



Provocative advertising and its impact on young people in Finland – a focus group study of people age 16-25

Tran Trung Duc

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Author:	Tran Trung Duc
Title:	
Supervisor (Arcada):	Mikael Forsström
Commissioned by:	
<p>Abstract:</p> <p>There are countless of different advertisements floating all over the world nowadays and people, who can be viewed and consumers, buyers or watchers have a hard time memorizing or being impressed by any of them since they have already been accustomed to the exaggeration. As a result, advertisers have found ways to slide in factors that can be comprehended as inappropriate and disturbing just to gain more attention from the audiences, hopefully increase their brand image and that is “provocation”. This points directly to the main purpose of the thesis, which is to dig into the interpretation regarding the term “provocation” in advertising by the young generation and from there see how impactful it could be to the brand image in the industries selected. The thesis covers how provocative advertising is interpreted and defined, the risks that come along with it, how well it performs on advertising in different industries and how diverse the youth’s reponses are to it. Despite having a broad spectrum in terms of aspects, this study’s limitation is only to focus on “sexuality” side of provocation and the targeted audiences are from 16-25 year-old teenagers who live in Finland. The research is mainly done with qualitative method with focus groups and interviews and the findings gathered do show different understandings of provocative advertising, in which one industry (food) displays it more negatively than the other (fashion). Additionally, it has also been proven that the youth tends to be more exposed and as a result, more accepting towards provocative advertising than older people. Regardless, women do most of the time find provocative</p>	

ads offensive and degrading given the frequent women portrayals in this type of ads, which leads to a major risk, that is if the sexuality factor is not brought into the advertisement cleverly and with an acceptable level, it might cause the brand to be cut off by customers and all the successful efforts of gaining a massive amount of attention from the beginning will all go to waste.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Advertising is basically a mean of communication with the customers of a product or service. Advertisements are messages under multiple means (posters, newspaper, TV, etc..) paid for by those who send them and are deliberated to provide information to the users who see them (Advertising Association of the UK, 1975).

People have the tendency to be driven towards bizarre and new things that they have never experienced or seen before. This concept strongly applies for marketing angle as well. For example in advertising, instead of going for traditional introductions of the products, in which how they look like and what they do basically, marketers sometimes have different approaches such as picking an odd-looking character to represent their product, putting it in a completely unexpectable picture to cause confusion to the consumers, resulting in creating more curiosity and interest, or simply they have the advertisement's content totally irrelevant and slowly making their way to the actual purpose of the product. A triggering or what is going to be focused on – provocative advertisement basically consists of disturbingly odd or sexually sensitive, arousing contents that tend to trigger audience's interests and draw their attention, making itself more memorable to the minds of the consumers, so even if they do not feel comfortable watching the whole ads, they still remember the product or the service vividly and words will spread and reach to the consumers one way or another. At the end of the day it all comes down to being able to sell the product, but the attention acquired lies in the art of advertising, however this does strongly depend on consumers' liking, some prefer the simpler way, some are fascinated with the complication and peculiarity or in this case – provocativeness, the advertisers have to offer.

It seems obvious how TV channels are competitively climbing to the top of winning audiences' attention and resultantly, advertisements become more and more diverse every single day and the use of provocative advertisement has been proven to be rather effective when it comes to drawing consumers' attention. Some provocative advertisements accidentally or not create bad impressions and negative confusions toward their audiences but those impressions somehow manage to turn themselves into unexpected advantages, which could be the factors to stand out of all the competitors' 'regular' advertisements or a disaster to their own brand image if considered inappropriate to the majority of viewers.

With all that said, it is still quite vague on what category or what industry provocation actually shows effectiveness in advertising since it is impossible, inappropriate and unnecessary to make everything sexual. Apart from the common sense concerning ‘‘what goes well with what’’ ,this also relies a lot on the chosen audiences’ responses towards the ads. Results from the research are going to be elaborated in this thesis.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this thesis is to dig in the psychology of consumers, especially the young, to deeply comprehend their interests of what might appeal them to buy the products, so that advertisers would have the hints to be creative or flexible about the advertisements depending on the consumers targeted , who are teenagers living in Finland from 16 to 25 in this case since people regarding ages, genders, interests have different thoughts and feelings towards provocation in advertisements. The purpose is, simultaneously, to find out different perspectives as well as perceptions of provocative advertising interpreted by the younger generation. The thesis will be raising various aspects that encompass sexuality in these provocative advertisements of different, unrelated industries. This requires collecting (focus group and interviews) and analyzing participants’ opinions and reaction within the age decided, categorizing various types of advertisements in order to evaluate the provocative levels for instance, and from there concluding and determining the influence it has on its own brand image and consumers.

1.3 Research questions

- What is provocative advertisement?
- Give examples of that type of advertisement? In which way is an ad considered provocative? Perceptions on provocation?

1.4 Limitations

The research is only targeting a specific group of people (from 16-25 years old) and currently living in Finland. Despite the vast perceptions of the word ‘‘provocative’’, the thesis solely takes into account the sexuality aspect with visual elements. There are different types of materials that advertisements are supposed to be showcased but image advertising is chosen because it is able to capture all the content that is meant to be delivered to the audiences in

one picture, so there will be no video ads of any kind mentioned in the report. Moreover, the study only covers ads from two industries – food and fashion.

1.5 Structure of the report

The thesis starts off with chapter I Introduction which demonstrates the background of advertisements and brief researches of how audiences have been reacting to them over the years. Chapter 2 is going to be concentrating on theoretical framework, encompassing the knowledges, theoretical definitions and such. The highlight which is also one of the important chapters if not the most, of the whole thesis is Chapter 3 – Methodology, in which plenty of different advertisements, that are thoroughly picked out, will be described and analyzed based on themselves and participants' behaviors toward them. Some surveys and interviews will be executed on customers that were selectively chosen for the research, to get more insights regarding the topic. Chapter 4 is Findings and Results, which simply shows what have been taken out of the groups and interviews, hopefully to answer all of the research questions made from the beginning. Followed by that is the data analysis (discussion) on what has been collected from the interviews, specifically the answers, thoughts and reactions of the audiences. The final chapter is Conclusion and Summary that finalizes and recapitulates the information throughout the study and the thesis ends with possible references, tables and figures that have all been listed during it.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

All of the definitions regarding provocative advertising and consumer behavior that have been mentioned in the Introduction part of thesis will be all reviewed here. Later on, discussions about the efficiency of provocative advertisement on the audiences as well as the risks existing along with it, and the legal and ethical approval are going to be demonstrated.

2.1 Provocative Advertising

Vezina and Paul (1994, p.179) define provocative advertisement as:

“An intentional appeal, lying inside the content of an advertisement, to stimuli that are expected to shock at least a portion of audience, both because they are associated with value, norms or taboos that are habitually not challenged or transgressed in advertising, and because of their distinctiveness and ambiguity.”

Provocative advertising is a pervasively used phenomenon by marketers or advertisers and is simply a method to draw the audiences' attention toward the ads (Dens, De Pelsmacker & Janssen, 2008; Waller, 2003). Consumers are drawn to advertising that is shown through a variety of means to make it way the audiences with a purpose of promoting a product or a service and with the numbers of advertisement climbing up every year, provocative communication is getting more and more popular for its unique approach (Huhman & Mott-Stenerson, 2008; Pope, Voges & Brown, 2004; Vezina & Paul, 1997; Waller, Fam & Erdogan, 2005). The use of provocative advertising has been moving upwards drastically for the past twenty years as a result of increased advertising chaos (Vezina and Paul 1997).

Provocative advertising has been addressed as an intentional effort to draw attention through shock, and apparently to work through three constructs: distinctiveness, ambiguity, and transgression of a social or cultural taboo (De Pelsmacker and Van Den Bergh 1996; Vezina and Paul 1994). However, it is quite crucial to remember that not all of these “bad” factors of provocative advertising must essentially bring out negative reactions from the audiences (including guilt). As a matter of fact, research has pointed out that some particular provocation can have a rather positive impact on attention to the retrieval, ads and memory (Childers and Houston 1984) and on brand judgement (Beattie and Mitchell 1985). It has as well been discussed that ambiguity—the definition of which an ad is expanded to many interpretations—can lead to further and bigger processing (Howard and Sheth 1969) and provide the chance for an aesthetic experience (McQuarrie and Mick 1992).

Distinctiveness and ambiguity by themselves however would not be adequate to form provocation, the advertisements may pull one or both of these elements, but it would still lie outside of the provocative zone. Transgression of a social or taboos in general for instance might be the most important factor that determines whether an ad is provocative or not. Sexual appeals can be interpreted as a type of transgression because the topic of sexuality itself is claimed to be unrighteous and indecent. To add more to the perspective, it is said that sexual appeals content that are applied in advertisement, in spite of all the controversy surrounding them, increases the attention by triggering the consumers' curiosity towards the products, and along with that the purchase intention also went up remarkably.

Not everyone is aware of this, but provocative appeals take into account more than just sexual appeals, it also includes elements like drugs, violence, political and even racial issues. Nudity is not always considered provocative if it is used “appropriately” (Richmond and Hartman

1982). Provocative in this thesis's context will be referred as "erotica" which has been explained as images that unclearly portrait people (adults) in many stages of not wearing clothes, engaging in sexual activities such as intercourse or anything that is connected to it (Lopez and George 1995). Mild erotica is not frowned upon but in fact, there have been a lot of well-known brands that used this approach in the past and still do, Calvin Klein is a one example.

2.2 The impact of provocative advertising:

According to Vezina and Paul (1997), provocation is indeed a valid and legitimate approach to tackle the problem of getting more attention to a specific advertisement. This statement is justified by Dahl et al. (2003), also later on supported by Dens et al (2008) and Huhman and Mott-Stenerson (2008). Buying intention can as well be positively affected by provocative advertising according to Dahl et al. (2003). Nonetheless, with all of that being solidified, there are still some holes throughout the arguments and the data collected from some research methods will give some interesting insights about the effects of provocative advertising.

Dahl et al. (2003) conducted a study from which to conclude the effects on provocative advertising attention, recognition and recall in an HIV/AIDS prevention context by using one sexually shocking, one fearful and one informative advertisement. There was a total of one hundred and five college students to attend in this study. So basically all the 3 posters mentioned just now were shown to the students alongside with 4 more randomly picked advertisement posters. When the actual experiment ended and all of the students had walked out of the room, they got asked which advertisements shown in the room they would remember the most. The research showed that 96,9 percent of the participants memorized the sexually shocking advertisement, while only 78,1 percent recalled ones in either fear or informational condition.

As opposed to Dahl et al. (2003) researches, a certain study indicated that provocation in advertising can definitely stimulate the negativity of one's thought toward the brand image (De Pelsmacker & Van Der Bergh, 1996; Vezina & Paul, 1997), as a result will be likely to drag down the purchase intention from the beginning (Sabri & Obermiller 2010).

Fascinatingly, research also points out that audiences have the tendency to "absorb" provocative advertisement from nonprofit corporation rather than profit ones (Parry, Jones, Stern & Robinson, 2013). One of the most reasonable explanations for this phenomenon is

that with nonprofit organizations, their purpose is sincerely steer consumer behaviors into a better direction, whereas profit organizations' first intention is always to benefit their revenue.

The majority of provocative advertisements nowadays usually appear in fashion brands, in fact, the fashion industry has been using this particular method to promote their image by taking advantage of sexuality (nudity for instance), mostly showing women's body (Filieri, 2015; Vezina and Paul, 1997; Gurrieri, Brace-Goven and Cherrier, 2016). As mentioned above, Vezina and Paul (1997) stated that not all nudities have to be necessarily understood as provocative, utilizing sexuality can create a vast amount of impacts depending on the circumstances and gender, age of the consumers. (Dahl et al., 2009).

According to Vezina and Paul (1997), provocative advertisements are created to target young audiences, however Dahl et al, (2009) went up against the statement that says only young audiences have more exposure to sexuality. The fact that women usually take offend or react toward provocative advertisements more negatively was practically based on a finding by LaTour (1990); Manceau and TissierDesbordes (2006). Christy (2006)'s explanation about this behavior was that women's characteristic and motherly instincts trigger the way they react toward this and Gurrieri et al. (2016) supported the study by saying that sexualizing or objectifying women can lead to the act of normalizing sexual violence and attitudes which is now known as "rape culture", and this act is to degrade women.

As proven, the brand's image is strongly affected and connected to advertising, more specifically, provocative advertisement is made to evoke audiences' emotions whether they are positive or negative.

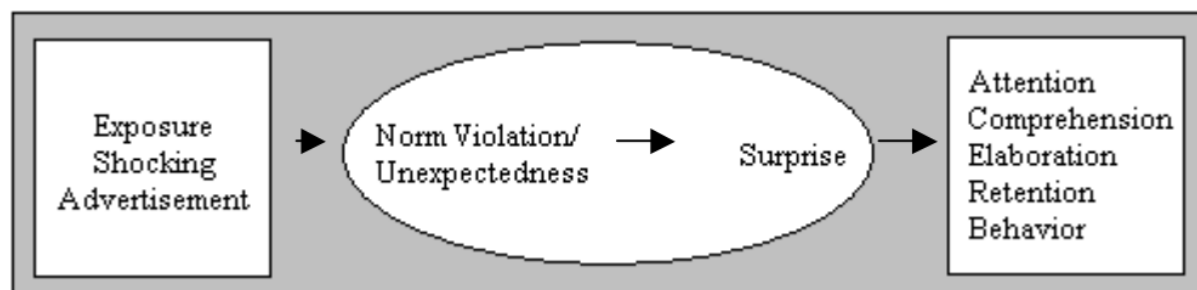


Figure 1. The process of how an ad is viewed by the audiences (Dahl, Frankenberger and Manchandra, 2003).

This model shows the beginning point is the exposure of advertisement, and then the information of the ads will be processed to decide whether the advertisement disrupts a social

norm or a personal norm. An advertisement that displays unexpectedly results in surprises, which plays a tremendous role of the process that draws attention to the event.

2.3 The risks of provocative advertising

There have been a lot of criticisms regarding ethical issue about provocative advertisement in this contemporary environment of commercials, where advertisers are willing to pull any strategy and image on advertisement just to draw more attention from the audiences (Vezina and Paul, 1994). Provocative advertising is evidently one of the most effective appeals to get consumers' attention, which later on leads to higher purchase intention, and seemingly the best to stand out from the chaos of advertising, however, risks of overusing or inappropriately using provocation in advertising are also inevitable.

The provocation that is used in advertising has already been discussed on media throughout the years about whether it is an ethical marketing strategy. According to the authors, the action of evoking the audiences' emotions can definitely lead to higher awareness yet at the same time it could result in high chances of disapproving and unaccepting from the consumers. Boddewyn and Kunz (1991) claimed that it only takes several small numbers of sexually offensive and "inappropriate" advertisements to make a huge impact on the whole industry in a negative way. Apparently, there is a vast number of offensive and sexually portraited advertisements out there and the fact has been remaining from time to time (Shimp, 2003). Wells et al (1992) studied that advertisements that were meant to be offensive 50 years ago for instance, might not be perceived provocatively the same way in the current time. Normally, there is no ordinary and simple clarification for why an advertisement is comprehended as provocative, yet there are certain elements that is more easily accessible and identified than others (Boddewyn and Kunz, 2001). According to Wells et al (1992), if the advertisers acknowledge well the current standards of taste, more specifically, what phenomenon is on trend, for example, consumers' mindset nowadays, etc., it would be a huge advantage for them to pull off provocative content yet still be able to avoid all the ethical problems. The study also showed that every individual has their own opinions and interpretation of what "good taste" really is, and it is impossible to form a general guideline for good taste in advertising. People take offense of different things and problems, what might strike as a good taste for one might come across as offensive and unacceptable to others. Provocative advertising has created a discussion wave on social media as it being

unethical. Peter Shaw, a director of brand consultancy, shock trick might work as raising awareness for a short period of time, but on the uglier hand it is able to seriously do harm to the brand image in the longer run (Croft, 2002).

Sex appeals in advertising can be shown as provocative and offensive and when it comes to sex in general, countries around the world accept it very uniquely because of cultural differences (Boddewyn and Kunz, 1991). The authors have given some rather clear example demonstrating the variety of sex comprehension in each country, for instance in highly traditional and conservative ones, any image that contains a woman's body or just a slight sign of nudity or sexuality in general is legally forbidden. In Malaysia, if a man and a woman appear in the same room together for more than three seconds, it basically insinuates that they had intercourse. European countries are known to be quite open about the whole provocative advertisement phenomenon, as a matter of fact, they do not often time encourage humility in advertisement, going full power is what they always aim for to achieve the best result yet of course, within legal approval. In France, the country of high fashion, the amount of advertising showing not fully clothed or nude women are quite considerable, along with sexually worded contents. As for the United States, the images of men and women acting provocatively or making poses as such are seen regularly on advertisements, however, advertisers tend not to create frontal nudity but there are still some exceptions for example in fashion advertisements or men's magazine (it is quite popular to see shirtless famous celebrities showing their body on the cover of a magazine, health magazine often time) (Boddewyn and Kunz, 1991). The studies above have clearly proven that interpretations concerning sexuality and provocation vary in each country around the world, therefore the strategy to this tactic should go under careful consideration depending on the country in which the ad is going to be created. Boddewyn and Kunz (1991) also said that sex as well as decency in advertising industry is an extremely crucial problem as they deeply determine audiences' acceptance and of course the claim applies for provocative advertising as well.

Vezina and Paul (1994) did a study where the final result of the actuality of consumers' reaction toward provocative advertisement was presented. The result they had come to conclusion regarding audience's understanding of this type of advertising was that the exposure to excessive provocation can lead to negative responses from the audiences, and eventually cause a bad effect on the brand image and the provocative execution strategy itself. On the contrary however (Vezina and Paul, 1994), also came to realization that with provocation being used in moderation or properly, the effect that it brings might turn out to

be more positive than expected, if not better than traditional methods. Interestingly, the majority of audiences have the tendency to possess a positive attitude towards provocative advertisement in general, but every time when it comes to shockingly or overly provocative advertising, they tend to show reactions that are against those. The study also showed that for the younger the audiences are, the more positive their reactions toward provocative advertising would turn out, for both provocative strategy and provocative appeal itself.

2.4 The importance of emotions in advertising

Consumers a lot of times buy products based solely on how they feel, that is why emotions do play a significant role in the success of any advertisement out there. There are certain types of food that are not great for your health. Let's take Pepsi as an example, their advertising is obviously never about calories or diabetes, instead the focus on people having the time of their lives, freshness and good vibes. Candies are not any better to consume either yet it has been known to portray positivity and colorfulness. From the two examples it is affirmative to state that emotions build incredible memory trace in every consumer's head, leading them toward taking action – purchasing the product. As a result, the purpose of advertisers is to access to the emotional side of buyers so as to increase sales as much as possible.

According to researches, the responses of consumers are so irrational and heavily affected by how they feel at the time, that they jump to decisions by instinct. As a matter of fact, people do not acknowledge how many of their decisions have been made based solely on emotions as well as irrationality, yet they tend to claim the opposite whenever asked if they follow logic or emotion. These are the reasons why emotional – based advertisements are created but there appears to be 2 problems whether all emotions are made the same and how to really paint an incredibly memorable and viral advertisement. This will be unfolded with more details after all the data concerning people's reactions has been collected during the research.

3. METHODOLOGY

Most studies are supposed to describe the phenomena that are part of the research, it could be an event, course of action or a condition. Describing here takes into account identifying, documenting and mapping out. The researchers start off the description process by choosing perspectives, aspects, understandings and examinations etc. When a person wants to explain,

foresee or comprehend, a detailed and informative description is necessary (Enriksson & Wiedershiem Paul, 2001).

When researchers want to dig deeper into the phenomenon, look for insights and ask some questions, exploratory studies come in quite handy, it gives them better comprehension of the research area. It always takes off with a pervasive research area and then gradually turns smaller as the research goes.

There has not been many findings within this specific area so the main purpose here is to find out how impactful and effective provocative advertising is towards the youth (which is also the generation this type of advertising mainly aims at) since receiving negative reaction does not always mean ineffective, after all, the innitial purpose of provocative ads is to draw as much attention as possible.

3.1 Qualitative research method

Qualitative research method is defined as a marker research method that concentrates on collecting data through conversational means such as interview, focus groups. The method's purpose does not just stop at direct answers, it goes deeper to the root and explanation so excecutors would have more insights to form a better result.

The methods that are going to be used to conduct this kind of research are focus group (the main method) and single interview. With focus groups, the data collected are indicated on a larger scale, despite the fact that concentration regards only one particular age (16-25 years old), yet as known, people always have unexpectedly different opinions. As for one-on-one interview, there will come the opportunity to dig in the emotional aspect a little deeper which might not be able to be done with focus groups because of the time restriction and number of participants. As given the thesis will be grabbing data qualitatively, creating a survey might as well be added if the information wanted is not adequate along the way.

3.1.1 Interview

Interview is basically defined as a rather formal meeting between two people in which there will be an interviewer, whose job is to verbally give a list of prepared questions to an interviewee, the other individual that is obliged to answer those questions. Semi-structured

interview is often used for research in social sciences, this kind of interview differs from the structured ones, where interviewees don't get many opportunities to expand and steer their answers out of given contexts, semi-structured interview actually enables both to be open about ideas that might be brought about during the conversation. As a result, semi-structured interviews are most suitable in qualitative research.

3.1.2 Focus groups

Focus group simply consists of an interviewer or a moderator and a small group of participants, ideally from six to fifteen people with preferably different backgrounds (Denscombe, 1998). The thing is that if the focus group has too few people, the data collected from it would not be broad enough to capture the problem, on the other hand if the group consists of too many people, it will lengthen the duration compared to how it is supposed to be and the interview would not go effectively as planned as there are an excessive number of participants (Cooper and Schindler, 2001). Hair, Bush and Ortinau (2000) stated that any size smaller than six participants will not likely to operate the energy and group dynamic that are supposed to be presented in the focus group, and it will not be able to benefit the outcome of the interview, moreover, a group with inadequate number of members will easily lead to one taking over the whole conversation and outperforming other participants in spite of the moderator's effort. According to Hair et al (2000), it is quite necessary that the moderator or the interviewer as well has to be active to keep the flow of the discussion going. As for a bigger focus group with too many people, as I explained above, this is likely to increase the limit of individual's chances to give out their ideas and opinions. All the participants have been picked and gathered together to give contribution to the purpose of the focus group, to express their feelings about certain things that are asked (Denscombe, 1998). The result (outcome) of the group focus is to solidify, clarify or at least have a deeper insight about that specific research area (Mitchell and Branigan, in Meijer and Styven, 2001).

With the study of Cooper and Schindler (2001), having some separate focus groups for different subsets of population is more ideal than having one. That way as a result, the members are more alike to each other and the consistency as well as similarities will push the flow of the conversation more effortlessly and naturally within the groups (Krueger, 1994). Focus group is known to collect data with qualitative method, by that the interviewers can have more access to the perceptions and emotion aspect of each and every group member. Mitchell and Branigan, in Meijer and Styven (2001)'s research has shown that interactions

among participants to run the data is an absolutely important factor of the focus group. According to Krueger (1994), providing a new and refreshing atmosphere throughout the interview can trigger great and profound ideas and is strongly encouraged.

Focus groups are used as one of the most popular and effective methods to collect data qualitatively nowadays for the diversity of research applications (Zikmund, 2000). Focus group is said to have more strong points and advantages compared to structured or one to one interviews (Sullivan, 2001) given that focus group can easily point out the core problem of the topic being discussed in the fastest and cheap way and to advocate this, Zikmund (2000) added that focus group is rather brief and quick, not time-consuming whatsoever in comparison to the amount of data that is expected to be collected, zero burden and difficulty to conduct, very flexible in terms of location, time and participants and inexpensive because the most needed element in the interview are the questions and the answers. The method is also believed to be better of its flexibility, to put this into perspective, instead of staying in a closed box with a formalized method, the group members in the focus group can freely express their opinions and emotions fully with their own words.

Everything has to come with several downsides and focus group should not be an exception. As proven above, the number of participants in a focus group can play a tremendous role in getting the most wanted outcome of the topic discussed. According to some studies (Mejer and Styven, 2001 referring to Krueger, 1994, Mitchell and Branigan, 2000, Morgan, 1997 and Threlfall, 1999), focus groups can bring up an uncontrollable flow in the conversation compared to one-to-one interviews. The study also shows that bias can easily happen during the discussion with participants who want to agree with the moderator for example. Zikmund (2000) stressed on the importance of the moderator in focus groups, of which if the moderator is insensitive and inefficient, a dominant participant might take over the conversation and unintentionally block other members' ideas. Psychologically speaking, other participants will have the tendency to react negatively toward that dominant person, and it will more or less have an impact on their talk and opinions followed by the bad impression that the dominant member brings.

The ultimate reason that focus group is chosen to be the main research method of this thesis is because attitudes, emotions and opinions are highly expected to be exploited from individual participants throughout the interview and as stated, focus group can be executed with easiness, inexpensiveness, flexibility and it can go deep into the core issue and benefit

the outcome in the most effective way. Additionally, focus group is believed to collect broader and better data in comparison with individual interviews. Moreover, this topic is more suitable with discussion, various opinions from different people with diverse backgrounds, so there will be better insights and information to jump to conclusion.

Things that help bring out the ultimate effectiveness of the focus group interview:

Neutrality: Making sure that everyone finds it easy and comfortable to express their thoughts. Avoidance in creating certain gestures such as nodding or shaking head, raising eyebrows, showing agreement and disagreement toward the answers, complimenting or denying the comments.

Be more active when it comes to shy interviewees: Follow-up questions are asked to those who are seemingly shy and create a friendly environment for everyone.

On the other hand, there are those who come across as quite dominant, won't let other people talk and stand on their own opinions. Showing them that their answers are acknowledged and understood is essential, and bringing up questions for other people to open up like: "Thank you, what do other people think about this?"

The smartest way to show people that interviewers do capture and comprehend their individual responses is that they try to summarize the ideas and facilitate the long complex sentences if needed.

3.2 Data collection method

Eriksson and Wiedersheim (2001) said that data collection consists of two categories which are primary data collection and secondary data collection. Primary data is basically the data that is accumulated primarily by the people doing researches whereas secondary data is the information that is already gathered from previous researches.

Yin (2003) stated that data for research can come from a variety of sources, there are six most crucial and frequently used: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, physical artifacts and participant observation. Followed up with Yin's study, all sources have pros and cons yet none of them has an advantage that outperforms other sources, in fact, they complement each other extremely well. The same study suggested that more than one sources should be used in doing a research, this is known as triangulation.

Yin (2003) claimed that focused group's duration tends to be quite short, that is why it is more open-ended, and interviewers will ask the participants more unstructured questions (ibid). Denscombe (1998) stated and as also mentioned above, this type of interview allows respondents to expand their thoughts and develop their answers, which will come in handy doing research about complicated questions that relate strongly to emotions.

Source of Evidence	Strengths	Weaknesses
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stable: can be reviewed repeatedly - Unobtrusive: not created as a result of the case study - Exact: contains exact names, references, and details of an event - Broad coverage: long span of time, many events, and many settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retrievability: can be low - Biased selectivity: if collection is incomplete - Reporting bias: reflects (unknown) bias of author - Access: may be deliberately blocked
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Targeted: focuses directly on case study topic - Insightful: provides perceived casual inferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bias due to poorly constructed questions - Response bias - Inaccuracies due to poor recall - Reflexivity: interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear
Direct Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reality: covers events in real time - Contextual: covers context of event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time-consuming - Selectivity: unless broad coverage - Reflexivity: event may proceed differently because it is being observed - Cost: hours needed by human observers
Participant Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Same as above for direct observations) - Insightful into interpersonal behavior and motives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Same as above for direct observations) - Bias due to investigator's manipulation of events

Figure 2. Pros and cons of evidence's source (Adapted from Yin, 2003, p. 86)

3.3 Primary data collection

As mentioned before, provocation covers a broad spectrum regarding many aspects, however sexuality will be the main focus. After a few researches, it is shown that provocative advertisement is constantly used in the fashion and food industry, that is the reason why the advertisements that are going to be displayed to the audiences fall into these 2 categories. Furthermore, the criterias in choosing the ads have been determined given the 2 chosen industries, in which the ads should be a worldwide famous brand that both genders associate with and easily relate to.

The ads should also be accessible to a vast group of audiences that even exposes to children.

Six different ads from 2 most popular industries listed above which are food and fashion, were selected and tested on a group of young audiences who will not be a part of the main focus group interview. Likert scale method is used to measure the young audiences' responses toward the ads' provocation intensity on a scale of 1 to 6 with 1 being "not thinking the ad is provocative whatsoever" and 6 being "extremely provocative". Based on the data collected from this research, 3 advertisements have been picked out to be the most provocative to be the representatives of the main research. The ads that were chosen for the group interviews include Calvin Klein, Burgerking and Aito (An oat milk Finnish brand).

3.3.1 Participant

Male and female teenagers living in Finland from the age of 16 to 25 are gathered for this focus group interview since provocative advertisements tend to target the younger group of audiences. It is better to have the interviewees with a variety of occupations. The purposed aimed for is digging in the emotions aspect of the audiences to know how they feel and react towards certain advertisements given and basing on that to determine the effectiveness and the influence they bring. People with different jobs can establish different pictures of mindsets, which evidently affects their thoughts on the ad. The interviewees are preferably strangers, some are familiar with the brands considering they are all well-known brands, some might not be, with a purpose of getting the rawest and most honest responses since the analysis depends strongly on this.

The participants are divided into 3 groups (there are 24 people in total - 13 males and 11 females) . Their nationalities include Finnish, Vietnamese, Swedish, Korean and Spanish. According to the literature review, only when the numbers of people joining are not excessive nor too few can focus groups bring out the best result for the research. Since researches has shown that gender can create a significant impact on the outcome of the research, male and female's input and reactions are also noted separately.

3.3.2 Focus group execution

The process of the group interview was conducted in a rented rather big space – office in this case to be precise, the type of advertisement desired to be displayed was image advertisement, as it is quicker, less time-consuming and it won't be necessary to watch the whole video from beginning to end, some video ads require full length observation. Plus

image advertisement is less likely to cause distractions from unnecessary factors and participants can instantly tell if the if is considered “provocative”. To describe the setting in details, three photos of the ads chosen were shown in front of the participants one by one and their thoughts and opinions based on the questions prepared were all noted down on paper by an assistant of the author and all of the answers were phone recorded. The group interview was held on 30th August, 2020 here in Helsinki, Finland, even though the pandemic seemed to be dialing down a little at the time, distancing method was still applied to ensure everybody’s safety.

First of all, the participants were asked about their knowledge regarding the given brands in the order of Calvin Klein, Burgerking and Aito. Next, all the advertisements of each brand were shown respectively to the participants, their reactions and interpretations were all recorded and noted on papers for analysis purpose. Lastly, the participants were all asked to describe their perceptions on provocation.

There was one moderator (interviewer), one secretary to take notes and one in charge of recording. The interviewer started off with the introduction about the concept of the focus group, then proceeded to ask open-ended questions and after people responded, followed-up questions were brought up to untangle any misunderstandings throughout the interview and gave participants a chance to elaborate their answers.

The research is done with qualitative method. Since it is supposed to be a semi structured interview, a list of prepared questions will be asked throughout the interview and in the middle of the showcase of the ads images. As the interviewees answer the questions, popup questions might be created if there is a need to exploit more information.

There are 3 types of questions used in this focus group interview:

- Probe (or introducing) question: This type of question is made to slowly and easily introduce the topic we plan to bring about to the people in the focus group, making them feel more comfortable sharing their points of view.
- Follow-up question: This is to penetrate more in people’s opinions regarding the topic, getting a more insightful view of their answers.
- Exit question: This is simple to check and make sure nothing is missed throughout the whole interview.

3.3.3 One-on-one interview execution

The one-on-one interview was executed on the following day after the focus group which was 31st August. 2 people, one was 22 and the other was 20, were chosen for the interview. This time they were shown the advertisements that had already been picked out from the focus group that was held earlier, and asked questions that are similar to the ones in the focus group as well, nonetheless, since this time it was a direct 2 people interview, there was more time and opportunity to spiral in individual perspectives as well as emotional reactions of the interviewees towards the given ads. The interviewer then asked more details about their interests, what normally appeals them to buy the product in general and their interpretation of provocation in advertising. Each participant was shown all 3 selected ads. For this type of interview where time is not restricted, it was not necessary to have many people to be in charge of different responsibilities, the author himself was enough. The interview took place in Espresso House coffee in the city center of Helsinki.

3.4 Brands and advertisements' demonstration

Burger King

A restaurant corporation expertizing in flame-grilled fast food hamburgers. Burger King is the second biggest hamburger chain in America only behind the infamous McDonald's. It is claimed to have around fourteen thousand restaurants around the world with more than eleven million customers. Burger King was founded in 1954 by James W. McLamore and David Edgerton in Miami (Bloomberg, 2017), where the head quarter is at the moment.



Figure 3 Burgerking's long burger's ad (Burger Babes, 2020)

As far as the advertisement, it was publicized in 2009 in Singapore. The print shows a woman holding a long-shaped seven inch burger with excitement in her eyes, below that says “Blow one and swallow” which is a rather obvious sexual implication. On the upper right corner is the Burger King logo with a heading next to it saying “It just tastes better”.

Calvin Klein

Calvin Klein is a global fashion brand founded in 1968 by Calvin Klein himself and his business partner Barry Schwartz. The retail sales of Calvin Klein products reached more than nine billion dollars in 2017 and were present in over 110 countries around the world (Calvin Klein, 2017).

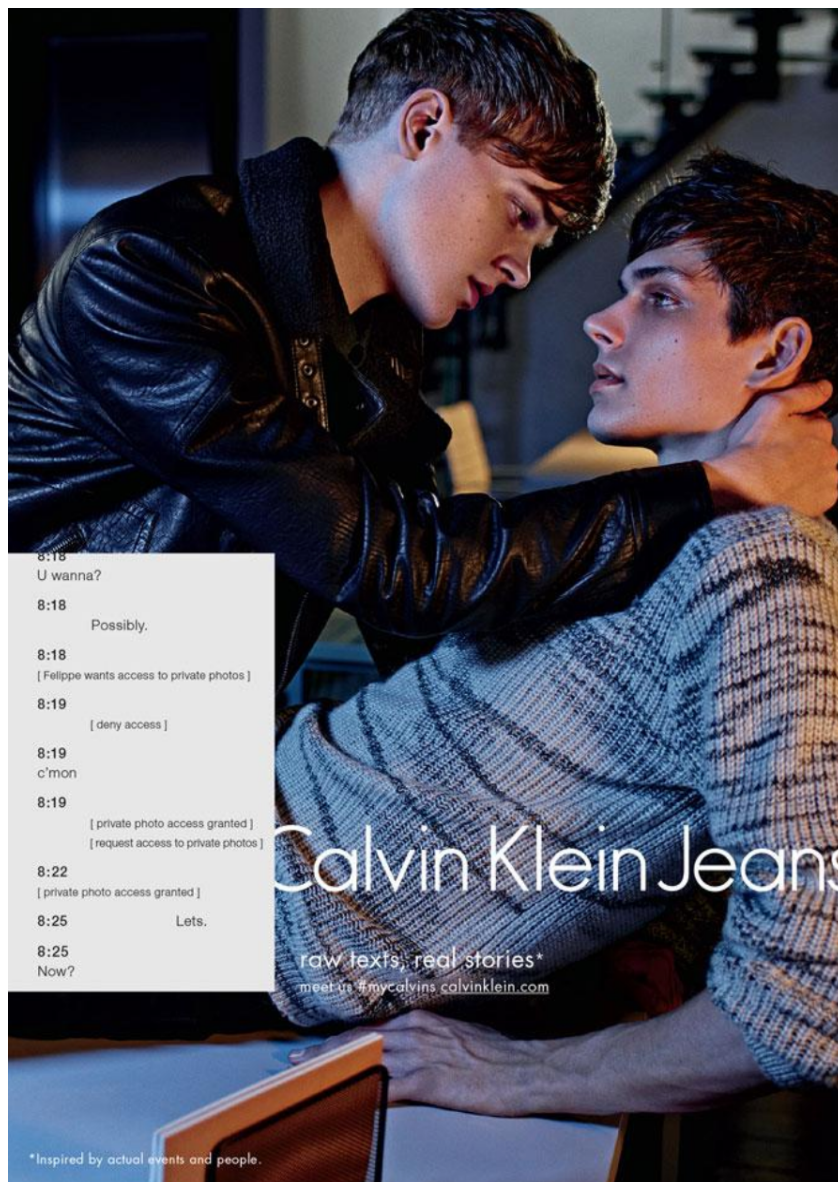


Figure 4. Ck's #mycalvins campaign (How Calvin Klein Courts Controversy In Its Marketing Campaigns, 2020)

The brand created this campaign called #mycalvin in 2015 and intentionally promoted a provocative virtual language that is sexting (on dating apps such as Tinder, Grindr, Zoe, etc...). The advertisement encompasses people with various genders and sexualities showing intimacy overlaid with texts and messages regarding nudity, dirty talks and even cheating.

As seen from the left bottom of the ads "Inspired by actual events and people", Calvin Klein was trying to bring out the rawest stories that include real events and people, showing the audiences the truth about digital as well as modern dating. The ad was displayed in big cities in the US at the time and it definitely worked on drawing attention.

Aito (Organic Oat Drink)

Aito is a Finnish oat drink brand that is currently used in most coffee places as well as households for dairy substitution, it appears to be owned by one of the largest corporations in the Finnish food industry, and that is Fazer.

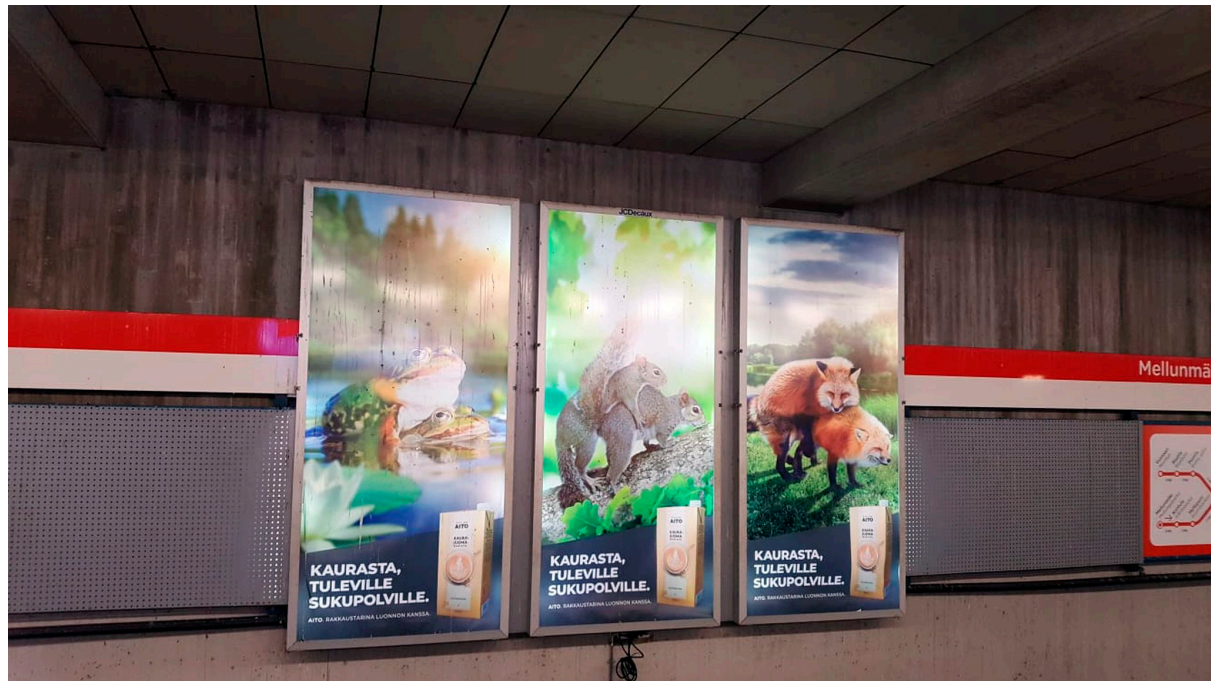


Figure 5. Aito's oatdrink ad (Rautio, 2020)

The ads were taken right at the metro station in the center of Helsinki so that proves how this campaign is strongly pushed and promoted. They show different types of animals having sexual intercourse, which stirs quite a controversy considering being displayed everywhere and easily accessible to kids. A slogan is written on the bottom right corner of each piece saying ‘’ kaurasta tuleville sukupolville’’ which roughly means: Oats for future generations, implying that cutting dairy and consuming vegan food like oats instead will help benefit the ecosystem.

4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this research as mentioned is to find out how provocation is interpreted by younger generations and how it can have an impact on advertising of the food and fashion industry. This session will show the results and data collected from the focus group as well as the one-on-one interview. All consents regarding the mention of names and words had been

legitimately given by all of the participants that took part in both the interview as well as the focus groups.

4.1 Burger King

According to the data collected from the two interviews, the brand is likely to be more appealing towards male audiences while females do not usually show interest in it in terms of ‘‘place to eat’’. The majority of females in the interviews stated that Burger King is not their priority and they only go there when they need to grab something quick. On the other hand, males seem to love the brand for its convenience and decent range of food.

It appeared that as soon as the Burger King advertisement was shown to the audiences, they all agreed that it did draw a huge amount of attention yet only made a good impression on half the participants. Miss Thanh (23 years old) said:

‘‘Why would you create an ads to impress buyers by objectifying women? Sure it’s really effective on getting my attention but no way I am going back to Burger King after this.’’

Ms Kattis (20 years old), with a not so pleased expression said:

‘‘If you ask me whether I received the message positively or not I would definitely say no. The ads is utterly grotesque and insulting, why did they even come up with such thing and I do not see any relevance to food whatsoever.’’

However, there was a male participant who perceived the ads as creative and intriguing. Mr Toan said:

‘‘It gives me a weird and uncertain feeling because like Kattis, I don’t really think the two categories food and sex work together. But advertising wise I have to applaud them for their creativity and outside the box thinking because I would definitely go to Burger King for this despite its controversy.’’

Ms Huong said when she looked solely at the text, she did not know what to think because it was quite confusing for her, but then the image pulled the whole thing together and she immediately realized the implication.

There were more discussions about this ad during the focus groups, the comments above are the highlighted ones that can be linked to the literature review to help answer some questions. To recapitulate the feedbacks of everyone in Burger King case, the image they created

definitely had an impact on the brand itself, a negative one given that the majority of participants (100% females) found the advertisement to be outrageous and offensive towards woman. Even though they all agreed that the brand did extremely well on doing something different and creative to draw an impressive amount of attention, and seemed to have not many problems with male audiences' perception toward it, the outcome of this interview still insisted on the message as well as image affecting Burger King's image negatively.

4.2 Calvin Klein

This particular brand has always been seen as appealing and modern, high quality and the focus groups are not exceptional. However since advertisers seemed to tackle a new approach on this ad, a variety of opinions as well as reactions and feelings are collected from the interview and they all were diverse. Yet there was some confusion involved as well.

The majority of participants all agreed that they were a little confused about the message in this particular advertisement. Mr Leo spoke up:

-“I mean I understand that the advertisers wanted to connect with the audiences with ‘real stories’ and all and again the poster might do well on drawing attention but I don’t really see how all this has anything to do with the fashion, which is the key product they are trying to promote.”

Ms Tracy, who stated that she actually liked the advertisement, because in her perspective, it was somewhat sensual but still laid within the acceptable level of provocation as it was not insulting or degrading to first look at. However putting a homosexual couple in this might create negative stereotypes against the LGBTIQ+ community, that they have an easy, carefree, wild and sort of unhealthy sex life. “I like the ads, I can see the clothes they are wearing, the models are beautiful, the message they are trying to send out is relatable and intriguing. Though I feel like it is not quite necessary to put a gay couple in an advertisement that has this kind of message since not so nice assumptions might rise up, they should be normalized by being put in those more positive ads since this one could be looked at by a certain group of people negatively.”

Mr Hy, 18 years of age told the moderator that she did not consider the ads as provocative because specifically when it comes to fashion, this kind of ads is displayed everywhere and it just did not come as something shocking to her anymore.

4.3 Aito

The participants however were a lot more accepting towards this ad and they found it to be funny and creative, not so much provocative. Their opinions and ideas about this ad and the message being delivered were quite similar so there will not be any elaborate comments on this specific ad. Some of the participants also added that this ad is absolutely safe to be displayed to kids and they would not form a questionably inappropriate thought in their head. One participant said again if shown only the image, they would have no idea what this ad is about, or have any relation with the oat drink, but the text certainly did support and complete the brand image (Edell and Staelin, 1983).

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis of this method will mainly be discussed based on emotional aspects of the audiences who watch the advertisements. According to an online research, people have the tendency to share “arousing” and positive contents. This can more or less answer the question whether provocative ad has more efficiency over regular ads. However, it is not that simple if considering other angles of the topic. The use of emotions in advertising is extremely important to its success and provocativeness usually pulls different reactions upon audiences. Based on what thoughts on the ads the audiences have to offer and what sort of feelings they feel, it is possible to go into analyzing about the effectiveness that a provocative ad can bring to that one specific audience and what factors make it most memorable to him or her. To put this into perspective, there are six universal emotions that represent: Anger, happiness, disgust, sadness, fear, surprise, ‘arousal’ and ‘valence’ will be used as a measurement to determine the essence of the audiences’ emotions. The graph below is going to illustrate how this works:

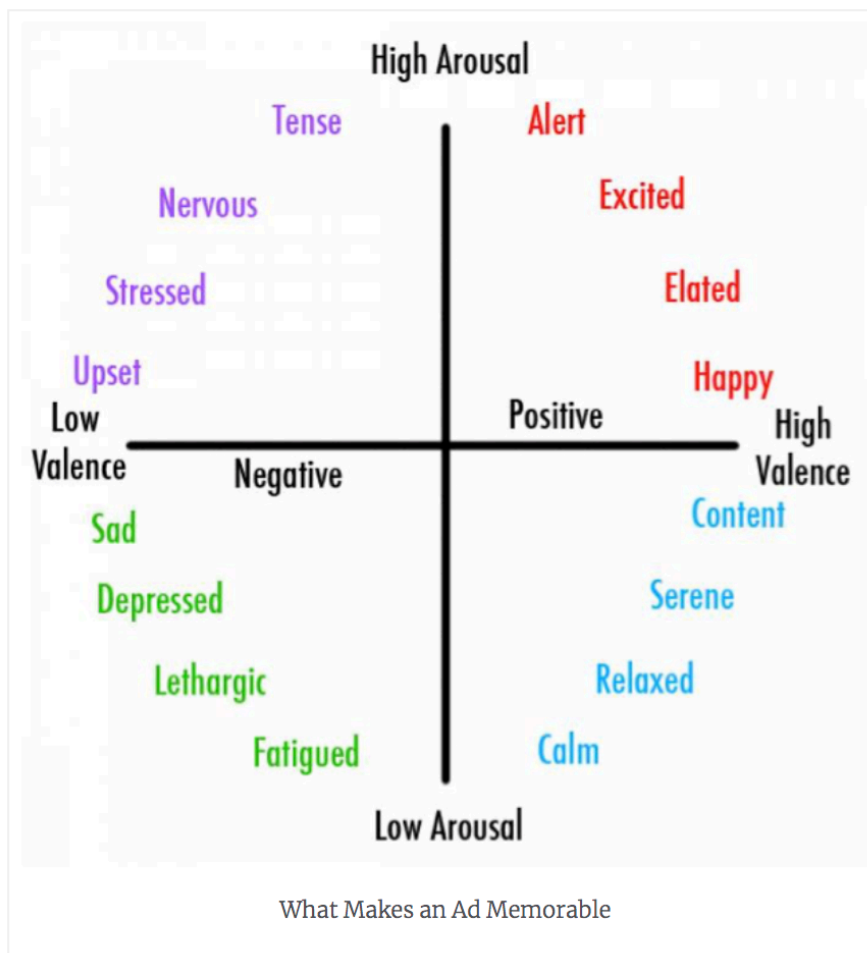


Figure 6. What makes an Ad Memorable (Frenay, 2020)

Burger King

In findings, The fact that this Burger king ads caught Miss Thanh's eyes supports the study of Dahl et al (2003) but goes against Durgree (1988), who claimed that advertising is all about delivering positivity and sole information to the audiences. Miss Thanh additionally mentioned that in her point of view, most often women are displayed in a provocative advertisement, not men and this is true if put next to Gurrieri et al. (2016)'s statement in which women are more likely to be sexualized than men. As a result, Christy (2016) indicated that women are more offended by provocative advertisement compared to men.

As for Miss Kattis, clearly she was confused about the purpose of this ads since it did not speak much about food itself and the point of promoting the original burger image was steered away from the viewers (Nandaan, 2004 and Melin, 2002) instead the effort was solely poured into creating attention. This as a result could be the reason of all the negativity that Burger King received from this particular advertisement. McQuarrie and Mick (1992)

discussed that comprehension of advertising can be positively impactful to buyers' decision. So far two female participants have shown their disagreement and unpleasantness toward this ad which means the effect advertisers aimed to bring out was negative. This supports the statements of De Pelsmacker & Van der Bergh (1996) and Vezina & Paul (1997).

According to Mr Toan, provocation in this case has been used in a creative way and that was able to draw more attention to the brand. This was mentioned before by Dens et al. (2008) and Waller (2003) as an essential purpose of provocative advertisement. Yet regardless of this mindset, the image planned to be brought out still had a negative impact on the majority of consumers.

Ms Huong's realization advocates the statement of Meenaghan (1995) which indicated that images are the prime component in a brand advertising. Moreover, Edell and Staelin (1983) said that with right text, the precise interpretations of the ads that advertisers want the audience to have will be much clearer. If both image and text work together brilliantly, this mixture would be able to form the ultimate brand image according to Scott (1994).

Calvin Klein

Mr Leo did not have any problem with the ads being rather raunchy and provocative but he struggled to find the link between the image and the purpose. This advertisement is purely visual with the name of the brand only, that explains why the absence of text can cause confusion to the audiences (Edell & Staelin, 1983), leading to certain viewers perceiving the picture in various ways.

The perception of Mr Hy proved that the young generation has the tendency to look at sexuality and raunchiness as a lot less provocative than the older one (Dahl et al, 2009). The fact that provocative advertisement has been increasing in the past years (Vezina and Paul, 1997) and (Huhman & Mott-Stenerson, 2008) and they have become regular on a daily basis especially to the young people, it is likely that they have been normalized and not seen as provocative anymore (Vezina and Paul, 1997).

Mr Hy had proven the study of Moorthy and Hawkins (2005), in which advertising influences the brand image from time to time, not immediately. Despite giving different opinions and attitudes towards this particular advertisement, everybody in the room all admitted that it

does not really change their view about the brand in general as provocation in this case could be interpreted as creative, closeness or realness. As mentioned in the focus group execution, these are the results when the participants were asked to use words that came to the mind to describe and define provocation.

Table 1. Perceptions on the term "Provocation"

Group 1	Shocking, surprising, triggering, offensive, negative, effective, disturbing
Group 2	Attractive, creative, clever, insulting, weird, irrelevant, disgusting, negative
Group 3	Degrading, offensive, sexist, stereotyping, controversial, caught off guard, funny

This research on people's understanding toward the term 'provocation' has evidently supported the theory of Vezina and Paul (1997) as the majority of participants interpreted the term as 'shocking', 'offensive' and most of the time 'negative'. The research at the same time proved that it is true that 'provocation' has the ability to shock the audiences (Dahl et al., 2003). Nonetheless, as seen from the table above, there are some positive descriptions regarding the term such as 'attractive', 'creative', 'funny' and 'clever' which establish a contradiction to the study of Vezina and Paul (1997). The fact that there are still a lot of people who see a provocative advertisement as something nice and positive shows that provocative advertising in general can still create positivity on its brand image.

6. CONCLUSION

The whole study has certainly answered all of the research questions. All of the theoretical knowledge including definitions and risks of provocative advertising as well as the massive impact it has on the young generation and the brand image were all listed and meticulously demonstrated. The advertisements chosen for this study belong to two completely distinct industries, which are ‘‘food’’ and ‘‘fashion’’, and it is to show that provocation has been used widely in advertising regardless of category. The methods used to collect all the data were focus groups and one-on-one interview, they both went anticipatedly well however there were some downsides to each. As for the focus groups, the information was more diverse and it was possible to look at everybody’s reactions and opinions as a whole but since there were too many and the time was restricted, it was quite challenging to dig deep into each individual. One-on-one interview on the other hand provided more in depth information from the only 2 participants but lacked diversity in data. The data has proven that provocation is interpreted in various ways, evidently more negative towards the food industry and more positive and neutral toward fashion, yet both draw incredibly major attention from the viewers. However Aito did a good job in creating a surprising factor without diminishing its own brand image considering the brand is related to food. Advertisers should take this into account to create an appropriate level of provocation in visual advertising in different industries. Calvin Klein, as expected, being a well-known fashion brand, the provocation used in its ads is generally perceived as ‘‘creative’’, ‘‘non-sexual’’ or ‘‘aesthetic’’, this is understandable given a strong connection between fashion and ‘‘expressing sexuality’’, as a result, the brand image was not influenced in a bad way. It has also been concluded that texts play a significant roll in perfecting the image and delivering the accurate messages to the audiences, without text or the right text, people can easily be steered astray from the point of the advertisements, nobody wants to ever buy a product while being surrounded with too much confusion. The younger generation is believed to be more accepting towards provocative advertising and women have the tendency to be offended by provocative ads more than men do, a proper explanation is that even though there are three different types of sexuality exposed ads in this study, the majority of provocative advertisements tend to target and objectify women instead of men.

7. REFLECTION

The whole study was successful in capturing all of the fundamental knowledges regarding provocative advertising, enough for the audiences and the author while doing research, to have a better insight about this type of marketing strategy. However the methodology could have been slightly different and less time-consuming yet still remained its efficiency. Focus group was the main method to collect data in this study so it would have been wiser to put full concentration on that. The reason one-on-one interview existed was because of the thought of being able to get more detailed answers from the participants. Now given that the focus group was divided in smaller groups, there would not have been much hardship to dig into everyone's emotionality, plus, collecting as much data as possible from a larger scale was initially the whole point of this research. Therefore, the methodology process could have still gone smoothly and optimally even without the execution of the single interviews.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview questions

- What is your first impression of this poster? Is it a good or a bad impression?
- Do you find this advertisement provocative in a disturbing, overwhelming way or is it still provocative but in a weird funny way?
- What elements of the ad makes you think that it is provocative? Can you describe it?
- Do you actually notice the product that is meant to be promoted?
- Is the ad informative? Are all the information of the product/service you need shown clearly on the poster?
- Do you like this ad? Would you buy the product?