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# **The Effect of Creativity in Social Media Marketing on Consumer Behavior in Finland**

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<p>Description</p> <p>Marketing efforts and the use of advertising channels continue to change drastically. This has changed the ways in which consumers see and interact with marketing, which has made it a challenge for businesses to build relationships with consumers on marketing channels, such as social media platforms. The aim of this study was to examine and bring insight on the impact of creativity in social media marketing on consumer behavior in Finland to fill this research gap.</p> <p>Theoretical literature was collected from diverse literature sources including past thesis works, academic journals and research articles. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with ordinary Finnish consumers. An NVivo qualitative analysis software aided the thematic analysis process performed to identify themes within the data which were member-checked to ensure credibility.</p> <p>The results revealed that higher advertising creativity in social media advertising increases ad-attitude, word-of-mouth and purchase intentions. Advertising which lacked creativity resulted in negative consumer behavior, such as blocking advertisements and causing annoyance to the consumer. Consumers also considered other elements important in social media marketing, such as relevancy and subtlety. Prior academic research suggests that advertisements should be divergent by being novel and standing out from other advertising. The results suggested that advertisements should not stand out as advertisements on social media platforms and should, instead, blend into the rest of the users' social media content.</p>		
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# **1 Introduction**

Marketing efforts and the use of non-traditional advertising channels have changed drastically during the past decade, which has also changed the way in which consumers see and interact with marketing. Studying the (Finnish) consumers' attitudes and views on today's social media marketing and how it affects them is interesting. This will also allow us to better understand how to build relationships with consumers. There is a great deal of research about advertising creativity (Ang & Low 2000; Smith & Yang 2004; Smith, Chen, & Yang 2008), different channels (Packer 2011), moving towards integrated marketing communications, social media, consumer decision making processes and relationships (Bambang 2012; Barry & Howard 1990; Brown, Amanda, & Lee 2007; DEI Worldwide 2008). However, there is a clear research gap on the use and impact of creativity in the social media channels, especially in Finland.

## **1.1 Purpose & Scope**

The primary objective of the study was to clarify and bring insight on the impact of creativity in social media marketing on consumer behavior in Finland. The consumers' perceptions of the current social media marketing were also examined.

The main research problem can be stated as follows:

What impact does creativity in social media marketing have on consumer behavior?

This problem was examined by answering the following research questions:

1. How are social media used by consumers?
2. Are there key elements in social media marketing (such as creativity) which affect consumer behavior?
3. What are the consumers' views on social media marketing?

The theoretical part of this study refers to several academic works and discusses the usage of social media and creativity in advertising. The first part aims to clarify the relevance of social media marketing today, bringing insight into the interactions and challenges faced by businesses. The second part focuses on defining creativity and showcasing its importance and effect on consumer behavior in the traditional marketing channels.

The empirical part of this study examined the Finnish consumers' perceptions and interactions with social media marketing. This was done through a qualitative approach, with data collected from structured interviews with Finnish consumers using social media platforms.

## **1.2 Motivation**

The motivation for this study originated from the author's personal experiences during several projects and lectures regarding the ethics of advertising, creativity in advertising as well as managing customer relationships. This sparked an interest in understanding the effects of marketing communications on consumers. The author wishes to pursue a career in the field of marketing, and thus, a topic which would further develop understanding within the field of marketing was inevitable. Social media marketing plays a key role in marketing communications today, and its use continues to evolve as social media platforms develop. Even though there have been numerous studies concerning social media and its opportunities for businesses, it is vitally important to understand the role of creative advertising within its channels to optimize marketing efforts. In Finland, the importance of social media is understood by businesses, but many businesses fail to understand the influence of their marketing communication on consumers.

## **1.3 Background**

### **1.3.1 Social Media Marketing**

Finnish businesses agree that social media is important to their business. However, according to a study completed in 2013 by Dingle and students from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, 73% of Finns agreed that social media was important for their business. However, only 36% of these businesses used social media, allocating only 5% of their marketing budgets to this channel. (Dingle Oy 2013.) Many companies are putting more effort into their marketing communication as it becomes a vital part of their strategy. Due to the rapidly changing nature of marketing communication methods, we can argue that companies must not rely solely on traditional sales and marketing processes. By exploiting non-traditional and integrated marketing channels such as social media, businesses can gain a competitive advantage over competitors with similar products (Haataja 2010). Social media applications, such as Facebook, provide an opportunity for businesses to reach large target groups instantly. These social media platforms also provide the target group with a possibility to interact with businesses and their marketing campaigns. Despite all the self-evident benefits of social media, many companies are having trouble understanding the influence of their marketing communication on consumers and how these messages are perceived or examined by consumers (Haataja 2010).

### **1.3.2 Creativity in Advertising**

There is plenty of pre-existing research and literature about the use of social media and understanding the consumer's perspectives globally and in Finland (Brown, Amanda, & Lee 2007; Dawley 2016; Dingle Oy 2013; Haataja 2010). However, there is a lack of research into advertising creativity across social media and integrated marketing channels. The integrated marketing channels refer to channels being used during integrated marketing activities to communicate a consistent and concise brand message to consumers whilst allowing the different channels to reinforce and complement each other (Kotler

& Keller 2011). There is a vast amount of research within the advertising industry on the use of creativity across traditional advertising channels and its importance for successful marketing (Barry & Howard 1990; Smith & Yang 2004; Smith, Chen, & Yang 2008; Smith & Yang 2009; Ang & Low 2000; Modig 2012). However, the author could not find any significant research on the importance of creative social media advertising or consumer perspectives and behavior related to creative social media advertising in Finland. The goal of this study was to examine the impact of creativity in social media marketing on consumer behavior by finding answers to the research question, 'What impact does creativity in social media marketing have on consumer behavior?' It was hoped that this study would allow businesses and marketers in Finland to better manage their social media platforms as non-traditional marketing channels. It was also hoped that the study would allow businesses to better understand their customers and how they react to creativity in social media marketing as well as provide insights on the consumer's perspectives on social media marketing. This information is useful today, as marketing efforts and the use of non-traditional marketing channels, such as social media platforms, continue to rapidly evolve and grow. This would allow us to better understand how to connect with and build relationships with consumers and whether creativity and other elements in social media marketing are important to achieve this.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Social Media as a Marketing Channel**

People are social by nature and we are always collecting and sharing information that is important to us. Connecting with others socially through technology daily has become extremely easy and a norm for many generations, especially younger ones through various social media platforms. The usage of social media by consumers and business entities varies greatly and is different on each platform. We continue to experience a radical shift in how social media work and how consumers interact with each other with new technology and platforms being released frequently. This means that marketing must adapt to these quick changes for businesses to keep their competitive advantage (Packer 2011). Most platforms connect users with similar interests and allow them to interact with each other whilst collecting or sharing information. The usage of social media by business entities and consumers is further described below.

#### **2.1.1 Usage of Social Media**

Social media are composed of online applications various platforms which allow interaction, collaboration and the sharing of content. Social media content and messages can be delivered as many media types including blogs, wikis, podcasts, videos, pictures, sound, discussion boards through many different social media platforms. The usage of social media has grown exponentially and continues to do so. Business entities use social media as a communication tool for advertising and marketing. Social media allow these business entities to perform integrated marketing activities with a smaller effort and at a lower cost than before. (Kim & Ko 2012.) According to a study by DEI Worldwide (2008), 70% of consumers use social media to search for information, and 49% of these consumers have made a purchase decision based on the information they have found through social media sites. Moreover, 60% said that they were likely to use social media sites to pass along information to others, and 45% of those who searched for information via social media sites engaged in word-of-mouth. Business entities that do not



utilize social media as a communication tool to inform and maintain relationships with consumers are missing a major opportunity as one customer is worth far more than what he or she initially spends (DEI Worldwide 2008). In Finland, the use of social media by enterprises is quite versatile, and the number of enterprises using social media has increased by 25% in the past four years. In 2013, only 38% of business enterprises used social media, but in 2016 it was used by over 63%. The use of social media by these business entities is quite versatile in Finland as it is used to connect or communicate with consumers, as a recruitment channel and to improve the business entities' image or market products. A significant 89% of enterprises used social media to manage their image or to market their products. (Statistics Finland 2017.)

There are hundreds of Social Media platforms which cater for different audiences and use different forms of media to connect people. Facebook is currently dominating the social media platform industry with over 1.7 billion monthly active users in 2016 (Dawley 2016), but other platforms, such as Snapchat and Instagram, are catching up or even overtaking Facebook, especially among younger people. Among people aged 12-24, Snapchat usage (72%) has overtaken Facebook (68%), and Instagram is only 4 percent behind Facebook in a study which included 2001 Americans aged 12 or older. (Edison Research 2016.)

Platforms, such as Facebook (and its mobile platform, Instagram), allow advertisers to target advertisements to and connect with their consumers. These advertisements are well targeted as they factor in demographics, location, interests and consumer behavior (Facebook Business 2018). These tools allow business entities to share their advertisements and interact with consumers. Customers can also interact through social media to share their information and ideas, which can be utilized by business entities and other consumers.

### **2.1.2 Word-of-Mouth**

Word-of-mouth has been used to exchange marketing information between consumers and change their attitudes towards products or services (Katz & Lazarsfeld 2007). Some have suggested that it is a communication tool between a communicator and a receiver, who perceives the information regarding a product, brand or service as non-commercial (Arndt 1967). This communication provides information which “goes beyond the messages provided by the companies/advertisers and involuntarily influences the receiver’s decision-making”. (Brown, Amanda & Lee 2007). We can agree that word-of-mouth is an important information source which affects a consumer’s purchasing decisions. Moreover, Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2008) argue that it is the most important information source during a customer’s purchase decision along with interpersonal influence.

As marketing channels have rapidly evolved to include non-traditional channels, such as social media, which promote consumer interaction, a new form of communication known as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) or viral marketing has emerged (Yang 2013). This communication tool is easily accessible, and consumers today rely on electronic word-of-mouth to gain information regarding a product or service (Huete-Alcocer 2017). This means that the electronic word-of-mouth has become an important medium for companies’ social-media marketing (Hussain, Ahmed, Jafar, Rabnawaz & Jianzhou 2017).

## **2.2 Creativity in Advertising**

### **2.2.1 Creativity**

Advertising, an audio or visual form of marketing communication which “informs, entertains, persuades, dissuades and helps to enhance the perception of value” (Deloitte LLP 2013, 10). The marketing process can be summarized using the marketing mix: price, product promotion and place. Advertising covers the promotion part, which means that it is an integral part of marketing (Hanson 2017). A creative execution of advertising stands out

and is more memorable, it “pushes the message into viewers’ minds” and it is therefore considered to be necessary for advertising effectiveness (Kover, Goldberg & James 1995, 29). In today’s cluttered media landscape, a meaningful connection with consumers is important to sustain. One way to do this is by applying creativity into marketing campaigns. In order to understand what creativity is, we must define it as it is a complex term. There are many definitions of creativity based on decades of research and by combining them we can form a clear understanding of it. Advertising creativity can be split into two major elements, divergence and relevance. (Lindau & Tosti 2012.)

Divergence refers to the ad elements which make ads novel, different or unusual compared to other advertisements. Relevance can be defined as ad-to-consumer relevance or brand-to-consumer relevance. Ad-to-consumer relevance is defined as a situation in which the elements of the advertisement are meaningful to consumers. For example, music, such as The Beatles, may create a link to the Baby Boomers, which would make an advertisement relevant for them. Brand-to-consumer relevance refers to situations in which a brand or product is relevant to a consumer’s needs or uses. (Smith, Chen & Yang 2008.)

Humour is also considered an important element of creative advertising. If humour is appreciated by the consumer, it may add value to the process of watching an advertisement, which makes humour an important element of creativity (Ang & Low 2000).

There are still many skeptics who question the importance of creative communication in advertising and continue to use product pricing as a key factor. An empirical study by Sara Lindau and Mattia Tosti from the Stockholm School of Economics shows that consumers develop stronger positive attitudes if an advertisement is creative and that they are more prone to recommend the brand. However, product pricing strongly influences the role of creativity in a negative or neutralizing manner. (Lindau & Tosti 2012.)

### 2.2.2 Hierarchy of Effects Model

Advertising is an aggressive form of business promotion aiming to increase awareness, interact with customers and create positive perceptions in the mind of the customers, which will increase the likelihood of sales (Nawaz, Ahmed, Hyder, Javed & Rehman 2014). Understanding how advertising influences buyers' purchasing decisions is important and is often based on literature referred to as the hierarchy of effects. The hierarchy of effects model states that advertising is an investment into a long-term process which moves consumers through several steps from unawareness to an actual purchase as shown below in Figure 1. This process affects customer purchase decisions and can be used to measure advertising effects on consumption behavior (Barry & Howard 1990). The hierarchy of effects model assumes that people first gain knowledge from advertising, after which they may develop feelings about the product in question, which may result in them acting. (Bovee, Thill & Dovel 1994).

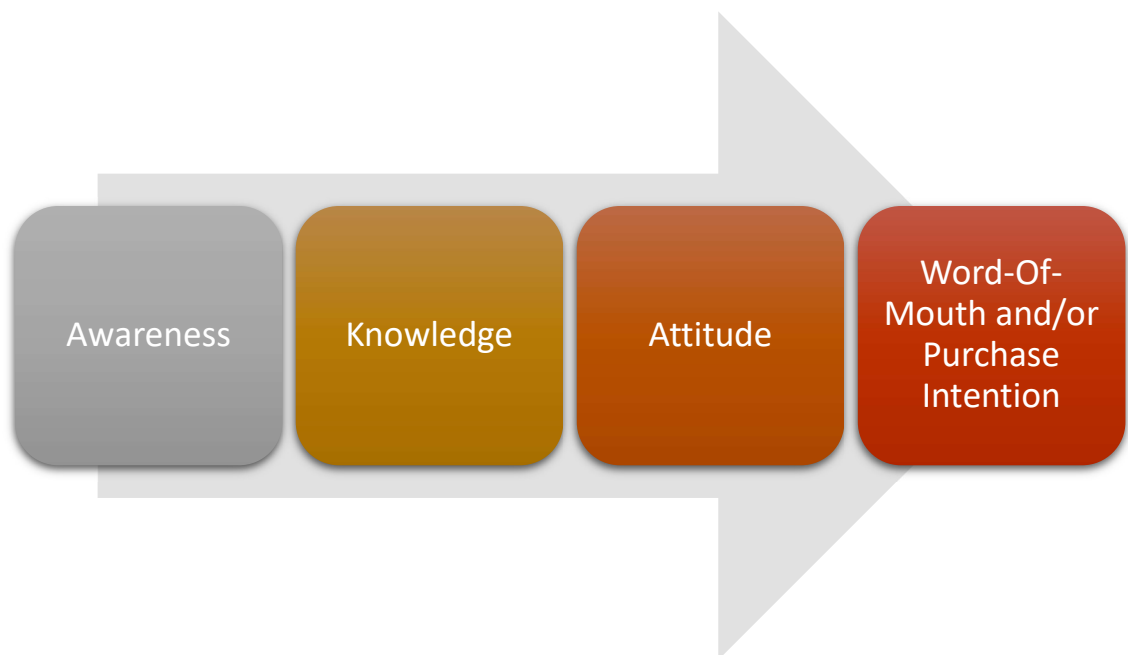


Figure 1: The Hierarchy-of-Effects model (Smith et al., 2008)

The process starts with a consumer who has no awareness of the advertised brand or product. The first step for advertising is to gain the consumers awareness. This will cause the consumer to orient cognitive resources to

process the advertisement and brand (Greenwald & Leavitt 1984). If an advertisement is creative and sufficiently interesting, it will create a link between the brand and its product category in the mind of the consumer. This means that creating brand awareness is the first step in the hierarchy of effects model. (Smith, Chen & Yang 2008.)

The next step, knowledge, involves showcasing the positive traits associated with the brand, which will allow the customer to move through to the next steps. Knowledge regarding claims made in the advertisement that associate the brand with positive traits (e.g., environmentally friendly, cheap, safe) will push the consumer towards a purchase (Smith et al. 2008).

The affective stage involves the consumers' affective reactions influenced by the brand. Brand liking is a pre-requisite for brand preference. Brand liking is an affective reaction influenced by factors, such as the perceived entertainment value of the advertisements. Advertisements which attract and retain the interest of the audience are usually more creative compared to those that do not (Smith et al. 2008). Consumers do not solely base their brand liking or preference on the information gained in the cognitive stage. Non-rational attributes (emotional connections, intriguing sensorial experiences and advertisements which deliver memorable experiences) will influence a consumer's brand preference (Ebrahim 2013).

The conative stage happens when the consumer has established a brand or product/service preference. The consumer may recommend the product/service and their desire to purchase the product will increase (Smith, Chen, & Yang 2008). During the conative stage, Word-of-mouth has a significant impact on consumer behavior and the consumer's decision-making process. Creativity also increases brand word-of-mouth intention, and this will positively influence firm performance (Lindau & Tosti 2012). Advertisers may allow the consumer to sample the product/service, which will reassure them, and any possible knowledge gap can be eliminated. This will lead to the final step which is the purchase of the product/service (Smith, Chen, & Yang 2008).

During these steps, the advertiser uses well-developed, persuasive advertising messages that are designed to increase brand awareness over time, which can lead to a purchase at the end of the consumer's decision-making process (Investopedia LLC. 2016). Since it is a hierarchy model, not all consumers will move through all the steps. It is the businesses' task to ensure that as many consumers as possible move to the final step.

The hierarchy of effects model is still widely used today to assess the effectiveness of advertising. The theory and its pseudo-theories can be used in traditional marketing, digital marketing and integrated marketing. Businesses are still investing massive amounts of capital to promote their brands and to engage with consumers (Nawaz, Ahmed, Hyder, Javed & Rehman 2014). The hierarchy of effects model and its pseudo-theories (such as the Attention-Interest-Desire-Action, or 'AIDA' model developed by E. St. Elmo Lewis in 1898 (Li & Yu 2013) are still popular as they are sequential and rational. The process can be broken down into measurable steps, and it can be used to research the effect of advertising and advertising creativity on the customer decision-making process. Modern market research shows that the decision-making process is often non-rational, and there have been studies that critique the hierarchy of effects model (Pringle & Marshall 2011). The sequence of the steps and stages have been debated. There is controversy regarding the ordering of the cognitive and affective stage and the definition of the stages, that is, knowing when each stage begins or ends. It is important to note that a consumer's mental activities and decision-making process is dynamic and that consumers can move between the stages. As Garry and Howard (1990, 109) put it: "The hierarchy of effects should be used as a heuristic model which provides guidance to management in a general sense, as opposed to an empirical model which can be relied upon to provide consistent and interpretable results which deserve to be specifically addressed".

The advertising world has evolved rapidly and continues to do so. Creativity, strategy development, business landscape changes, media changes and innovations in technology change the way people communicate. The role of

advertising is changing, and advertising effects are much more complex compared to the hierarchy of effects model. However, the hierarchy of effects model is still used to predict consumer behavior, define advertising strategies and to organize planning, training and conceptual tasks within a firm (Bambang 2012).

### **2.2.3 Hierarchy of Effects and Creativity**

During the cognitive phase of the hierarchy of effects model, creativity creates a “contrast effect” by breaking the ordinary patterns of things (Smith & Yang 2004). This allows consumers to process the message within at a meaningful level and makes the message advertised memorable (MacInnis & Jaworski 1991). The messages acceptance by the consumer is also affected by creativity (Smith, Chen, & Yang 2008). Creativity decreases a consumer’s need for cognitive closure. This includes a consumer’s desire for clear and firm answers, their brand curiosity and decreased resistance to persuasion (Kruglanski & Ajzen 1996).

During the affective phase of the hierarchy of effects model, a positive attitude towards an ad will result in positive consumer intentions. Creativity also plays a role in this as suggested by several studies. Ads that incorporate creative features and divergent stimuli are more pleasing to process as a consumer (Smith & Yang, 2004; Smith & Yang 2009).

During the conative phase, word-of-mouth drives consumers’ purchase decisions (McIlroy 2008). Divergent and humorous experiences are interesting also provide a positive ad attitude, this sparks consumer discussion and increases word-of-mouth (Modig 2012; Dichter 1966). Purchase intentions and ad creativity have a positive relation (Kover, Goldberg, & James 1995; Ang & Low 2000; Smith, Chen, & Yang 2008). It has also been shown that ad and brand attitudes, which are affected by creative ads, significantly impact purchase intention (Notani 1998).

Considering the above, we can hypothesize that higher advertising creativity in social media increases ad-attitude, word-of-mouth and purchase intentions.

### **3 Methodology**

The thesis was built around the research question ‘What impact does creativity in social media marketing have on consumer behavior?’. The aim of this question was to identify how creativity in social media advertisements affects consumer behavior. The methodology used in this research was a semi-structured interview that investigated consumer perspectives and interactions to creativity in social media marketing in Finland. A qualitative research approach made it possible to understand the experiences, social processes and imaginings of our research participants (Mason J. 2002).

#### **3.1 Data Collection**

Interviewing gives us access to the observations of others and their perceptions and interpretations. Qualitative interviews rely on a small sample which is expected to provide a great deal of information. This means the analysis will rely on interpretation, summarization and integration of this data. (Weiss 1995). This study strove to extract consumers’ reports on the impact of creativity in social media advertising.

The study focused on Finnish consumers that interact with social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. The study focused on social media platforms owned by Facebook as they are the most popular in Finland with 60 percent of individuals aged 15-74 using Facebook or Facebook Messenger daily. Daily Instagram usage in this demographic is around 25 percent (Statista 2018). The participants of the study were mostly in the age demographic between 15 and 25 as that is the consumer group with the highest social media usage in Finland. For example, 40 percent of Finns in the age group of 15-24 years use the Instagram platform, and the usage decreases to only 20 percent in the age group 25-34 years old (Statista 2018). The respondents could be described as ordinary users with no in-depth knowledge related to the study or experience in the digital marketing field. This ensured that the perspectives and reports from the respondents were reflective of the attitudes and behaviors of normal consumers who are the target group of marketing efforts.



This study used convenience sampling, focusing on participants who used social media. This allowed time-efficient and no-cost research by using a population that was already available and easy to contact. The interviews were completed by phone or face-to-face with the participants who used social media platforms, such as Facebook, Facebook Messenger and Instagram. The responses were recorded in text format. This provided a sample that was connected to social media, and the participants were able to provide perceptions from a user perspective.

Qualitative research seeks data saturation, which is reached when additional data becomes repetitive and eventually redundant. Different participants will have differing and diverse opinions, and the sample size should be sufficiently large to assure that most perceptions are covered. However, due to qualitative research being very labor intensive, analysis of a large sample would be time consuming and impractical. Many researchers have set guidelines for sample sizes, but they do not present empirical arguments for these guidelines and the recommended sample sizes differ between authors. Creswell suggests 20-30 interviews for grounded theory and 5-25 for phenomenological studies (Creswell 2007), while Morse suggests sample sizes of 20-30 for grounded theory and 5-7 for phenomenological studies (Morse 2000). Many researchers do not follow these guidelines and, instead, suggest analyzing data until the “new” information that arises no longer provides anything to the overall report (Mason M. 2010). In the present study, common themes started to emerge after 3 interviews, with most of the respondents using similar phrases to discuss their experiences and providing no new information. The fifth interview provided minimal amounts of new opinions or perceptions, and the data started to become repetitive. This was the final interview as suggested in the guidelines for phenomenological studies discussed above. Further interviews would have been time consuming and impractical.

### **3.2 Data Analysis**

The analysis of data happened through thematic coding by using six phases: data familiarization, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, designing and naming themes and producing a report. These six phases attempted to meet the criteria that increase trustworthiness in qualitative research, such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Although the steps above are presented as a linear process, it is iterative and reflective with developments happening over time. (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules 2017.)

During the data familiarization phase, the responses were read multiple times and summarized. Word frequency was checked, which showed the keywords used most often by the respondents. This included words such as “humor” and “funny”, which were mentioned multiple times and considered one of the important elements of good advertisements by the respondents. These keywords allowed some initial broad themes to be formed, which described the respondents’ attitudes towards advertisements. The responses were then coded by “Elements of Good Ads”, “Elements of Bad Ads”, “Consumer Behavior” and “Social Media Usage Behavior”. Additional themes emerged after the data was coded which described “Negative Ads” and “Positive Ads” and the elements within them. All respondents had similar descriptions and several elements/keywords were mentioned repeatedly. As the respondents described these elements, they also mentioned actions that they took, which provided insight on their usage behaviors on the social media platforms as well as patterns in their consumer behavior. These themes were further reviewed, and a report was formed. As this happened, all connected responses were checked to ensure they were supportive. This process is briefly summarized in the author’s research journal which can be found in Appendix 2.

### **3.3 Reliability and Validity**

Strategies used to ensure the reliability and validity of quantitative research cannot be applied directly to qualitative research and there are ongoing debates regarding terms, such as reliability and validity and if they are appropriate to evaluate the rigor of qualitative research (Noble & Smith 2015). However, there are alternative criteria for establishing rigor within qualitative research, such as truth value, consistency, neutrality and applicability.

Truth value recognizes the fact that multiple realities exist. Moreover, the researchers' personal experiences and viewpoints may impact the results due to researcher bias. Truth value also clearly and accurately presents the participants' perspectives. (Lincoln & Guba 1985.) It is important to assess the study with a critical perspective due to possible researcher assumptions, which may impact results (Bowen 2008). To negate researcher bias and ensure truth value, raw responses were checked to ensure they were all supportive of each theme, as well as the conclusions and interpretations that were made. Member-checking to establish credibility was also completed, and two interview participants were shown the themes and the report and asked to clarify certain points so that the final report information was accurate and in line with their intentions.

Consistency relates to the rigor of the methods which have been undertaken by the researcher, and it is dependent on the researcher's decisions being clear and transparent. Similar or comparable findings should be found by other researchers. The data analysis method through thematic coding has been explained and the authors' thoughts and decisions are explained.

Neutrality ensures that the research findings are determined by the respondents and conditions of the research instead of by the researchers' motivations, interests and perspectives. (Lincoln & Guba 1985.) Member-checking ensures that the results are reflective of the sample's observations, perceptions and interpretations.

Applicability questions if the findings can be applied to other contexts, settings or groups. The findings of this study were tied to the sample's observations,

perceptions and interpretations. The sample was selected using convenience sampling, and it can be assumed that the findings can be transferred to a similar population. However, if there is to be transferability, the burden of proof lies with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere and not with the author. (Lincoln & Guba 1985.)

Failure to reach true data saturation may also affect the findings of the study (Bowen 2008). The experiences, social processes and imaginings described by the respondents were similar and increasing the sample size was not practical due to limited time and resources.

## **4 Results**

A total of five interviews were completed and analyzed using thematic coding. The interviews were recorded through audio or text and raw responses were imported to a spreadsheet. Demographic information and information regarding usage of social media platforms was first collected to ensure the sample fit the target group of this study. Respondents opted to remain anonymous and no identifying data was collected.

Respondents were given questions 1 week in advance and all data was collected between May 1, 2018 and June 10, 2018. The interview data was summarized and coded in an emergent way until several themes started to emerge using tools such as Microsoft Office Excel and NVivo 12. In this chapter the interview results are presented and analyzed.

### **4.1 Respondents Use of Social Media**

Respondents were first asked general demographic info such as their age, gender and nationality. This was followed by questions regarding their usage of social media platforms.

The target group of this study was 15-25 year old Finns that used social media platforms. 3 males and 2 females answered, and the average age of respondents was 26.8 with only 1 respondent outside the target age demographic (15-25 years old). All respondents were Finnish.

All respondents used social media daily and Facebook was the most common social media platform as it was used by all respondents. Instagram was used by 3 out of 5 respondents and there were many additional social media platforms used by some respondents. All respondents used social media primarily to interact with friends, but it was also used to communicate with colleagues, check news and for entertainment. Most interactions on social media platforms happened between friends, family or people with similar interests, with only 1 respondent using social media platforms to interact with their colleagues/place of work. The usage of social media platforms among the respondents is an accurate overview of our target group, as shown by the statistics from Statista which looked at the usage of social media platforms in Finland on a larger scale.

## **4.2 Consumer Perceptions of Advertising in Social Media**

Almost all responses when asked what they thought about advertising on social media and if it made the experience better or worse were negative. Reasons for this included seeing too many ads and that ads on social media platforms are “in the way” and not sufficiently subtle. Users mentioned skipping ads and that they were in the way of their social media experience or even a hinderance to it. One respondent mentioned a decline in Facebook users due to the high prevalence of ads and them taking away space from possible social interaction.

Four out of five responses mentioned interest being a factor affecting their perception of ads. The product had to be of interest to the consumer, and the ad also had to be subtle and blend into their social media experience as to not hinder it.

Respondent 3 stated that:

*“If they are similar to content my friends post like stories or nice pictures they make it better but if it’s a plain ad its ok. If the thing is not interesting to me its annoying.”*

This again supports the need for subtle ads as mentioned previously by other respondents but also provides a possibility for ads to enhance a consumer’s

social media experience by masking an ad as a social media post and perhaps using story-telling as an advertising method.

The next question asked: “What kind of ads do you see? Are they relevant to your interests?” All respondents saw ads that were relevant to their interests and product interest was an element mentioned multiple times in other responses. Relevant ads were perceived in a positive manner as they were more likely to be suitable for the consumer. However, respondents stated that seeing the same ads or ads for similar products repeatedly was annoying.

### **4.3 Elements of Ads Which Affect Consumer Behavior**

#### **4.3.1 Positive Elements**

There were many elements which affected consumer behavior or their perspective on an ad in a positive manner. Some of these elements included elements traditionally used to define creativity and some included methods of displaying ads and ad composition.

Interest was mentioned multiple times when respondents discussed positive ad elements. This included proper ad targeting, ensuring that the product advertised was interesting for the consumer. Poorly targeted ads were usually ignored or even blocked. Relevant ads were important; however, they should diverge from other similar ads. Respondents agreed that ads also had to be interesting to watch and that they should use creative elements and have content that is interesting too.

Ads which used humoristic elements were popular, “funny” ads were mentioned multiple times to be positive and to provoke the sharing of ads on social media and outside social media. Humor was the most popular element deemed to be important by the respondents as it was mentioned 9 times in the responses.

Story-telling was also important, users stated that ads that had “story telling aspect as its priority, and did not try to just shove a product down the consumers throat” were enjoyable and impactful. Stories told by ads should be

“sincere, touching, relatable, riveting and heartwarming”. Respondents remembered ads which fit these criteria and considered them to be creative. One respondent talked about an ad and its story and its effect on his behavior when asked to think about a creative ad they had seen on social media:

*“Throughout the entire advertisement I was unaware of what the ad was trying to sell, until a slogan appeared on the screen “#BudsForLife” with the Budweiser logo. The advertisement was subtle, yet at the same time very impactful. The story the ad was trying to tell was sincere, touching and relatable. The reason this ad was so impactful was because it had the story telling aspect as its priority, and did not try to just shove a product down the consumers throat. Even though at the time, I was a minority and the advertisement was not tailored to me as I was not apart of Budweiser’s demographics; I still remember that one advertisement when I see Budweiser beer at the store. I saw the advertisement on Facebook, not as an advertisement, but as a repost. I saw the advertisement again on other platforms where it popped up as an ad.”*

The above ad managed to connect with the respondent emotionally through story-telling. The ad affected their cognitive behavior and they connect the ad to the product advertised even after the campaign has ended. The subtleness of the above ad was also mentioned by the respondent as well as electronic word-of-mouth.

Ads on social media should be subtle. Respondents felt that ads were being a hinderance to their social media experience and that there were too many ads on social media in addition the ads displayed on other marketing channels (e.g. TV). Ads which were subtle and were like content which their friends posted were preferred, as they did not distract the user from their social media experience. Respondents mentioned that they “should be hard to tell apart from other content” they view and should not “shove a product down the consumers throat”.

Other elements of creativity that were important to the respondents included music (which had to be to their taste), original content such as nice pictures or views and creatively executed product showcases.

### 4.3.2 Negative Elements

Respondents also agreed on multiple common ad elements which affected their social media usage in a negative manner. This affected their perspective on the ads and their electronic word-of-mouth interactions. Interesting ads were mentioned again, in the context of the ads being interesting and creative as well as the product or service advertised being of interest to the consumer. If these interest criteria were not met, the ads were ignored or skipped.

*“Sometimes I see ads that just have a picture of the product and then a price next to it. Its quite annoying unless I need that specific product, but usually I don't need it so I ignore the ad”*

All respondents mentioned seeing too many ads on social media and on other marketing channels such as television. This is not directly an ad element but showcases the need for ads to be able to merge into the other content their audience sees on social media and to be subtle as mentioned above.

Respondents mentioned ads which were “trying to sell a product” as poor ads. This could be due to them appearing as traditional advertisements instead of subtle, creative content which camouflages itself into the rest of their social media experience.

Respondents mentioned seeing the same or similar ads repeatedly.

Respondents already stated that they see too many ads and that they usually disrupt their experience.

*“annoying, when the same ads that are not interesting are there again and again”*

Poor targeting was also mentioned multiple times. This could be due to total lack of interest in the product/service or in this case, the product already being purchased.

*“ads are often for products I have recently bought which renders these advertisements useless”*

Other various elements of ads which were considered negative included videos which played automatically, loud sounds, catchy songs that become annoying, memes and advertisements which tried to coax the user into clicking on them.



Respondents felt that these elements/ads affected their experiences and created poor perceptions as the ads were disruptive, with all 4 users mentioning “annoying” in their responses. Social media platforms or advertisers need to refine their ad targeting to ensure products or services being advertised are in-line with the audience’s interests. Ads should not be shown to the same user repeatedly, especially if they are not relevant to the users’ interests. Social media ads should use elements discussed in [Positive Elements](#) and refrain from using the negative elements mentioned above as they are linked to negative ad interaction and lack of consumer behavior, which is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.4 Ad Interaction and Consumer Behavior**

Consumer behavior and electronic word-of-mouth interaction were affected by the consumers perspective on an advertisement and the ads effect on their social media experience. This perspective and effect were affected by the positive and negative ad elements discussed above.

Good ads (ads which included positive ad elements such as the ones discussed in [Positive Elements](#)) result in more consumer electronic word-of-mouth interactions such as sharing the ad to others. They are also likely to affect consumer behavior along the hierarchy of effects. All respondents mentioned finding more information or even purchasing a product after seeing social media ads. Their perspective on the ad and its effect on their social media experience also affected the consumer's affective behavior related to the product. Respondents remembered good ads and connected them to brands and products even after the advertising campaigns were over. Ads which acted as giveaways or offered a prize also provoked consumer interaction as respondents liked and shared these ads if they could win something.

Negative ads (ads which included negative ad elements such as the ones discussed in [Negative Elements](#)) provoked negative electronic word-of-mouth interactions such as ignoring or blocking ads. The respondents considered these ads a hinderance to their social media usage and deemed these ads

annoying. 2 respondents already blocked all ads on social media sites using third party tools and hence only saw ads shared by friends. They were not likely to move along the hierarchy of effects if ads were disruptive as these ads were usually ignored. Ads which were not interesting and were deemed as negative ads by the consumers even affected their consumer behavior negatively.

## 5 Conclusion

Creative advertising is often defined by divergence and relevance. Divergence refers to the ad elements which make ads novel, different or unusual compared to other advertisements. Relevance can be defined as ad-to-consumer relevance or brand-to-consumer relevance. (Smith & Yang 2004.) In addition to this, there are many advertising elements which are considered important in creative advertising such as humor (Ang & Low 2000) and storytelling. Respondents in this study associated these creative elements with positive ads, whilst ads lacking these elements were considered negative ads. Positive ads resulted in positive consumer behavior such as seeking more product information, sharing information through electronic word-of-mouth activities and even purchasing the product or service. Ads lacking these creative elements were considered negative by the respondents, resulting in ads being ignored, blocked and disrupting/annoying the consumers social media experience.

All respondents in this study used social media daily to connect with family and/or friends. All respondents stated that they see too many ads and that these ads were often a hinderance. Social media platforms are saturated with ads and ones which fulfill the above creative criteria and remain subtle and similar to non-ad content on these platforms were considered as good ads by respondents in this study.

Smith and Yang (2004), stated that "By definition, divergent ads are different and novel so at the most basic level a contrast effect should be created. This contrast is produced via the ad's divergent, which makes it stand out from other ads and thus attracts pre-attentive processing (such as orientation

reactions) where the consumer notices and directs processing resources to the ad.” This contrast effect, which makes ads stand out from other ads (and other content) and causes the consumer to notice them may not work on social media platforms if the ad stands out as an ad, which consumers view critically on platforms where they expect to see interesting original content, - instead of ads.

Ads which are relevant and contain creative elements (building blocks of divergence) such as humor, story-telling and unique, original content are considered good ads but there may be additional factors and elements which affect consumer behavior when it comes to social media advertising such as the subtleness of ads.

Considering the above, we can state that higher advertising creativity in social media advertising increases ad-attitude, word-of-mouth and purchase intentions.

## **6 Managerial Recommendations**

From a managerial marketing perspective, maintaining and creating consumer relationships and ensuring that marketing activities move consumers along the hierarchy of effects is important. Based on this study, creative advertising in social media channels pushes consumers along the hierarchy of effects and incites positive consumer behavior. Marketers should take this into account during the planning of marketing communications.

It is important that marketers also understand the channels they use for marketing communication and the type of content these channels usually contain. Consumers view ads critically, especially if they are not interesting. Marketing professionals should ensure they target their ads properly. This can be done with minimal investment by using free audience and targeting tools provided by social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, which should always be used as poorly targeted ads are ineffective and may cause negative consumer reactions towards the brand if they disrupt the user’s social media experience.

Content posted to social media platforms should be reviewed to ensure that they do not contain negative ad elements as discussed in [Negative Elements](#) and include positive ad elements such as humor, story-telling, creative content or giveaways. Ads should be subtle and fit into the environment of the platform they are being viewed on by being “organic” and like other original content viewed by consumers.

The following guidelines can be followed with minimal additional resource investment and should help ensure positive consumer reactions to advertising campaigns as well as incite consumers to move along the hierarchy of effects.

## **7 Future Research**

This study provides perspectives and information from a small sample of Finland’s youth. Further research should be done on the importance of divergence and relevance in social media advertising across different demographics and social media platforms to fully understand the impact of creative advertising on consumer behavior and to ensure the transferability of these findings. The importance of subtle ads on social media platforms should be explored further or perhaps included as a key component when defining creativity in advertising. Current research on the influence of marketing efforts will always provide crucial information on the effectiveness of those marketing efforts across various marketing channels, which continue to change, grow and evolve rapidly.

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## Appendix

### *Appendix 1: Interview Questions and Answers*

Interview to find out about your (consumer's) perception of ads in social media. Information will be recorded but it will remain anonymous.

ID	Question	Response (raw)
	Age?	
1		52
2		20
3		23
4		20
5		19
	Gender?	
1		Female
2		Male
3		Male
4		Female
5		Male
	Nationality	
1		Fin
2		Fin
3		Fin
4		Fin
5		Fin
	What social media platforms do you use?	
1		Facebook
2		Facebook, Instagram, Discord, Reddit
3		Instagram, Facebook
4		Instagram, Pinterest, Reddit. Sometimes Facebook.
5		Facebook, WhatsApp
	How often do you use these platforms?	
1		Daily
2		Daily
3		Daily
4		Daily
5		Daily
	Why do you use social media?	
1		Easy to communicate and stay in touch with friends I use social media to stay in the loop when it comes to current events, interact with friends, and to pass time.
2		Entertainment and to see news.
3		To search for inspiration, keep in touch and to share my photos and entertainment.
4		Lots of info there and to waste time. Also message friends.

Who do you interact with on a regular basis?

- 1 Friends and colleagues and place of work  
Predominantly I interact with friends, whether that be friends I know or people I have met through the internet. Occasionally I do interact with others who share similar interests (ie different enthusiasts groups on facebook)
- 2
- 3 Family and friends.
- 4 Family and friends.
- 5 Just friends mostly.

What do you think about advertising on social media?

- 1 I think TV ads and newspaper ads are enough. Most ads are pointless but some clothing and other products that interest me can be interesting ads, its nice to know about promotions.
- 2 I do not like advertisting on social media. For the most part I ignore ads, or block them by using third party software.
- 3 I think ads on social media or ok if they are interesting to watch and subtle. I don't like ads that try to sell a product.
- 4 Social media has a lot of ads, they are everywhere. It is quite annoying, when the same ads that are not interesting are there again and again. You can learn something from some ads or get a laugh.
- 5 I don't like ads, especially on Facebook. They are in the way and I see too many already from TV and in the city.

What kind of ads do you see? Are they relevant to your interests?

- 1 Clothing, shoe and jewellery ads. Hardware store ads, food ads and car ads. If the advertised product is relevant to that moments interests it is interesting. For example, shoes or clothing.  
I often see ads from Wish.com, which from what I can gather is a platform similar to ebay where sellers can sell items. Usually these items have been tailored to my interests, however, they often seem fraudulent as the ads seem to be too good to be true. The advertisements tend to try and coax the user into clicking on them, to be merely re-directed to download some other application.
- 2 I see many tourism, outdoor apparel and sporting gear ads. Yes, they are related to my hobbies.
- 3 I see a variety of ads daily. Car ads, clothing ads, travel and tourism ads, business ads, grocery ads and sale ads. Only some of them are interesting. For exameple my current phone, I saw an interesting ad and searched for some more information about it and soon enough I was already purchasing the phone at a shop. Ads which are related to nature make me thing, for example an ad in which they showed floating plastic bottles and fishing nets with fish stuck in them. After that I have collected other's trash from waters and on land.
- 4 Gaming and car ads. Yeah I like to play games and also old cars are really cool.
- 5 Sometimes I see ads for stuff like lipstick and that's not at all relevant to me.

Do ads make your social media experience better/worse?

- 1 They don't affect my use, I quickly skip them if they are not interesting  
In my experience ads have merely been a hinderance especially on a social media platform. These ads tend to be invasive, as they are usually tailored to the individual user (which implies that these social media pages algorithims mine their users info). This bothers me as I feel like my privacy is often being violated (regardless if I have agreed to it in the TOS), and the ads are often for products I have recently bought which renders these advertisements useless.
- 2 If they are similar to content my friends post like stories or nice pictures they make it better but if it's a plain ad its ok. If the thing is not interesting to me its annoying.
- 3 Usually negatively. There are so many ads on Instagram and Facebook, they disrupt my experience. Especially when I have seen the same ad which is not interesting multiple times.
- 4 They make my experience worse, I just want to use Facebook to message friends and see what they are doing. I don't want to see ads there.
- 5

Are there any ads that you enjoy seeing? Examples? Why were they enjoyable/interesting?

- 1 Ads from XXL since I buy shoes and clothes from there. Social media ads are quite boring because they arent so creative. But if the product is interesting like XXL ads then its good.  
In my experience I rarely see ads that are enjoyable, as they are often just a "paywall" to the content that actually interests you. The only advertisements that do not bother me are generally trailers for upcoming films or videogames. However these are the types of ads you do not wish to see multiple times, which is often the case and then they become a hinderance. Generally I dislike ads that are trying to sell a product, however, Budweiser has had a good approach when it comes to their Budweiser: Super Bowl XLVIII Puppy Love advertisement. The ad did not seem to want to shove a product in your face, and it told a story that was rivetting and heartwarming.
- 2 I like seeing tourism ads on Instagram because they have nice nature pictures, and that's what I like to see on Instagram anyway.
- 3 Luckily there are also interesting/good ads. Ads which have had effort put into them and some imagination instead of something lackluster. Simple can be nice and interesting as long as it has something to grab my attention. Like I mentioned before, if it is related to nature and nature conservation. For example, I recently saw an ad by HallaxHalla for a swimsuit made of recycled plastic from fishing nets etc. and it was interesting, so I googled some more information about them.
- 4 None on social media. Maybe on TV if it is really funny, but usually all ads are not enjoyable.
- 5



Are there certain types of ads you do not enjoy? Which elements in these ads make them unenjoyable?

1

2

Ads not targeted to me. Also ads that autoplay video and ads that have memes. Memes that are not cool but they think they are cool. Actually those ads are better for small kids, not for me.

3

Ads with a song that gets stuck in my head are fun in the beginning, but after a while quite annoying. Ads with content that is not interesting (eg. Cosmetics or fashion for me) do not spark any attention or interest from me. I think all the ads are quite similar, like grocery ads are all the same and also cosmetic ads are very similar but some have unique music or something funny.

4

5

Ads with loud sound or ads that are videos and don't get to the point.

Do you think ads have a place in social media in the future? How do you think ads will change in the future?

1

People use social media a lot so it's a good channel for advertising. I do not think that ads have a place when it comes to social media, as from a users perspective they are usually invasive and take away from the experience of browsing these sites. However, I do believe that from a business perspective they do have a place, as ad revenue is the way that these social media websites make money. I don't believe ads will change much in the future, because if they foreexample became more prevalent then the community would most likely boycott these discissions. Currently ads try to be for the most part subtle, as if they annoyed the user too much then it would most likely start to impact the sites user traffic.

2

If they are not annoying me they are ok. There should not be too many and they should be hard to tell apart from other content I view.

3

I think its easier for businesses to advertise as social media use increases. Its easy to use pictures or videos to advertise. But I think the content and targeting of ads should change.

4

5

I don't think so, people already stopped using Facebook, I think it was because there are too many ads there and less space for social interaction.

How do you interact with ads? (Comment? Share? Like? Block? Report? Ignore?) What kind of ads result in these interactions?

1

I ignore ads if the product is not interesting. I have liked and commented where I can win a product that is interesting for me. I don't usually share or like.

2

I generally ignore ads, block them when possible, and skip them as soon as possible. The only time I do not try to get rid of the ad as soon as possible is when the advertisement is for a movie/tv trailer that interests me.

3

Ignore most but if its for a product I need or something cool, I will watch it. If its super funny sometimes I can share it to friends.

4

Comment if it's a very nice ad, if its funny or I want to show it to others. I block ads that are boring or not interesting and ads which I have seen multiple times. I ignore uninteresting ads and if its very interesting I can comment, like or share.

5

Ignore them, but if it's a really funny one or something my friend wants to buy I can share it to them.

If you share or like content, what prompts you to do so?

- 1 If I can win something.
- 2 I generally do not like or share content on social media, unless it is original content.
- 3 If its really funny or a super cool product. I don't usually do that.
- 4 I share and like ads if they are good promotions or very creative ads.
- 5 If it is funny.

Do you share these ads outside of social media? E.g show interesting ads to family members or friends?

- 1 No I don't.
- 2 No I do not share ads.
- 3 Only if my friends are next to me and im bored and the ad is a cool/funny one. Sometimes, if there is someone who might not see it through social media and it's a good promotion or funny ad.
- 4
- 5 No.

Have you sought more information or purchased a product after seeing an ad for it on a social media platform?

- 1 Yes I have looked for more information and bought products such as outdoor clothing and shoes.  
The only time I have bought a product because I saw an ad on social media was because of a black friday sale. I was aware of the sale on this specific site prior to seeing the ad, but it worked as a reminder regarding the product I had planned on purchasing beforehand.
- 2 Yeah very often I look for online reviews and prices etc. I cant remember if I bought something from a social media ad, probably yes. Usually I google some info if its an interesting product.
- 3 I have purchased several products after seeing ads on social media. First I searched some more information about them. Eg. My phone (oneplus3) and swimsuit from HallaxHalla.
- 4 Sometimes I look on google for more information but I don't think I bought something right away.
- 5

Can you think of an advertisement you have seen recently on social media which was creative?  
 What kind of advertisement was it?

1

I haven't seen many creative ads recently. Earlier I have seen creative car and travel ads. They had a story, good music and nice views. Creative ads are nice to watch and I can remember them easier. \*\*note\*\* could not remember social media ads, only TV campaigns. Info regarding TV Campaign: \*\* "Jeep Renegade ad that was a music video, with singers and they travel with the car.

2

The advertisement was about a puppy who grew up on a ranch, who befriends a horse. One day the puppy leaves the farm with its owner in a car, and the horse proceeds to escape and follow the car. They manage to surround the car and then the advertisement ends. Throughout the entire advertisement I was unaware of what the ad was trying to sell, until a slogan appeared on the screen "#BudsForLife" with the Budweiser logo. The advertisement was subtle, yet at the same time very impactful. The story the ad was trying to tell was sincere, touching and relatable. The reason this ad was so impactful was because it had the story telling aspect as its priority, and did not try to just shove a product down the consumers throat. Even though at the time, I was a minority and the advertisement was not tailored to me as I was not apart of Budweiser's demographics; I still remember that one advertisement when I see Budweiser beer at the store. I saw the advertisement on Facebook, not as an advertisement, but as a repost. I saw the advertisement again on other platforms where it popped up as an ad.

3

I usually only see ads my friends shared on Facebook because I use a adblocker. On Instagram there are a lot of nice photos and videos, so if there is an ad that is creative enough to sell something but not be obvious its nice. So the ad fits in but doesn't push a product to me.

4

For example Savotta has fun, interesting and creative ads. One that I can remember was testing Savotta Jääkäri backpack's durability and quality through some crazy tests on video. Usually for product ads, unique ads are ones which you can call creative. I personally would not be interested in a product if I can't see how it works and how to use it from an ad. I think all ads should showcase their products in a creative manner.

5

I saw a Sprite ad that had some cool rapping, it was really hip ad. I don't think it was that creative but I don't think there is space for creativity on social media. Only on TV since you can have long videos.



	<p>What about a non-creative ad? Do you think ads that are not creative are worse than creative ads?</p> <p>Creative ads are nicer to watch but they don't usually affect if I buy the product. If I already am interested or decided to buy a product, just seeing the product, some information and a price is enough, the ad doesn't need to be creative. Creative ads are interesting and I would watch them but they also distract from social media use and having nice and creative ads on TV is enough.</p>
1	<p>The first ad that comes to mind are advertisements for Wish.com on facebook. These advertisements prey on the ill informed, as I would assume the majority of the ad listings are some form of a scam. These ads have left a bad impression in regards to facebook's ad policy, as it is willing to provide ad space for companies that clearly operate in a legal gray area. The ads are not creative at all, just a picture of a product with a price that is too good to be true. For the most part I am impartial to the creative aspects of advertisements, due to the fact that I believe they just take away from my experience using social media. However, I do believe that certain creative ads are better in grabbing the attention of potential customers but quite often they lead to the pitfall of becoming a nuisance. An example of this would be spotify's ads which I would consider annoying, however due to the repetitive nature of seeing ads multiple times the creative aspect has become more so annoying.</p>
2	<p>Sometimes I see ads that just have a picture of the product and then a price next to it. Its quite annoying unless I need that specific product, but usually I don't need it so I ignore the ad.</p>
3	<p>Creative ads spark more interest in the content of the ad, for example on the product. It depends on what is advertised, but it can be long and complex or short and simple but still creative. I think its hard to have too long ads on social media.</p>
4	<p>Boring ads dont spark any interest and the product wont be interesting for consumers.</p>
5	<p>I think short ads are best ads, if its creative that's ok but the main thing is to be short. I don't have time on social media to look at an ad for so long.</p>



## Appendix 2: Research Journal from NVivo Thematic Analysis Process

### Research Journal

Have read and summarized interviews from all respondents.

#### Key themes across interview data (Data Familiarization):

- All respondents agree that there are too many ads on social media and most are in the way
- Usually ads are targeted correctly, however not always. Targeted ads are not enough.
- Most ads affect social media experience in a negative manner. Unless ads are subtle.
- Low ad interaction. Some interaction when ads have certain elements.
- Good social media ads often resulted in cognitive consumer behavior.
- Creativity in social media advertising requires other ad features or elements in addition to the traditional elements which define advertising creativity

#### Initial Coding Strategy: Start coding broadly for (Initial Coding):

- Elements of a good ad
- Elements of a bad ad
- Consumer Behavior Related to Ads
- Social Media Usage Behavior

#### Positive & Negative Ads (Initial Themes → Further development and design of themes):

Positive ads:

Funny, Subtle, Interesting (Product and Ad), Creative, Story, Original Content, Unique, Win something

Negative ads:

Too many, hindrance to social media usage, not well targeted, not interesting (creative), Not unique, Autoplay videos, long ads, seeing the same or similar ads repeatedly

#### Consumer Behavior Related to Positive/Negative Ads:

Negative ads provoke negative e-WoM and interaction. Users ignored or blocked or reported ads which were negative. These ads were also a hindrance to their social media usage and perceived as annoying. Respondents were annoyed by these ads and were not likely to move along the hierarchy of effects as the ad was ignored and disrupted the users social media experience.

Good ads result in more consumer e-WoM interactions such as sharing the ad. They are also likely to affect consumer behavior along the hierarchy of effects. All respondents mentioned finding more information or even purchasing a product after seeing social media ads. Their perspective on the ad and its effect on their social media experience also affected the consumer's affective behavior related to the product.

How to define good ads? → Positive ads<sup>^</sup> as defined by respondents

Are the elements which compose a positive ad ones which also define creativity and creative advertising?

Yes, but there are additional requirements for ads to be effective in addition to creativity.

- Subtleness