customer engagement. Shortly explained, ***Brand exposure*** refers to repetitious presentation of a brand to target consumers, to increase familiarity and recognition among target audiences. ***Electronic word-of-mouth*** *(e-WOM)* is a (unpaid) form of promotion, where consumers share the word of brands, products and services to other consumers. And, ***Customer engagement*** relates to consumers' relationship and feelings towards brands, of which affects their willingness to promote a brand to other consumers.

Social media does offer great potential for brand exposure. Especially social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram, enable affordable continual and repeated exposure among users that have decided to follow a brand. Following a brand is a sign of interest towards a brand (Sprout Social 2016), and indicates that some level of awareness has been reached. By creating and publishing brand related content (brand posts), brands can decide how often they are exposing their followers to brand related content. Based on find-

ings of the study, Balmuir, Pentik and Vallila Interior, which are the most followed Finnish brands in interior stores category (Bransome.fi), post content on Facebook and Instagram several times a week. For instance, Balmuir who was the most active in publishing content in both Facebook and Instagram, published content on average daily in Instagram and six times a week in Facebook. All benchmarked brands posted on average over three times a week in both platforms. This was not as often as brands post according to Statista (2017d), yet indicates that both platforms are used regularly by all three brands.

In social media, precisely in Facebook and Instagram, users may easily show their engagement towards the brand by liking, commenting and sharing (or reposting) content that has been shared by brands. An indication that a friend likes, comments or shares branded content, is regarded as an important form of marketing in social media as WOM is considered trusted source of recommendation (Goehring 2016). The findings of benchmarking indicate that the number of posts does affect the number of likes the brand earns within a month. Even if all posts would not earn high engagement, however, publishing more posts increases the possibilities that brand becomes viewed by wider audience. Also regular likes and comments from followers' influence how many people become exposed to a brand. As in Facebook, contacts of followers may see the reaction towards a brand post and this way more people may become aware of a brand.

Concerning electronic word-of-mouth, it was noticed that followers did positively react to incentives and encouragement of communication, such as questions that were directed to followers. Lotteries, competitions and questions directly increased especially number of comments, and often shares and/or tagging of other users. For instance, Vallila Interior earned at its highest 1700 comments, by arranging a lottery and asking followers opinion of their favorite new tray. This was the highest number of comments any of the brands earned within six months' period.

Trusov et al. (2009) argue that e-WOM is linked to the number of new members who subsequently join brand sites. Vallila Interior earned the highest number of comments, likes and shares among the benchmarked brands in Facebook, which could offer an explanation why Vallila Interior has been able to increase the number of Facebook followers more than other brands, by approximately 575 new followers per month since their first post. Similarly, Pentik was the brand that earned significantly more likes on average per

post in Instagram than other brands, and has also been able to increase the number of followers faster than other brands in Instagram, by on average 620 new followers each month since their first post. This indicates, that brands should strive to encourage word-of-mouth to influence the number of followers in social media.

Higher number of followers means that a wider audience may potentially see brand posts and reach to them. However, the importance is to target right audiences, as the number of followers does not give any direct indications of followers' engagement towards the brand. For instance, Vallila Interior with over 44.500 followers and Pentik with over 33.100 followers in Facebook, had the lowest on average total engagement rate, 0.7 %. With more followers, it might be challenging to please everyone.

Yet, the low engagement rate maybe also affected by the commercialized nature of Facebook, that negatively influences customer engagement. Facebook was rather used for direct sales and increasing traffic to website/webstore, whereas Instagram was used for more inspirational purposes. Especially Pentik and Vallila Interior used also used actively paid advertising such as carousel and slideshow ads. And, Pentik promoted discount sales in 32 percent of brand posts. Sales posts posted by Pentik earned on average 135 likes within the six-month period, whereas total posts earned on average over 230 likes. All benchmarked brands were also active in using call-to-action and links to brand websites and webstore in Facebook. This indicates that increase use of direct sales negatively influence customer engagement.

According to Heine (2017) brands get even three times more engagement in Instagram than in Facebook. This was supported by the findings of benchmarking, as all brands received higher total engagement in Instagram than in Facebook. For Vallila Interior, the total engagement rate in Instagram was 2.3 %, whereas total engagement rate in Facebook was 0.7 %; For Pentik, the total engagement rate in Facebook was 0.7 %, yet in Instagram 3.8%; which means that two out of three brands had over three times better total on average engagement rate in Instagram. Balmuir had the highest on average total engagement in Facebook, 1.4 %, and 2.5% in Instagram. This indicates that engagement towards Balmuir is more stable between the two platforms. Better engagement, in other hand, may influence brands willingness to use Instagram over Facebook. This is supported by the

fact, that more brand posts were published in Instagram than in Facebook between October 2016 and March 2017.

The use of other user @Mentions in Instagram was also statistically proven to earn more engagement than posts without such mentions (Simply Measured 2014 p.11), however this was not supported by the findings. Balmuir brand posts with @Mentions earned on average 320 likes whereas total posts earned on average 337 likes in Instagram. Similarly, Vallila Interior posts with @Mentions earned on average 317 likes, whereas total posts earned on average 393 likes. Based on findings, the use of other user @Mention does not directly increase engagement towards unique posts.

However, social influencer strategy can be extremely powerful in reaching target audiences and influencing brand exposure. This relates to sharing content provided by social influencers, and co-operation with non-competing social influencers, such as celebrities and popular bloggers. Among the three benchmarked brands, especially Balmuir's social media strategy was strongly related to social influencers. Balmuir mentioned 43 different users within six-month period, and some of them were mentioned more than once. In fact, almost 40 percent of Balmuir's Instagram posts were related to other user mentions. Those 43 users that were mentioned in Balmuir's account have over 1.3 million followers. As an addition to reach, followers of social influencers wont only become aware of a brand, they also see how brand products are utilized and most likely use #brandname, which leads to more mentions in Instagram.

It was also noticed that the use of hashtags, was not as strategic as it could be. For instance, Vallila Interior used on average ten hashtags, and over 370 unique hashtags were used over 1500 times within the six-month period. Still, they earned on average the lowest total engagement of all brands in Instagram. Within top five hashtags used by all brands, most hashtags had just couple of hundred mentions or several or tens millions mentions. Use of such hashtags does not support brand exposure. This said, more strategic use of hashtags that enable targeting desired audiences would better benefit brands.

Similarly, brands could strive to influence brand exposure and word-of-mouth by encouraging their followers to use hashtag #brandname, for instance as a part of competition. If other users of Instagram, attach hashtag #brandname to their posts, brand earns more mentions. This benefits the brand, as it can follow how much interest and engagement

towards the brand is shown within Instagram, as well as select suitable photos that can be reposted to activate the account and show how other users are using their products. Additionally, users who use hashtag #brandname, most likely use also additional hashtags at a post. This ensures that the photo will be found also by searching other words (hashtags) in Instagram.

Other brand post elements that may, according to statistics increase engagement by 7 percent is the use of location. Findings towards this were controversial. In Facebook, the average number of likes for posts with a location for Balmuir was 258 likes, compared to the average number of likes of total posts, which was 212 likes. However, in Instagram, the average no of likes for Balmuir posts with location was 330, while average no of likes for total posts was 337. BEdesign earned on average 163 likes for posts that included location in Instagram, whereas the average number of likes for all posts was 156. Therefore, the use of location may not directly increase engagement. However, use of location may influence brand exposure.

To conclude, there are several ways to influence brand awareness through social media by focusing on brand exposure, electronic word-of-mouth and customer engagement. Based on the study it can be listed several actions that may influence brand exposure. Brands can influence brand exposure in social media among target audiences by posting regularly content (brand posts) in Facebook and Instagram; by encouraging followers to use hashtag #brandname to increase the number of mentions in Instagram; by utilizing hashtags strategically to reach target audiences; by tagging location; by working in cooperation with selected social influencers or non-competing brands; by encouraging followers via CTA to get familiar with brand owned websites and webstores; and by encouraging followers electronic word-of mouth.

E-WOM can be encouraged by offering incentives or organizing lotteries and competitions, and by activating followers with questions and increased communication. This may positively influence engagement towards unique post, but may not influence engagement in a long run. Some actions that would, according to statistics increase engagement, were not supported by the findings of the study. These were e.g. the use of location and other user mentions. Due to higher engagement rate in Instagram, more inspirational content is more likely engaging for customers than highly promotional content. However, this

would require more in-depth investigation of the content of brand posts. It is also difficult to estimate how much and how fast such changes would influence brand awareness, and if use of such activities is enough to ensure brand awareness within commercialized social media platforms.

5.1 Recommendations for BEdesign Oy

Based on benchmarking it was noticed that the on average total engagement rate of BEdesign was in line with benchmarked brands (as if compared on average total engagement to total fans). In fact, the engagement rate of BEdesign was second best in both Facebook and Instagram, which indicates that followers of BEdesign are as engaged or more engaged to brand that of other benchmarked brands' followers. BEdesign published the least content in both platforms, and used the least CTA and links to generate traffic to company owned sites. Additionally, it was the only brands to use mainly same posts in both platform Facebook and Instagram. Based on findings, author recommends the following:

Regularity of Brand Posts

BEdesign should consider publishing brand posts more regularly to remain in minds of target audiences. The number of posts is not the key, and too much promotional content should be avoided. However, posting regularly content that is interesting for target audiences and presents brand products on an inspiration way, increases familiarity towards the brand. The brand becomes more easily recognized and, if memories towards the brand are created, recalled. Regular posting may inquire some pre-planning. BEdesign could create some sort of yearly plan that emphasizes most important events that need to be promoted each month. Content created by other users of Facebook or Instagram, as well as interesting links, could be shared more regularly to keep the account active.

Increased Visibility for Brand Products

BEdesign could slightly increase brand product visibility in Facebook and Instagram, for instance by following 20/80 principle. This does not necessarily mean increasing direct sales. Products can be presented on an inspirational way, as has been done also so far. It

is important to consider how social media posting enables to accomplish company objectives. If social media is used to ensure target audiences become aware of a brand and its products, it needs to be ensured that followers get exposed to brand and its products more than once. Several encounters with a brand increase familiarity among followers, which may lead to more positive attitudes towards the brand. Additionally, reminding followers about the existing brand products repetitiously, ensures that followers better recognize the brand and its products in different situations.

Encourage Consumers to Visit to Brand Sites

BEdesign should consider if their current way of publishing brand posts does help to accomplish company objectives that are related to sales. Brand awareness is a prerequisite of including brand into consideration set to be purchased. Based on benchmarking findings, BEdesign could increase brand product visibility in posts, as well as consider increasing call-to-action and direct links to encourage followers and potential new target audiences to visit their website and/or webstore. Such actions were used mainly in Facebook by benchmarked companies. While visiting brand sites may not lead to sales on the first time, may help consumers to better recognize the brand in different situations and help to form stronger memories towards the brand, making brand more easily recalled.

Encouraged Communication and e-WOM

BEdesign could increase communication with followers to influence their willingness to comment and share posts. Especially in Facebook, followers' contacts can see what has been liked or commented (at least to some extent), which may influence brand awareness. Although incentives are an opportunity, also simple questions and CTA may encourage followers to comment and share their opinions towards the brand. Competitions where followers are asked to post a photo and use brand name hashtag, are an opportunity to increase the number of brand mentions in Instagram. This might be also useful in terms of brand exposure.

Positive comments and reviews that BEdesign has received or noticed in social discussions, could be shared to show how engaged other consumers are towards the brand. And, why not consider using consumer opinion as part of product development to show their opinion matters and is respected. For instance, followers could be given opportunities to

vote between different options or color alternatives regarding smaller and/or more affordable brand products.

Focus on Strategic Awareness Instead of General Awareness

BEdesign should focus on strategic awareness instead of general awareness, meaning that it should be consider how brand post elements can be utilized to target most potential audiences. For instance, more strategic and planned use of hashtags that enables to reach necessary amount of people, may influence brand exposure. Trending hashtags or potential foreign hashtags could be used e.g. to target audiences in selected countries. Co-operation with selected social influencers and other brands may ensure brand exposure for wider (target) audiences.

Use of Facebook and Instagram to Complement Each Other

BEdesing should also consider if the use of Facebook and Instagram support company objectives. Currently Facebook seems to be used rather as an extension of a more preferred and regularly used Instagram account, and Facebook posting is more unregular. Although the use of Instagram posts in Facebook is easy and fast, it should be considered if the use of same posts does bring value to followers. If followers are different in both platforms, then the use of same post might be justified. But, if same people are following brands in different platforms, then they might need different stimulus to become entertained and interested.

Facebook was used more for sales purposes by benchmarked brands. Maybe BEdesign could also use more CTA in Facebook posts and add direct links to their webstore to generate traffic and push sales. And, in Instagram focus on inspiring people and focus on creating desirable identity. It is also good to remember, that Facebook and Instagram enable different possibilities for influencing brand awareness. Although engagement in Facebook is overall lower, benchmarked brands earned significantly more comments and shares in Facebook.

Use of Analytics for Continuous Development

BEdesign should follow more actively their social media performance - e.g. via Facebook and Instagram analytics - against company objectives. This to follow how audiences are

reacting towards content, to form an understanding of what works best and what should be developed. Some clear objectives should be formed to follow the success of social media marketing efforts. These could be, for instance, related to long-time growth in engagement rate or increasing number of followers or number of brand name mentions (#bedesignfinland) in Instagram. Potentially results of the study may help to form some concrete numeric objectives related to engagement rate or mentions.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

This study focused on three factors – brand exposures, e-WOM and customer engagement – that were suggested to influence brand awareness based on former research. However, this does not mean that there would not be additional factors that affect brand awareness. For instance, paid advertising possibilities that can influence brand awareness in Facebook and Instagram, were not considered. In an extremely competitive social media environment, however, increasing awareness may be difficult without paid advertising. It should be also considered, that marketing actions to influence brand awareness may significantly differ in other social media (other platforms, blogs etc).

Author did have limited possibilities to analyze all data that was collected for the research. Therefore, for instance, the impact of content for customer engagement was not investigated. Also, while this study did enable author to list some concrete actions that can be used in Facebook and Instagram to influence brand awareness, it did not take into consideration how *much* and how *fast* the use of listed actions and/or brand post elements could influence brand awareness. This is something that could be further investigated e.g. via experiment.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Consumers' awareness of a brand is essential, as it is considered one of the main reasons that brand and its products are purchased. The use of social media has been regarded a great possibility for brands to increase global brand awareness due to its affordability and reach, however, with continuously increasing competition for attention and fast commercializing social media, getting noticed has become challenging. Global social media trends force also smaller brands to consider their social media presence and marketing

activities more strategically than before. Especially with limited financial resources to invest in advertising awareness, understanding of possibilities to influence brand awareness are required.

Brand awareness can be influenced through social media by focusing on three factors: brand exposure, electronic word-of-mouth and customer engagement. Based on benchmarking research of three Finnish interior and lifestyle brands, especially brand exposure among target audiences can be influenced by several actions, such as posting regularly content in Facebook and Instagram; encouraging followers to use hashtag #brandname to increase the number of mentions in Instagram; utilizing hashtags strategically to maximize target audiences; tagging location; working in co-operation with selected social influencers or non-competing brands; encouraging followers via CTA to get familiar with brand owned websites and webstores; and by encouraging electronic word-of mouth. E-WOM can be encouraged, for instance, by offering incentives or organizing lotteries and competitions, and by asking questions and discussing with followers. Although engagement rate rises due to increased e-WOM, concrete actions to increase customer engagement on a long-run requires more in-depth investigation. However, it is difficult to estimate how *much* or how *fast* the use of listed actions could influence brand awareness through social media, such as through Facebook and Instagram.

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