Just another ad?

A qualitative study on the impact of personalized advertising targeting women aged 55+ on Facebook

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Dedication

We would like to dedicate this paper to the women who not only shared their private and intimate Facebook feeds with us to complete this paper but also took their time to contribute and participate. Your reflections were very rewarding and gave unique insight into the world online targeted advertising.

Jonna & Louise
Abstract

Marketers often target women because they represent over half of the population in Canada and Sweden and because they are the purchasing agents for 85% of household items. Advertisers and marketers use targeted marketing on Social Media platforms in the hopes of engaging the audience enough to initiate a purchasing action. For this paper the goal was to understand the relationship between women aged 55+ and their attitudes and perception of targeted advertising, to see whether it was effective in engaging them as consumers. Through interviews and the think-aloud method we found that while the overall perception of online advertising was negative, in practice, the ads on their social media feed were either accepted as relevant ads, simply ignored/not noticed, or not recognized as advertising. Finally we conclude that because social media gives users the impression that they are in control of the content on their feed, the consequences may be that targeted advertising can influence audience’s perception of who they are, more than they think.
# Table of Contents

1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 6
   1.1 Group work ............................................................................................................. 6
   1.2 Thesis structure ...................................................................................................... 7

2 Background .................................................................................................................... 7
   2.1 Internet advertising ............................................................................................... 8
   2.2 Online vs. traditional advertising ........................................................................... 8
   2.3 The emergence of social media ............................................................................ 9
   2.4 The rise of Facebook and Facebook advertising .................................................. 10
   2.5 Facebook demographic ....................................................................................... 12
   2.6 Problem ................................................................................................................ 13
   2.7 Purpose and focus ................................................................................................. 13

3 Theory ............................................................................................................................ 14
   3.1 How the audience has changed in the digitalized world ......................................... 15
      3.1.1 One-to-one, many-to-many ............................................................................. 15
   3.2 Four-stage mass communication theory ................................................................ 16
      3.2.1 From production to reproduction .................................................................... 17
      3.2.2 Producer and receiver .................................................................................... 18
   3.3 Social cognitive theory ......................................................................................... 18
      3.3.1 Symbolization and self-reflection ..................................................................... 19
      3.3.2 The motivational process ............................................................................... 20
      3.3.3 Associated meanings ..................................................................................... 21

4 Literature review .......................................................................................................... 21
   4.1 Influencing consumer attitudes .............................................................................. 22
   4.2 Influencing consumer conversations ...................................................................... 24
   4.3 Effectiveness of online advertising ........................................................................ 25
   4.4 Reflection on literature review .............................................................................. 27
5 Methodology

5.1 Empirical research

5.2 Three-stage interview method
  5.2.1 Justification of interview technique

5.3 Participants

5.4 Analytical instruments

5.5 Limitations

6 Results and analysis

6.1 Encoding: Production and circulation

6.2 Decoding: Circulation, consumption and reproduction
  6.2.1 Participants' attitudes towards social media advertising
  6.2.2 The circulation of ads in the context of social media
  6.2.3 Participants' attitudes and understanding of targeted advertising
  6.2.4 Participants' ability to recall social media ads
  6.2.5 Participants' willingness to engage in social media advertising

7 Discussion

8 Conclusion

9 Final reflection

  9.1 Ethics
  9.2 Future research

10 References

11 Appendices

  Appendix 1: Hall's Encoding - Decoding model
  Appendix 2: Overview of participants
  Appendix 3: Interview guide
  Appendix 4: Interview transcript and coding
1 Introduction

Marketing through the internet is a steadily growing phenomenon. As the interest in the digital environment continues to globally increase, it attracts the attention of advertisers and becomes an important channel to reach and immediately engage with a range of audiences and consumers (Cheng et al. 2009; Busen and Mustaffa, 2014). Furthermore, with the emergence of the phenomenon known as ‘Social Media’, the tools and strategies for communicating with customers have changed significantly (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; 357). As social media advertising continues to grow, so do consumer attitudes, behavior and overall awareness of these advertisements. Given this parallel development it makes sense to investigate how advertising on social media is being perceived by the consumers and whether the relationship advertisers hope to create is reciprocated. Learning how today’s digital, and rather advanced, communication infrastructure shape the audience is important for anyone who has a desire to gain the attention of the consumer.

1.1 Group work

We decided to work as partners early on. Having completed a project together earlier we knew that not only do we have a similar work ethic but we have, we consider, a unique dynamic in discussion. Also, we found that the time change (Jonna in Sweden and Louise in Canada) works in our favor as we continued to communicate on a consistent basis about the project’s progress ensuring that tasks were completed at almost every hour of the day. We scheduled Skype sessions that took place on the weekends that usually lasted for two or more hours. These sessions were disciplined, planned, prepared for and extremely productive. Not only were there practical advantages with working as partners, but having very different past education, work experience and internships resulted in diverse discussions with perspectives coming from different angles. These
angles were also academically based with Jonna having completed a bachelor in graphic design and Louise one in communications. The combination of a creative and design and a theoretical background was found to be very profitable for the project.

1.2 Thesis structure

In the following thesis we begin with formulating the background, context and the purpose of this study. Thereafter, we introduce the theoretical backbone followed by the literature review of previous research. We then explain the methodologies used during the empirical research process, and finally, we present and analyze the empirical results and what they mean in relation to previous research with the support of theoretical standpoints.

2 Background

With this study we aim to understand the relationship that women aged 55+ have with advertising that appear on their social media feeds (specifically on Facebook) and to see whether their perception of advertising as a whole is affected by being represented through this platform. We are interested to look at whether the message that the advertisers aim to send is altered not only by the decoding process of the receivers but whether the form in which the advertising takes changes the attitude towards the brands and products depicted in the ads. We will then see whether the relationship that advertisers attempt to create, especially with target advertising, is reciprocated by the users. This is an important study because audience research, before the internet, was based on television, a one-way communication tool. Even though the audience did indirectly influence the content by choosing what to watch and what not to watch, on the internet, the audience is directly involved in the creation of the content. This larger role has caused advertisers and marketers to target the audience directly in the hopes of influencing their internet behaviour to their advantage. However, before moving on to the study, we will in this chapter clarify the concepts and themes that will be addressed and how they are being used in the context of this thesis.
2.1 Internet advertising

In order to understand internet advertising, it is important to first understand the two concepts separately. The internet is a “network of networks that operates on a set of technical protocols that enables people from around the world to access and exchange information” (McMillan 2004; 2). Advertising, McMillan explains, was defined by theorists Richards and Curran (2002) along with advertising experts to be “a paid mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action now or in the future” (McMillan 2004; 2). It is “addressed to a selected target audiences with the objective of creating awareness, informing, reminding, influencing, and persuading to buy the product or service or to be favorably inclined towards those ideas, products or services” (Koekemoer 1998, in Busen and Mustaffa, 2014; 98-99). These two concepts however do not entirely cover the scope of internet advertising which has the additional elements of interactivity and the ability to target a particular audience. To understand the enormous potential of online advertising, it is helpful to look at how it this type of communication differs from traditional advertising.

2.2 Online vs. traditional advertising

There are four fundamental differences that distinguishes online advertising from other forms of advertising (McNally, 2011). First, as opposed to traditional advertising, it can create a direct connection from the ad to the place of purchase. In other words, it allows relatively immediate purchasing via the use of digital technologies. Second, online advertising can be interactive, meaning that it acts as a two-way communication tool directly, and instantaneously, engaging the audience. In fact, Tuten explains that apart from Art Direction and copywriting, ‘engagement planning’ is predicted to be employed in the creative and strategy departments in the near future (2008; 13) if it hasn’t already. Third, online advertising is uniquely non-intrusive; advertising usually interrupts the flow of either film and television or in the reading of a magazine or newspaper, but on the internet, the message intended to persuade is one click away meaning that the consumer essentially has to request the ad (McNally, 2011). However, we could argue that even though the user often needs to physically click on an ad to be taken to the website, the user does not have the power to request ads; they appear on the social media
feed nonetheless. Finally, the fourth fundamental difference between internet advertising and other forms of advertising, is the capacity of highly personalized communication which, in contrast to ‘informativeness’, emphasizes the content to be personalized to consumer’s interests and to be relevant to them (McNally, 2011; Jingjun Xu, 2006;11). This is accomplished through three main ways: web bugs (invisible tracking of data that is not stored on user’s computer), cookies (as opposed to web bugs, cookies are stored on the computer leaving traces for the user to track) and the collection of clickstream data (which gives the marketers or advertising agents even more detailed information on user behaviour without the user’s knowledge) (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Tuten explains that thanks to these tools it is possible to track behaviour such as the length of time a visitor spends on a website, the specific pages that he or she views (including how frequently he or she visit the website), the number of times a video is being played and the clickthrough rates for banner ads.

The above mentioned ways of gathering user data and monitoring patterns of consumer internet behaviour have been regulated through the Privacy Directive because it caused privacy concerns mainly because the many ways of gathering data do not need the consent of the user. These forms gathering previously allowed marketers to track not only what websites consumers visited but for how long they visited the website, how far down the screen they scrolled and what website they had visited just before. Now that the user’s consent is needed to continue on the website, the user can choose to deny and leave the website. This has resulted in significant decrease of advertising effectiveness (Goldfarb and Tucker 2011).

### 2.3 The emergence of social media

In regards to consumer interaction and engagement, social media marketing embodies the very notion of engagement because of the many shapes that advertising can take. These shapes include consumer-generated advertising, opinion-giving through message boards, review sites, blogs, social networking, social news and video games, to only mention a few (Tuten, 2008; 14). Therefore, when it comes to internet advertising, the concept of ‘Social Media’ is on top of the agenda for many businesses today. Decision-makers, consultants and marketers continuously try to identify ways in which companies can make profitable use of these kinds of applications (for example YouTube,
Facebook and Twitter). This is not surprising seeing that the emergence of online social media platforms, and their high number of users, has made it possible for companies to communicate with thousands of individuals about their products and brands (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; 357). In fact, according to Kaplan and Haenlein, some industry gurus claim that if you do not participate in “Facebook, YouTube, and second life, you are not part of cyberspace anymore” (2010; 67). This is not to say that social media has to be something that exists online; the notions ‘social’ and ‘media’ are such large phenomenons whose meaning heavily depend on context, culture, and on who is doing the talking. In this paper, social media is referred to as “online communities in which people develop relationships by creating, co-creating, sharing, commenting, and engaging in content” (Tuten 2008; ix). Romantically, Kaplan and Haenlin describe the current trend towards social media as “an evolution back to the internet’s roots [...] as it re-transforms the Word Wide Web to what it was initially created for: a platform to facilitate information exchange between users” (2010; 60). One particular platform that has been immensely successful in facilitating such information exchange is Facebook.

### 2.4 The rise of Facebook and Facebook advertising

Facebook has become a platform for not only communication between individuals and groups but it also provides a strategy for businesses to target audiences and consumers. There were several temporarily succesfull social networks before Facebook such as SixDegrees.com, Ryze.com and Friendster. These were all shut down due to restrictions and lack of popularity often due to the limitations of personalizing and customizing the pages (Todi, 2008). MySpace, established in 2003, became popular, especially among indie rock bands and teenagers, because it allowed users to customize their profiles (Todi, 2008; 6). Facebook followed this trend when it was created in a Harvard door room with the intention of connecting college students with others in their program. The creators of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskowitz and Chris Hughes, did not expect that over 1200 students would have signed up within 24 hours of its launch. The Facebook, as it was called then, opened their doors to other elite universities like Stanford and MIT and soon the website had over a million users. After seeing the potential growth of this new social network, Zuckerberg took a leave of absence from Harvard to relocate to Palo Alto in the heart of Silicon Valley, and in May 2006,
Facebook opened its doors to anybody with a valid email address. The 89% growth of users within the first year proved the popularity of having a personalized and customized social media tool (Todi 2008:10). This in turn attracted many advertisers, especially because of the network’s strength in having access to information about its users. When one registers with Facebook, the new user is encouraged to enter information such as birthday (age), hometown, High School, what music they listen to, what books they like and what pages they would like to be associated with (this can range from brands, bands, products, restaurants etc). This can help the user connect with other like-minded people.

However, Facebook sharing all this information with advertisers showed to be highly unpopular with its users forcing Zuckerberg to apologize and change privacy policies (Todi, 2008). This did not stop advertisers as they found new ways to gather data and use it to target the audience with successful ad campaigns. The growth of Facebook and other social media networks has made social networks a crucial platform for companies to advertise. In fact, Todi presents four main reasons for why social networks play an important part in company’s advertising strategies: they have a large reach, it’s cost efficient, they can target their advertising and people are spending more time online allowing advertisers more exposure (Todi, 2008; 6).

Though advertising on social media can be profitable due to the strategies mentioned above, Todi also explains that there are three criteria that should be fulfilled in order to conduct a successful advertising campaign on a social network: it has to be unobtrusive, it has to be creative and it has to engage the user (2008; 25-26). The first form of advertising on the internet took the shape of pop-up ads; they opened in new browsing windows steering the user unwillingly from its intended website. Responding to user demands, advertisers instead opted to integrate with the web page. Now, advertisers rely more on users to spread their message online. This means that advertisers have to become more creative and engaging; which, incidentally, are the other two criteria Todi presents. Because advertisers are integrating with websites, advertisers have to find a way to attract the user and distract them from their feed; they have to become more creative in both the content and in the delivery of the ad. Increasing creativity in these two ways will increase user engagement. The technology available today allows the user to “fully display their unique personalities online” (Todi, 2008; 26). Advertisers take advantage of this uncommon characteristic by involving the users in the creation process itself.
making them feel more involved with the brand. It’s about creating a relationship between the user/consumer and the brand, and for this relationship to be reciprocated, it has to be able to target users of all ages.

2.5 Facebook demographic

In 2009, Facebook had already more than 175 million active users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; 59). This number has increased significantly since, as of March 2016, the platform had increased to an average of 1.09 billion daily active users (Facebook Newsroom, 2016). It is important to point out that this growth is not limited to teenagers. In fact, it is quite the contrary. Kaplan and Haenlin stress that members of “Generation X” (who by the time their study was conducted in 2010, were between the ages of 34-35) increasingly populate the ranks of joiners (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; 59). Accordingly, the Facebook Demographic report showed that the biggest growth during 2014 was amongst adults over the age of 55 (Facebook added 12.4 million new users from this range showing the equivalent of a 80.4% growth) (Neal, 2014). Incidentally, this is the demographic we decided to base this paper on.

We chose middle class women aged 55+ for several reasons. First, we find this demographic interesting since it is our hypothesis that if they have children then they are older and more financially independent meaning that the women may have both more access to funds and may have more free time as they get closer to retirement age. Second, this demographic did not grow up with computers and the internet but were instead surrounded by traditional advertising (such as TV, billboards, magazines etc). This adds an interesting component to whether the attitudes and experiences that our demographic have with traditional advertising transfers to the digital world; and third, advertisers target women because not only do they represent over 50% of both the Canadian (StatsCanada, 2015) and Swedish (Statistics Sweden, 2014) population, but they also control approximately 85% of consumer purchases (Banyete et al, 2007 in Talafuse and Brizek, 2014; 2).

We chose to combine this demographic with Facebook because women at that age have often established their identity and may therefore be less likely to be concerned about what others think of what they ‘post’, ‘share’ and ‘like’. Moreover, given the steady increase of Facebook joiners from this demographic (as shown in previous section), it
makes sense for us to take this group into consideration in this research since they clearly
classify as a potential target by advertisers who seek success through Facebook advertising.

2.6 Problem

As technology continues to develop and the use of social media platforms continues to
increase, the human community system in which it provides and distributes goods and
services, is becoming very complex due to the wide range of available goods across all
industries (Rai, 2013; 75). And while companies continuously search for new ways to
manage these systems, so does the audience. It is our assumption that this development
affects the way the audience consumes and responds to advertising, an aspect this paper
intends to investigate. The question remains whether advertising on social media reaches
the audience in the way it is intended, and in turn, whether the amount of awareness
the audience grants the ads varies depending on it appearing in the context of a social
media platform.

2.7 Purpose and focus

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore online social media advertising, particularly
on Facebook, targeting middle class women aged 55+ and the way this audience
perceives and understands these ads. We will explore this by using qualitative interview
methods including asking informal questions and using the think-aloud techniques
as described by Elizabeth Charters (2013) with participants of this demographic. In
addition, the purpose is also to review the literature and analyze the strategies used in
social media advertising and the assumptions about audiences that have been made. By
approaching the topic from these two angles we aim to gain in-depth understanding of
the meaning making process of social media advertising and how it affects the audience.
The research and the results are based on Stuart Hall's four-stage communication model
of the production (encoding) of a message and how the audience reads (decodes) that
message (1977), Sonia Livingstone’s explanations on how to approach and study an
audience in the digitalized world (2004), and Albert Bandura's study on the cognitive
process the audience goes through when associating with symbolic messages (2001).
3 Theory

Ever since the first communication theories were formulated, audience theories have been of crucial importance in understanding how mediated communication has been understood. These theories have radically changed due to the increasing use of digital media in recent years, which is affecting the ways communication processes have been conceptualized in modern research (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009; 63). There are of course many different theories and assumptions about the way audiences react to and perceive online media, however, the general perception among researchers is that the audience belongs to an increasingly diverse and complex reality (Ibid.) This is because in the era of digital mass-media, media production and media consumption increasingly merge and become difficult to distinguish. Early audience theory, for example the metaphorically labeled hypodermic theory (or ‘hypodermic needle’), suggested media to be one-way communication, and something that was “injected under the skin of the audience” (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009; 64). More recent studies however, show a change in power distribution between the content producers and the users of mediated content (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009).

For this research we have chosen to focus on three main theories. Primarily, Sonia Livingstone (2004), professor of social psychology at the London School of Economics and Political Science, explains how the audience has changed in the digital world. Secondly, we use the communication theorist Stuart Hall’s four-stage communication model (1977) as the backbone of the paper. Hall explains the process a message goes through from the first stage when a message is encoded by the producer to it being decoded by the audience. Thirdly, the social cognition theory, as presented by psychologist Albert Bandura (2001), helps us understand the psychosocial mechanisms through which symbolic communication influences human thought and how the human mind is affected, makes associations and how this may lead to action. We chose to focus on these three theories because they all interrelate with the objective of the paper which is to understand how the audience, in a digitalized world, interprets (or decodes) messages due to associations made with symbolic messages.
3.1 How the audience has changed in the digitalized world

*Sonia Livingstone*

Sonia Livingstone discusses whether previous research on television audiences is outdated or whether that research can be ‘recycled’ (2004). Livingstone explains the extent to which the television set dominates the lives of their audiences and how it has diversified and extended its scope only to penetrate both the public and private life even further (2004). Even though it is clear that the audience has dramatically changed from before and after the introduction of the common television set, the research has mostly focused on the non-interactive public service along with a “nationally-conceived, consensus-oriented, sit-back on the couch, family audience in the living room” (Livingstone, 2004; 2). With the introduction of the internet, some argue that the studies on the television audiences have become obsolete since the basic communication model of television has changed. The internet meant that broadcasters could attempt to facilitate online communication and connect communities rather than just send one sided communication. Communication when from ‘one to one’ to ‘one to many’ (Livingstone, 2004; 76).

3.1.1 One-to-one, many-to-many

When the television became a common commodity in most households it quickly dominated our leisure hours by penetrating further into both the public and private parts of our lives. It has become the “centre stage for our political life, focal point for popular culture and preferred window onto the global drama” (Livingstone, 2004; 4) and Livingstone questions whether “the Internet and its users [have] taken over the agenda” (Ibid.). There are many differences in researching the audience of television and the internet but the most significant one, the one that sets the stage for all other differences, benefits and consequences, is that the internet allows for more than just an elite mass broadcaster taking part in the ‘one to many’ communication model. It allows all participants to take part in the conversations online. The internet also facilitates communication in its interactivity by “explicitly emphasizing the user’s response and active assistance in the formation of the media text itself” (Livingstone, 2004; 4). Because of this interactivity and increasing participation of the audience, keywords such as taste, selection, choice and fandom have become more, rather than less, significant in
the studies of new media because these choices is what help shape the media culture. However, it is important to note that Livingstone mentions how the economics of new media markets can change this balance of communication. Advertising, one source in this study, would fall under this category and therefore may alter the seemingly non-hierarchical stage of online communication.

Even though the internet may have taken over the agenda of television, Livingstone explains, there are still differences that make it challenging to research the audience in the digitalized world. The three main challenges in audience research in new media are that there is often a gap between what people say they do and what they actually do in practice; second, the relationship between text and reader has changed because of the diversity of the media; and third, as it did with television, new media raises questions about potential moral consequences or audience effects (Livingstone, 2004; 7). The first is the most challenging in regards to the gathering of empirical data because the internet has become such a private experience making it difficult to observe and interview users. Additionally, interviews can be inaccurate if the interviewee is asked to recall their behavior because “experiences commonly regarded as trivial and forgettable” (Livingstone, 2004; 8) can be important. Many things can be overlooked especially because of the three-fold problem of virtuality, how temporarily material exists on the internet and the sheer volume (Ibid.). These challenges are highly relevant to this study because it explains challenges we could face in gathering accurate data; this lead us to, as researchers, to modify our research methodology to address Livingstone’s concerns.

3.2 Four-stage mass communication theory

Stuart Hall

The hypodermic communication theory outlines that one message is sent from one producer via one medium to one audience who will interpret it in one way (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009). Hall proposes an alternative communication process by presenting a four-stage theory of communication: production, circulation, distribution/consumption and reproduction in the encoding and decoding of a message. Hall (1977) explains this communicative process as a complex structure maintained through connected practices, or moments, by which the ‘objects’ of these practices are meanings and messages in
the form of signs - like any form of communication or language. This creates a chain of discourse from encoding of a message (the production of the message), to decoding of a message (the consumption, circulation and reproduction of a message by an audience) (Hall, 1977; 508).

3.2.1 From production to reproduction

Production constructs the message. The producer of a message can be an individual, a TV broadcast or an advertising agency whose purpose is to convey some sort of information, or meaning to a selected audience. This message is framed by the meanings and ideas of the producers and is dependent on many aspects, for example the routines of production, technical skills, definitions, general assumptions, knowledge, ideologies, and assumptions about the audience (Hall, 1977; 509). These aspects frame the constitution of the production structure, a structure that draws topics, events, images of the audience, ‘definitions of the situation’ etc. from other sources and other discourses within the wider socio-cultural and political structure (Ibid.).

The circulation of the product takes place in a discursive form and refers to the way individuals are able to perceive the product or event. Thus circulation requires (at the production end) its material instruments - the ‘means’ by which it is produced (Hall, 1977; 508). Because, as Hall importantly points out, “a raw historical event cannot, in that form, be transmitted by, say, a television newscast” (Hall, 1977; 508, italics in original), but rather an event passes through discourses and is a subject to the rules of language and the technical infrastructure available.

Distribution/consumption can be thought of as the “point of departure for the realization” (Hall, 1977; 92). It is the stage where a meaningful and encoded message is distributed and therefore meaningfully decoded. The message must yield encoded messages in the form of a meaningful discourse since, via Hall, “if no ‘meaning’ is taken, there can be no ‘consumption’”(Hall, 1977; 509), in other words, if the meaning is not communicated in practice, it has no effect and will not be meaningfully decoded (Ibid.). This means that in order for the message to be consumed, such as ‘satisfy a need’, ‘entertain’, ‘instruct’ or ‘persuade’, and in order for it to have an effect it must first be adopted as a meaningful discourse and thereby stimulate reproduction.
Reproduction happens after the audience has interpreted the message. If the message was meaningfully decoded, that is, if the message has had an effect on the audience, it will lead to a complex cognitive process that will cause emotional, ideological or behavioral consequences (Hall, 1977; 510). These consequences determine whether or not individuals take action after they have been exposed to a specific message, which is where the reproduction starts. Their actions however, Hall highlights, cannot be understood in simple behavioral terms, but are framed by structures, as well as produced, by social and economic relations, which shape their ‘realization’ in the first place (1977; 510).

### 3.2.2 Producer and receiver

While each of the moments in the encoding/decoding circuit - production, circulation, distribution/consumption and reproduction - are necessary to the circuit as a whole, Hall stresses that each stage has its own determining limits and possibilities; no moment can guarantee the next since each of these moments have their specific conditions of existence that can constitute its own break (1977; 508). Indeed, the meaning structure of the producers may not be the same as the meaning structure of the audiences (see Hall’s visualization of the encoding - decoding process in Appendix 1, p. 54). As Hall, along with visually presents in the communication model (Appendix 1), explains, “the codes of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly ‘symmetrical’” (1977; 510), which means that the lack of conformity between the two codes, encoding and decoding, depend on structural differences of relation and position between the producer (in Hall’s study exemplified as the broadcaster) and the audience. In other words, the level of understanding and misunderstanding in the communicative exchange depends on the relationship established between the encoder-producer and decoder-receiver (Hall, 1977). In the next chapter we will address the receiver and the cognitive processes of interpreting, understanding and acting on a message.

### 3.3 Social cognitive theory

*Albert Bandura*

While Hall’s mass communication theory focuses on the meaning making process of a mediated message from the producer to the receiver (1977), a different point of view
in theorizing about communication processes comes from the cognitive perspective as presented by Albert Bandura (2001). There are different types of cognitive theories, however in this study, in which the purpose is to study the media consumption process within a context of a personal social media channel, we find the study of *Social Cognition* to be relevant since this area of study is focused on how people perceive, store, and use socially relevant information, especially information related to themselves and others (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009; 112).

### 3.3.1 Symbolization and self-reflection

In the study *Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication* (2001), Bandura provides a conceptual framework to analyze psychological mechanisms through which symbolic communication influences human thought. Most importantly, according to Bandura, humans have an extraordinary capacity for symbolization through cognitive processes, which serves a powerful tool for comprehending their environment (2001). In order to cope with the great amount of information and external influences that the audiences receive daily, information is translated into symbols which are then filtered through cognitive motivational process. Without these processes, the world would be very difficult to manage, not least in social media given the large amount of information that people are exposed to daily through these platforms. In Bandura’s words:

“Cognitive factors partly determine which environmental events will be observed, what meaning will be conferred on them, whether they leave any lasting effects, what emotional impact and motivating power they will have, and how the information they convey will be organized for future use. It is with symbols that people process and transform transient experiences into cognitive models that serve as guides for judgment and action. Through symbols, people give meaning, form, and continuity to their experiences.” (Bandura, 2001; 267).

In other words, the impact of external mediated influences is determined by the way humans interpret and understand the mediated symbolic message; the meanings of these messages are re-constructed in the minds of the audiences depending on previous personal experiences and social structures. This leads us to another human capability within social cognition, via Bandura, defined as “self-reflective capability” (2001; 269). This term is used when suggesting that humans have the capability to reflect upon themselves and engage in learning activities. This, in connection with Hall’s
communication theory on the decoding process, helps explain what cognitive processes take place when the audience consumes and reproduces material. The self-reflective capability includes verifying thought by reflective means, for example, by generating ideas, act on them, or predict occurrences from them (Bandura, 2001; 269). These kinds of social learnings, Bandura (2001) explains, occur from models in one’s immediate environment, where people continuously act on their images of reality. Regarding the idea of ‘reality’, it should be noted that people’s conception of ‘reality’ is not necessarily based on their own experiential knowledge, but rather, they are often influenced by what they see, hear and read, without direct experiential understanding and experience. Furthermore, “[h]uman self-development, adaptation, and change are embedded in social systems. Therefore, personal agency operates within a broad network of sociostructural influences” (Bandura, 2001; 266). Today, much of the social construction of reality occurs via digital technologies meaning that the symbolic environment occupies a major part of people’s everyday lives (Bandura, 2001).

3.3.2 The motivational process

Bandura explain that people cannot be much influenced by observed events if they do not remember them (2001). Further, Bandura goes on to argue that memory is a form of cognitive representation that is aided by “symbolic transformations of modeled information into memory codes” (2001; 727). This assumption goes in line with Hall’s theory that in order for a message to have an effect, it has to be meaningfully decoded. Because it is not until the codes are remembered (either consciously or subconsciously) that the symbolic messages may be translated into appropriate courses of action i.e. have an effect (Bandura, 2001; 272). However, a remembered message does not automatically lead to action, since people do not perform everything they learn (Ibid.). In order to have an effect, a symbolic message has to go through motivational processes before it can possibly lead to action; however “people are more likely to exhibit modeled behavior if it results in valued outcomes than if it has unrewarding or punishing effects” (Bandura, 2001; 274). Thus, people learn what has motivated them from previous experiences leading them to take control of potential outcomes from an action. This would not be possible without the human self-reflective capability. It is important to point out that these sources of motivation do not only depend on direct practical experience,
but they often depend on personal standards of conduct; people generate their own self-approving behavior and self-censuring reactions that regulate which observationally-learned activities they are most likely to pursue (Bandura, 2001; 274). Moreover, people are also motivated by the success of other like-minded people, meaning that if people identify themselves with other people’s experiences, this may also stimulate motivation to take action.

3.3.3 Associated meanings

One important viewpoint in social cognitive theory is that people react and behave based on their association to things. For example, “people are easily aroused by the emotional expressions of others” (Bandura, 2001; 281); seeing others react emotionally, activates emotion-arousing thoughts and imagery in observers (Ibid.). Furthermore, “as people develop their capacity for cognitive self-arousal, they can generate emotional reactions to cues that are only suggestive of a model’s emotional experiences” (Wilson and Cantor, 1985, in Bandura, 2001; 281). Basically, people instantly learn to like what gratifies them, to dislike what repulses them or fear things that frighten them, depending on the emotions that these things or events have previously been associated with (Bandura, 2001).

Because the participants of this study grew up with traditional advertising, these association models are of special interest to us. It is our assumption that their perception and attitude towards social media advertising will be mirrored to however they feel about traditional advertising. This we hope can help bring interesting and fruitful empirical results.

4 Literature review

Goals and strategies in online advertising

While ads are surely created with a variety of objectives in mind - from selling a company’s products, services or ideas, to gaining political support or persuading people to take some sort of action (Glowa, 2002; 4-5), previous studies show that the general goal is the same. For instance, the Microsoft Advertising report (2010), suggests that
the use of online brand advertising always has the same fundamental goal to “stimulate a positive reaction towards a brand through attracting an effective level of attention or engagement” (Microsoft Advertising, 2010; 3), or, via Busen and Mustaffa “to turn people’s minds around” (2014; 99). Additional goals may then be applied depending on product, service or target. Once the advertising objectives have been decided, the challenge then remains for the creative team to market the product or service so that the message will have a meaningful impact and thus make an effective appeal to the needs and desires of the target audience (Glowa, 2002; 6). Indeed, as Glowa (2002) rightly argues, different products require different promotional strategies in order to reach different objectives, and the message production strategies between the different mediums differ. For example, while product advertising on TV mainly has the purpose of making the audience aware of a product or brand. The goal in online product advertising is to engage the audience and influence their attitudes to encourage them to click on the advertisement and perhaps even make an immediate purchase (Microsoft Advertising, 2010). Important to note is that according to a review of literature undertaken by the Microsoft Advertising report, exposure to online display ads generates awareness and interest in a brand, whether clicked on or not (2010; 4).

4.1 Influencing consumer attitudes

Three of the most specific factors that are especially important in affecting consumer behaviour (particularly on mobile advertising) are identified in an empirical study conducted by David Jingjun xu (2006). These three are entertainment, credibility and personalization. Entertainment, Jingjun xu (2006) argues, is crucial since people’s feelings of enjoyment, associated with advertising, play a great role in accounting for their overall attitudes. This was also found to be true in the research by Microsoft Advertising (2010), where entertainment achieved the highest ‘dwell scores’, or engagement scores (Microsoft Advertising, 2010). Entertainment can be achieved through social media since, via Mangold and Faulds, “enabling consumers to see others using the product can entertain and engage customers while communicating product benefits” (2009; 362). Credibility refers to the consumers’ perception of the truthfulness of advertising, an important component in acceptance and adoption (Jingjun xu, 2006). According to Mangold and Faulds, “[s]ocial media is being perceived by consumers
as a more trustworthy source of information regarding products and services than corporate-sponsored communications transmitted via the traditional elements” (2009; 360). This is an important factor for success companies and firms strive to adapt to. Personalization, Jingjun Xu (2006) found, has led to online advertising gaining significant attention as it has provided new opportunities (2006; 10). According to Jingjun Xu’s review of literature (2006), previous studies tend to show a generally negative public attitude toward advertising due to the intrusive and annoying tactics that advertisers employ when competing for consumer attention (2006; 10). This problem can be solved through personalized advertising since users tend to be more receptive and positive to advertising that is personalized and relevant to their lifestyle (Jingjun Xu, 2006; 10).

All the possibilities created online have led to a big change in advertising philosophy (Tuten, 2008; 1). For one, Tuten argues, the interruption-disruption model – which explains the goal of catching the audience’s attention to only have it interrupted with a commercial message – is no longer relevant seeing that consumers themselves control their media content. However, as will be seen in our study, this is not entirely right. The audience certainly controls whether to engage in ads more than they could in traditional advertising on television or in magazines, but they do not control the level of dominance of advertising on their social media feeds; this is controlled by the social networks that often have economic interests (see discussion for further analysis). Tuten supports her claim by explaining that while traditional advertising (such as a centerfold in a magazine or TV commercials) usually interrupt the flow and forces the consumers attention, a clear advantage consumers have with online advertisement is the “control they have over the item choosing whether to click on it or not” (Srivastava, 2012; 461). This has in many ways changed the power relationship between advertisers and the audience, seeing that the consumer now has the opportunity to engage with the ad or not, therefore, partially controlling its reproduction. Further, with the growth of interest in social media, in order to adapt to its infrastructure, online advertising has become more about the conversation and less about the “passive consumption of packed content” (Tuten, 2008; 3).
4.2 Influencing consumer conversations

Social media allows companies to communicate directly to many of their customers and engage them quickly and directly at a relatively low cost (compared to what can be achieved with traditional communication tools) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; 67). These media may either be company-sponsored, or be sponsored by individuals or organizations. It is important to distinguish these sources of sponsorships because on the one hand social media enables companies to talk to their customers, and on the other hand, it enables customers to talk directly to one another about a product or brand (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; 357-359). It is therefore possible to argue, as Mangold and Faulds point out, that the role of social media can be seen as an extension of traditional word-of-mouth communication (2009; 359). In order to adapt to this development, advertisers are advised to focus on employing a strategy to deliver high level of engagement by encouraging consumers to create and co-create content for the benefit of the company (Tuten, 2008; Microsoft Advertising, 2010). However, this is a risk for companies since they cannot directly control how the content is being co-created. They therefore use different strategies to positively influence the audience and thereby create discussion, debate and chatter in their favor.

There are many different ways to influence consumer-to-consumer conversation in social media. Mangold and Faulds present a study where they reviewed a collection of public relation firms and corporations that have begun to successfully use social media (2009; 361). One of the main things that the authors recognized was that consumers like to network with people who have interests and desires similar to their own (2009; 361). Companies can capitalize on this by creating networking platforms allowing like-minded individuals to talk to each other about a topic that can be related to a product or service. For example, Mangold and Faulds explain that

“a number of online communities exist to serve the needs of new mothers, including Baby-Zone.com, Michiganmoms.com, and Kentuckianamoms.com. These sites provide various types of information for mothers and parents, along with opportunities for interaction through message boards, forums, and chat rooms. Companies that can benefit from communicating with moms may want to have their employees contribute to the conversations that are occurring there, under conditions of full-disclosure. Such sites may also provide excellent sponsorship opportunities (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; 361).”
In other words, Mangold and Faulds argue that the experience of participating with like-minded people in emotional events become memorable and are therefore likely to be talked about, since people tend to tell others about things they are emotionally connected to (2009; 361). Their study also shows that products considered “fun, intriguing, highly visible, easy to use, and which engage the emotions” are more likely to stimulate conversation than products that do not meet these criteria (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; 363). In order to achieve this, advertisers use various types of rich media (such as video, audio or dynamic data ads) (Microsoft Advertising, 2010; 5), with “talking points in mind”, so as to stimulate word-of-mouth conversation (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; 363). This, they hope, will influence the consumers overall perception and attitude towards advertising and make them think more positively about a product or brand.

4.3 Effectiveness of online advertising

It is a challenge to influence a targeted audience because of the variety of attitudes, psychology and interests of the audience (Usman, 2013). However, similarly to the preferred element of entertainment mentioned above (Microsoft Advertising, 2010), one emotion frequently evoked in an audience, but often ignored by researchers, is humor. Humor reaches the audience on three levels: cognitive, emotional and interpersonal; advertisers, however, most commonly use the cognitive approach to engage a level of persuasion (Usman, 2013; 77). When using humor to catch the audience’s attention, it is important to consider the advantages as well as the disadvantages (such as cultural differences, political affiliations and past experience that affect how consumers receive and perceive different kinds of humor) of each type of humor because for some advertisers, the goal is to create entertainment; a factor we found to be very significant, for good and bad, in shaping the attitudes of the participants in our empirical research.

The unique way an ad reaches an audience is in the medium used and what level of awareness the audience brings to that medium. The type of medium can also affect the audience’s perceptions of an ad and therefore the product or brand it represents. Usman explains, “each medium has its own reliability that’s why the audience have stronger behavior towards the specific product/service” (2013; 78). Advertising through a standard medium, like the internet, can be effective because, even though there can be
limitations in terms of language, customs and cultures, the purchasing motivations and needs of the consumer remain the same: functional, family or societal (Usman, 2013; 78). Once the medium and the purchasing motivation has been identified, advertisers choose a marketing strategy. The three most common ones are: aggressive marketing (advertisers invest in high quality ads, marketing functions and selective distribution), product specialization (limited range of products) or price leadership (usually take the form of sales and discounts). The most commonly effective strategy is aggressive marketing since it allows for advertisers to invest in audience research, innovative products and concentrate advertising on segmented audiences (Usman, 2013; 78).

A large part of producing effective online advertising then lies in audience research to properly target an audience with relevant products, brands or services. The main way of correctly targeting an audience is done by finding patterns of online behaviour and tracking internet history (which will often point advertisers and marketers towards what the user is looking for right now). As mentioned in the Background chapter, the three main ways of collecting consumer online behavior are cookies, web bugs and collection of clickstream data (Goldfarb and Tucker, 2011; 7). Web bugs are pixel pieces of code that allow marketers to track users invisibly as they are not stored on the user's computer; the main difference from cookies which has a designated default folder on computer. Web bugs not only track user's movements from web pages but it also shows how far down the page the user scrolls (2011; 7). Clickstream data provides marketers with even more detailed information as it tracks how long the user spends on the websites, the IP addresses and which website was visited immediately before (2011; 9). Goldfarb and Tucker identify two main concerns with clickstream data: first, the IP address can identify a user and pinpoint a geographical location and second, marketers can collect data considered private data relating to religion and/or medical issues.

The collecting of this information caused severe privacy concerns leading to the implementation of the Privacy Directive in North America and Europe limiting resources available for advertisers and marketers to gather information used to target a particular audience. A study by Goldfarb and Tucker (2011) explores whether the effectiveness of online advertising has decreased since the introduction of the Privacy Directive since all of the three strategies mentioned above have been restricted to some degree. For example, cookies, since the introduction of Recital 25 of the Privacy
Directive, is only to be used when the user is given clear information that continuing on a particular website will cause the collection of cookies giving the user the choice to exit the site if so inclined (Goldfarb and Tucker 2011; 8). One general observation of this study was that ads on specialized websites did not decline because essentially, those websites are ads themselves and have already attracted a particular group. It is a form of non-intrusive target advertising because visitors to specialized websites are already identifying themselves to be a part of a certain group, and therefore, collecting their data is not as crucial in targeting relevant consumers. The implementation of the Privacy Directive, on average, resulted in a decrease of 65% in online advertising effectiveness in Europe. This can be because European law is far stricter than in the US and that “maintaining full compliance with restrictive privacy laws can be costly, particularly since that adherence can result in a loss of valuable marketing data” (Baumer et al 2004; 410 in Goldfarb and Tucker, 2011; 6). After the new privacy regulations were put in place, Goldfarb and Tucker found that users also had a fairly low percentage of ad recall (in a survey with 347 people, ad recall was as low as 26%). This shows that not only has effectiveness decreased by limiting the gathering of user data but the audience has become accustomed to avoiding certain areas of the screen to evade online advertising”.

4.4 Reflection on literature review

The literature above has given us insight on the tactics used to engage the audience even after the implementation of the Privacy Directive which limits the collecting of internet user data. As mentioned above, the three main factors that affect consumer attitudes are entertainment, credibility and personalization (Jungjun xu, 2006), all of which marketers and advertisers take advantage of to sway a potential customer their way. Even though advertising online is cost effective, companies take a risk because not only does it provide a platform for them to communicate with consumers, it also allows for communication between the consumers. Therefore companies have had to find more creative ways engage the audience to ensure that they are associated with positive online chatter in this modern version of word-to-mouth. This would suggest a change in the power relation between companies and consumers with customers in more control on the internet than with previous media such as television or magazines. This might be true in terms of having a bigger influence on what appears on your screen but the intention of the
marketers and advertisers remains the same: to use strategies and tactics to advertise a product in the most appealing way on a platform the user is most likely to relate to and thereby encourage the user to complete a purchasing action.

5 Methodology

While discussing the possible methodologies we could conduct for this research, one decision that was made early on was that we wanted to influence the audience as little as possible with technical definitions of terms such as social media and advertising so as to encourage more genuine responses. This decision was inspired and supported by Marshall McLuhan’s approach that if you “begin with theory, you begin with the answer; begin with observation, you begin with questions” (McLuhan, 2008; 26). We did this because if you begin with a theory then you are more likely to attempt to prove that theory, but, if you instead start with the questions then the task is to watch and see what happens (McLuhan, 2008). Thereafter, we conducted an empirical qualitative study using two interview techniques with a total of 11 subjects. A semi-structured interview allowed an informal guided discussion to take place and the think-aloud method allowed us to observe the participants’ reactions on Facebook. Finally, we analyzed the data based on Hall’s mass communication theory (1977) and Bandura’s social cognition theory (2001) which we found most applicable to the results.

5.1 Empirical research

This thesis uses qualitative methods to approach the research purpose and focus. Qualitative methods, Neuman explains, has the advantage to give researchers rich information about social processes in specific settings (2005; 140), which is precisely what this study is interested in. Moreover, qualitative methods may also give researchers the potential to critically break through assumptions implicit in, for instance, quantitative approaches (Neuman, 2005; 140). We see this as a clear justification for our choice of method since the main objective of this research is to compare the strategies applied by the advertisers (where success is often based on numbers of clicks/purchases/’likes’/’shares’ generated through online advertising) along with the psychological
process in the minds of the audience (including their attitudes towards the ads and the consequences of these). The present study uses a ‘transcendent perspective’, meaning, “it asks critical questions (e.g. who benefits?) by observing the process close up” (Neuman, 2005; 240), and aims to understand the viewpoints from all involved (though in this study the focus remains on the audience).

### 5.2 Three-stage interview method

Sonia Livingstone raises concerns and potential limitations in audience research in regards to new media mainly because the experiences are becoming more private and most experiences are considered trivial rather than important (2008). The internet has become highly personal and is often located in private spaces, such as the bedroom, on devices designed to allow little sharing. As discussed in the Theory chapter, Livingstone explains that this makes observation and interviews difficult. Taking this into account, our empirical study was designed using careful, systematic interview techniques involving a combination of semi-structured questioning and the think-aloud method, as inspired by Charters (2003). This resulted in the interviews, by the use of these methods, to be less invasive and it allowed the interviewee to ‘think-aloud’ helping us gather quality data despite potential limitations.

The stages of the interviews are depicted below.

For full interview guide, see Appendix 3, p. 56.

1. Stage one consisted of an intro-interview that asked questions regarding the participants thoughts on social media advertising, if they could recall any campaigns that have caught their attention in the past, and how they think this advertising is affected by appearing in the context of their social media feed.

2. Stage two was the think-aloud method. During this stage we asked the interviewee to open their personal Facebook feed (either on a computer, iPad or smartphone depending on what best corresponded to the participants’ normal behavior) and scroll down while verbalizing any thoughts they have about the advertising they find there. The questions in stage one (above) set the context of what the interviewees were to look for in this stage.
3. Stage three, the exit-interview, involved asking retrospective questions where the interviewee was asked to reflect on what they had just seen. These questions included whether they could recall any ads they just saw, how these ads may influence them, whether they think the advertising is targeted because of recent Google searches and if so, what kind of keywords do they think the marketers have associated them with.

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that they were focused on asking a set of questions, yet allowed for the participants to speak freely about the subject and make digressions. The questions were carefully phrased so as to not be over-influencing and to avoid yes/no answers. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face; this was important since, in order to complete the interview, we observed the participant scrolling and commenting on their Facebook feed. Additionally, we did not include questions asking the participants to define terms such as ‘advertising’ as we aimed to let the participants decide for themselves what they considered to be advertising and what not. This was a strategic decision, inspired by Marshall McLuhan (2008), to not limit the audience, especially since one goal was to find what the participants’ understanding and attitude of advertising is based on their own definition, not on ours.

### 5.2.1 Justification of Interview technique

The interview structure was purposely designed in these three stages in order to approach the problem from multiple angles. Stage one was a way to gain insight to the participants’ immediate thoughts and opinions about online advertising in general without simultaneously seeing it on a screen. This stage also prepared the participants for stage two. The think-aloud method was implemented as a way to gain qualitative information about the human thought process, or via Charters (2003; 71), the “inner speech”. As shortly described above, we asked the interviewees to open their Facebook feed and verbalize any thoughts they have about the advertising they find; this stage was therefore not guided by continuous questions. However, it should be mentioned that there were exceptions during the think-aloud stage where we did ask questions (e.g., *what are you looking at right now?*) in situations where we found the interviewee to be quiet for a long time; the silence indicated that they were no longer thinking aloud and by asking a quick question we were able to bring them back to the task. Charters
stresses that processes which are not naturally verbal, such as those involving visual images (which was the case in our research), “ha[ve] the risk of being distorted when they are translated to meet the demands of a think-aloud task” (2003; 71). Moreover, a think-aloud transcription can be difficult to interpret since thought is not meant to be understood by persons other than the thinker himself (Charters, 2003). This is something that we were aware of and have taken into account in the analysis and final reflection, and will be discussed further below.

The role of the exit interview was to complement the first and second stages and fill any possible missing links which can evolve since “the quality of these [the think-aloud interviews] may differ [and since] think-aloud data from working memory will always be incomplete and exclude a number of thought processes that was not expressed” (Charters, 2003; 73). Stage three was designed to solve these problems, as retrospective questioning is the most widely used follow-up strategy (Charters, 2003; 73). The retrospective exit questions were asked immediately after the think-aloud method since “retrospective data are most reliable when the time lag between think-aloud recording and exit interview is very short” (2003; 73).

5.3 Participants

The study subjects consisted of 11 women between the ages of 55 to 71 years old (see a combined table of participants in Appendix 2, p. 55), of which five live in Canada and six in Sweden. We came in contact with these women via colleagues and friends and each of the participants were selected based on the criteria of being middle-class women, aged 55 or up, and more or less active on Facebook. We decided to only study one gender in our study in order to see whether we could find a pattern in what type of advertising this particular demographic receives (i.e. targeted advertising). Furthermore, the reason why we chose to study women was because, as mentioned above, they represent more than half of the population and are responsible for such a large amount of household purchases making them the ideal consumer to target.

5.4 Analytical instruments

A qualitative study requires analytical tools and strategies to process the empirical data. Neuman (2005) explains that a qualitative researcher analyzes data by the means of
qualitative coding, that is, by organizing raw data into categories or concepts; coding can be described as tags or labels for assigning units of meanings (Neuman, 2005; 442). In order to do this, the interviews were recorded into audio files and then transcribed into a joint document. The transcriptions were then structurally mapped out with each response belonging to the same question placed after one another thereby keeping the answers categorized. This not only simplified the task of comparing and contrasting the answers but also eased the task of coding them. To identify meaning, we read through each answer carefully through discussion and continuously asked critical questions (e.g. *What is the difference between what happened here, to what happened there?*, *Are these the same answers, or are they in fact different?*, *What do these answers suggest?*) whereby key-events were marked with different colours. This way we aimed to, in Neuman’s words, “bring themes to the surface from deep inside the data” (2005; 443). Coding is seen as an important part of qualitative data analysis as it, though guided by a research focus, has the advantage of leading to new questions and higher-level thinking (Neuman, 2005) which was also true in our study.

5.5 Limitations

Our methods and analysis helped us make several implications and educated presumptions, however, no methods come without limitations. The think-aloud method especially needs to be challenged since it is so dependant on factors that can be neither controlled nor questioned. The information gained from the think-aloud method relies on the participants to verbalize their inner thoughts and therefore “cannot reveal deeper thought processes in their true complexity because they have to be simplified into words before anyone, even the thinkers themselves, can really know them” (Charters, 2003; 70). This means that once a though has been translated into words, much of the thought may have already been lost. We are aware of this drawback but accept it as inevitable since “translation into verbal language is necessary before thought can assume a form which others can understand” (2003; 70). Moreover, even if the words would have a precise reflection of inner speech, these words would still be very difficult to understand since “inner speech is not meant to be communicative to anyone but the thinker” (Charters, 2003; 69).

Another identified limitation involved the participants. First of all, although we involved people from two different countries – which in our view can be seen as a
strength – the participants came from a similar background. In other words, we made empirical generalizations based on a fairly small (11 participants) and homogeneous group. As applied to all qualitative studies involving a small group of participants, the reliability of the results may be questioned since 11 homogenous persons certainly cannot fully account for the reality. We understand that in order to collateral certain assumptions, additional research involving more people (perhaps including a complimentary quantitative study) would have been meaningful. However, we still believe that the method we have used is enough to get insight into the meaning making process when in contact with online social media advertising.

6 Results and analysis

In the following chapter we will present and analyse the empirical results and discuss what they mean in relation to the theories and literature reviews studied above. Since the focus of the paper is to gain in-depth understanding of the meaning making process, we will use Hall’s encoding and decoding processes to structure the presentation of the results.

We would also like to point out that we have been careful to analyze the empirical results with full respect to the privacy of all participants. Below are quotes taken from the transcriptions though we have given all participants fictitious names. Please note that all quotes from Swedish have been translated into English by us, the researchers (see Appendix 2, p. 55 for details on participants, and appendix 4, p. 58 for full interview transcript).

6.1 Encoding

*Production and circulation of social media advertising*

Encoding is part of the production process and is where the message is given a meaning and a purpose (Hall, 1977). The producer of the message has to take into consideration how the audience perceives the world and then identify components on how to best visualize and verbalize that perception. Through the literature review we identified key techniques that companies and organizations adopt and put in place in their social media advertising strategies in the hopes of creating a meaningful impact; that is,
to make an effective appeal to the needs and desires of the target audience and thus stimulate some sort of action either now or in the future (Glowa, 2002; 6). First of all, one of the key methods widely used by advertisers to reach success is personalization, or targeted advertising (Jingjun xu, 2006; Mangold and Faulds, 2009). By encoding ads with meaning that specific audience group relates to, and then, with the help of the online tools provided, strategically produce these ads in their environment, advertisers can successfully produce effective advertising that influence consumers attitudes (Jingjun xu, 2006). Although this is fairly consistent with what we found during our research (in that we noticed that personalized advertising is widely used among businesses) the psychological effects of these are yet to be explored. For example, as will be shown below in the decoding chapter, many participants reacted to advertising that was incorrectly targeted to them resulting in negative attitudes towards those ads.

One other frequent aspect discussed among advertisers is the importance of stimulating engagement (Microsoft Advertising, 2010). To accomplish this, companies produce games or competitions, or create entertaining rich media content encoded with meanings that people are likely to ‘share’ or ‘like’ so as to stimulate users to co-create the ad. If this is successful, consumers become co-producers of the ads resulting in the escalation of content credibility (through word-of-mouth conversations) as these messages, in theoretical terms, become encoded with new meanings (Hall, 1977). From a business perspective, users’ co-creation of messages is often perceived as a success, but it also means taking a risk since they lose control; they cannot know in what context the message is co-created in the ‘circulation’ stage of the process (Hall, 1977). We find this to be particularly true on Facebook since the diversity of each user’s personal feed allows for even more insecurity of what context the ads appear in. In regards to circulation, Hall also emphasizes the importance of using different mediums since the way a message is circulated will also affect how that message is perceived. Usman too explains that different mediums will carry different levels of reliability (2013). This raises the question to whether Facebook, as a platform and advertising provider, influences how the audience perceives and engages with the ads.
6.2 Decoding

Circulation, consumption and reproduction of social media advertising

Based on the discussion above about the implications in the encoding process, we found five components to be of special interest to analyze in the decoding process. First, since social media has become a platform where businesses strive to change consumer attitudes to their benefit, we will begin by exploring the participants’ general attitudes towards social media advertising. Second, since Hall addresses the importance of choosing different mediums, we will explore the participants thoughts on the effectiveness of ads appearing on this particular platform (Facebook). Third, since personalized advertising is becoming increasingly important in reaching business goals, we will analyze the participants reactions and attitudes to personalized/targeted advertising (consumption). This will give us some insight to whether relevant ads are considered equally than irrelevant ads. Further, because the main goals in social media advertising is to create awareness and stimulate engagement and action (i.e. reproduction), we will analyze participants ability to remember and recall ads, and finally explore their willingness to engage and act on social media advertising (e.g. click on an ad, buy a product, and/or share the ad).

6.2.1 Participants attitudes towards social media advertising

Primarily, we sought to gain insight on the participants’ immediate thoughts and feelings on advertising on social media. At this stage, it was clear that the majority of participants expected advertising to appear on their social media feed because it is so common but most also emphasized how that reflected on how heavily commercialized society has become. For example, one of the participants, Ida, immediately said that advertising made her feel angry by saying: *Why do people need this? Why, do people have to earn money on everything?* (Ida, 2016, appendix 4). Similarly, Leah immediately thought of advertising to be restrictive because it focuses on such a small phase in her life. On further analysis it became clear that not all participants reflected on advertising on social media specifically. Some referred to social media platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook but others seem to automatically refer to television ads. For example, Rebecka said: *I think it’s quite disturbing actually because it interrupts what you have chosen to watch. It interrupts you in the middle of a movie and sometimes, just a half an hour later,*
there's the same commercials again (Rebecka, 2016, appendix 4). Furthermore, one of the participants said that she was not sure exactly what the difference is between advertising, online advertising and social media advertising. Maybe I'm old but doesn't it all seem like the same thing? (Marilyn, 2016, appendix 4). These results suggest that most of the participants in this study don’t immediately distinguish between traditional advertising and online advertising as such. Their understanding of social media advertising seem to be in line with what Livingstone questions, whether traditional advertising has simply made the move online. The results also suggest that most of the participants carry a negative attitude towards advertising, which confirms the previous studies suggesting that the public attitude towards advertising is generally negative (Jingjun Xu, 2006; 10).

During the think-aloud, we could tell by the use of the coding method presented by Neuman (2005), participants’ attitudes towards the advertising that appeared on their Facebook feed was somewhat different, even contradictory, to what they had initially said in the first interview questions. For example, Marilyn mentioned the ads for Mother’s day and says that it shows how up to date these ads are, Mother’s Day is next weekend after all (Marilyn, 2016, appendix 4). Mathilda makes similar comments on finding ads on Greenpeace and Amnesty International by saying that she appreciates seeing those ads because even though she might not participate in those herself, it’s something good in this negative [Social Media] feed (Mathilda, 2016, appendix 4). In accordance with the review of literature, in which the role of social media is seen as an extension of traditional word-of-mouth communication (Mangold and Faulds, 2009), there was a much more positive attitude to ads that were ‘shared’ and/or ‘liked’ by their friends and family. This, however, was inconsistent to responses received before the think-aloud method. Marie from Sweden interestingly had a different view. She was very critical during the think-aloud method mentioning how she doesn’t have time to filter through the ads, that she is not interested in seeing what everybody else is posting and that everytime I see ads I remove them without looking at what they are. It’s a statement, I don’t want advertising. There so much of it anyway. Everywhere (Marie, 2016, appendix 4). Regarding this quote it should be mentioned that Marie rarely ever scrolls through her feed, making this procedure quite abnormal for her in the first place.
An important note that we made was that there was some confusion of what constitutes as an ad. As mentioned above in the Methodology chapter, we purposely avoided asking the participants their definition of an ad so the participants could describe their opinions based on their own definitions. Several participants, including Diana and Elizabeth from Canada and Rebecka and Ida from Sweden, questioned whether ‘Suggested Posts’, event marketing, entertaining posts that are ‘shared’ and ‘liked’, short videos and posts that advertised talk shows (such as Jimmy Fallon or Ellen deGeneres) are ads since they don’t require a direct exchange of money (but which we understand aim to elicit brand awareness). Ida made a note on this saying: *I am mad because I feel that they are trying to sneak in the advertising [...] I want them to have a big sign that says ADVERTISING* (Ida, 2016, appendix 4). As mentioned earlier, during the intro-interview, before the observations took place, we found that the general attitude towards advertising was negative. Social cognitive theory suggests that people continuously react and behave based on their modeled association of things; these are either self-created, or created by influence of peers, norms or social structures (Bandura, 2001). If this is true, that means that the participants’ negative association to advertising, even though they were expressed in connection with a question about social media advertising specifically, we believe may be rooted in the participants’ general understanding of traditional advertising (i.e. TV and magazines) as interruptive and annoying. In the context of social media, ads neither blatantly interrupt the flow, force the consumer’s attention nor prompt the user to make a purchase. Consequently, during the think-aloud, these advertisements did not evoke the same emotions that the participants initially claimed to have towards advertising. In other words, these new entertaining and ‘non-disruptive’ marketing strategies are resulting in the target audience to have difficulty identifying which posts count as ads and which don’t (no matter what the correct definition is but in eyes of the audience). As a result, this creates misunderstanding between the producers and the audience. This proves that Hall (1977) is certainly right in claiming that the codes between the producer and the receiver is not symmetrical.

### 6.2.2 The circulation of ads in the context of social media

It is not enough for ads to be customized to each user, there are more factors that cannot be anticipated (Hall, 1977). With this in mind, we asked the participants whether their perception of advertising changed when it appeared on their social media feeds
(as opposed to traditional media). This question lead to a variety of answers. Most Canadian participants said that the ads were taken less seriously because they appeared on a platform they don't take seriously. Brianna said that I wouldn't say that the ads teach me anything, it's more entertaining and fun, kind of what Facebook is about (Brianna, 2016, appendix 4). Leah had a similar approach but reflected on the intention when she said: it doesn't seem too serious but more like entertainment, but if that's the goal then they have succeeded (Leah, 2016, appendix 4). In contrast, many of the participants in Sweden expressed the opposite. For example, Mathilda explains that the ads on social media have the advantage of being ‘fresh’ and reflective of what is happening in the world right now; it becomes more alive because they are there (Mathilda, 2016, appendix 4). Anna complements this by pointing out that: I think they get more response from ads on Facebook than a magazine. If it looks interesting you just click and then you're there (Anna, 2016, appendix 4). However, it should be mentioned that the same participant, upon being asked if she is affected by targeted advertising, said that she was not. Though this is a contrasting observation, it is interesting to note that almost half of the participants thought that once an ad showed up on their Facebook feed it became entertainment, along with all other contents on that platform; this is a distinct difference from a claim by Mangold and Faulds (2009) who state that social media is perceived as more trustworthy source of information. There are many factors that could result in such opposite views the most evident being a culture difference in the two countries; however, this is only an assumption based on the pattern of a group of participants.

As discussed in the Theory chapter above, Hall explains that circulation not only refers to the medium through which the message is sent but also in what form and shape it is presented in (visual, audio, written etc.) (1977). The participants, when asked if they could recall any specific shapes ads take, they answered insecurely that they thought ads appeared in all forms ‘like usual’, however, many found it difficult to recall specific brands, products, or events. These unclear answers showed a pattern that participants do not pay much attention to advertising on Facebook. If it is true that people cannot be influenced by observed events if they do not remember them, as suggested by Bandura (2001), in our view, the effectiveness Facebook advertising may be questioned.
6.2.3 Participants’ attitudes and understanding of targeted advertising

When asking the participants about their understanding about personalized advertising, the answers varied widely and the result was interpreted in several different ways. Leah, having been critical from the beginning, immediately complained how limited targeted advertising is and how it restricts her from getting other kind of advertising. Others notices targeted advertising after having searched online for something particular such as flights, holiday destinations or specific products like bathing suites. The participants were indecisive on whether this was helpful (since it often showed discounted prices) or whether thinking that the ads were irrelevant since the booking had been made and that it is a little stupid, if I’ve bought one I won’t want another one (Ida, 2016, appendix 4).

During the think-aloud, it was clear that the participants’ attitudes were somewhat different from what they had said before as they clearly distinguished relevant targeted advertising from general (or currently irrelevant) targeted advertising. For instance, Ida, though being critical to targeted ads that don’t relate to her current needs, was positive to seeing ads for her local theatre on her feed. She said: all theaters need more visits and I like the theatre very much, so that is ok (Ida, 2016, appendix 4). Felicia also accepted some ads that she related to by saying: I sometimes go there so that’s fine (2016, appendix 4), even though she, before the think-aloud method, claimed that she was annoyed by advertising in the feed because it appears on a platform she wants to be able to control. One reason for this could be that users, according to Jungjun xu (2006), are more receptive and positive to ads that reflect their lifestyle.

These comments made us realize how hypocritical the results in this study are. Advertising, as mentioned above in discussing attitudes to advertising (see chapter 6.2.1), has a very negative connotation to it but when observing the participants and asking them specific questions we found that it is only certain advertising that is disruptive and annoying. It became clear that the ads that were accepted and thereby decoded and consumed by the participants, were those that were related to the participant’s current lifestyle. For example, ads that came from organizations in which the participants were active in or associations whose members they could identify themselves with were quickly accepted and appreciated. Theoretically speaking, these ads can be thought of as, via Hall (1977), symbolically encoded in a way that matches the
audience’s interests and therefore carries a meaningful message that the recipients did not mind being associated with. By using Bandura’s words, these ads can be identified as ‘self-approved’ (2001; 274).

One common thread amongst all participants was that whenever they were exposed to irrelevant advertising they became confused and asked “why is this on MY feed?”. Again, note that the majority of participants in our study expected their Facebook feed to contain personal content; whenever they were confronted with ads which did not meet their personal interests and needs, the participants were surprised and immediately dismissed the ad. Interestingly, in other cases they completely ignored the ad. In order for a message to be decoded (i.e. consumed), it has to be meaningfully encoded (Hall, 1977). This, in our view, explains why several of participants simply did not see several ads that appeared in their feed. The messages circulated in a context in which they were not re-encoded meaningfully enough to be able to be consumed in the first place (as opposed to what was explained above when a message was meaningfully decoded and consumers). Consequently, from a cognitive perspective, these messages weren't let into the participants motivational process, but were filtered out as a way to cope with the environment (Bandura, 2001).

The reason why some participants noticed some of the irrelevant ads while ignoring others, we assume, was because some ads were so divergent from their interests that they stood out compared to all other more or less personalized information thereby interrupting the flow, like traditional advertising would. This is opposite to what Tuten argued; that the interruption-disruption model is no longer relevant in the digital world (2008), as it was clear to us in our observations, that the participants were quite regularly interrupted and disrupted by miss-targeted advertising. The irregularity of relevant to irrelevant ads could be reflective of the laws put in place in Europe and North America restricting advertisers and marketers to gather user data resulting in a 65% decrease in advertising effectiveness in Europe (Goldfarb and Tucker, 2011).

6.2.4 Participants’ ability to recall social media ads

In our attempt to understand whether participants were in any way influenced by brand advertising, we asked if they could recall any ads, brands or campaigns that they had seen; this question was purposefully asked both before and after the think-aloud
stage. At first, participants could only recall ads that were related to any searches done earlier in the day, and as to campaigns, it took several minutes to recall. When they did recall something it was often related to their lifestyle and therefore expected. For example, Diana, who is Canadian, recalled NHL and Ford ads and assumed she notices a lot of these ads because she watches a lot of NHL hockey. Similarly, Marilyn could recall seeing Real Estate ads but again, assumed it was so because it’s her field of work. Again, as mentioned above, we noticed that many ads and campaigns that were recalled before the think-aloud interview came from television rather than social media feeds. This, we believe, is because of three reasons: first, the demographic probably doesn’t spend as much time on social media as the younger demographic would; second, this demographic became very engaged with television as they grew up parallel to the developments of that medium; and third, because television advertising is more interruptive by completely cutting off the flow of a movie or television show making it memorable.

When bringing the interview back to social media advertising, the participants recalled what form the ads take on their feeds. Many could clearly recall ads in the sidebar and ‘disguised’ ads in the flow of the feed. The disguised ads were more engaging because they often took the form of entertaining video clips. As mentioned above, this lack of clarity can cause confusion. For instance, Diana said: *when they come in video form then can get a little confusing because sometimes it takes some time before I realize it’s actually an ad* (Diana, 2016, appendix 4). Some participants however, mentioned the new level of engagement that ads are committed to by using incentives such as sales, contests, questionnaires etc. This marketing strategy of price leadership, as presented by Usman (2013), is also a way of engaging the audience in a more aggressive manner (Microsoft Advertising, 2010). Seven out of 11 participants pointed out that they take special note to the ads that appear when friends and/or family ‘share’ or ‘like’ something; this presents a different opportunity to engage an audience. One participant, Marie, explained that her understanding was that if an ad was ‘liked’ or ‘shared’ it was likely done so with the hopes of winning something from the company or organization. This indicates a high level awareness of the methods that companies use for marketing on Facebook and this awareness, we argue, could affect the choices users make online. We also noticed that participants often made more than one association to an ad. For example Anna saw a post from a friend and could clearly recall an ad which she usually posts. The same participant also saw an H&M ad and instead of thinking about their clothing, she
immediately commented on the dangers of child labor that H&M has been accused of employing. This shows that external knowledge of the product or brand being advertised will contribute to the overall perception to the brand and the ad.

The most interesting observation we made on recalling advertising was that even though not many could recall specific ads either before or after the think-aloud, many could recall, in great detail, ad campaigns that had similar characters throughout the campaign. In Sweden, the ICA’s commercial was mentioned several times (the commercial has four main characters that appear in each short clip commercial that is renewed every couple of months) and in Canada, the commercials by Canadian Tire were also mentioned (it follows one main character that participates in fun, seasonal and stereotypical Canadian experiments to test equipment sold at the store). This showed us that the audience creates relationships with the characters and therefore the product and/or brand. Again, these ads are mostly on television and this strategy of making ads into a mini-series is because, as Bandura explains, television ads intend to make the audience aware of the brand whereas ads on the internet are meant to engage and cause direct action (2001). Additionally, some participants connected the ads that they recalled to their lifestyles. Diana, from Canada, mentioned that she watches a lot of hockey and therefore recalled the NHL commercials; similarly, Rebecka recalled an ad from Garden-something (Rebecka, 2016, appendix 4) because gardening is her hobby. The reason why they could recall these ads specifically, we believe, does not necessarily depend on the design, purpose or frequency of the ad, but rather, because it mirrors their own perception of themselves and what they want to be associated with at this moment; that is, as Bandura has termed it, their self-approving behavior (2001).

6.2.5 Participants’ willingness to engage in social media advertising

As discussed in the literature review, the main business goals in advertising is to stimulate some sort of action and/or engagement (e.g. Glowa, 2002; Microsoft Advertising, 2010). Action is what happens after an ad has been consumed, i.e. meaningfully decoded, which takes place in the fourth stage of Hall’s communication process, reproduction (1977). To understand this stage from the point of view of the receiver, we first asked the participants about their understanding of the intentions of social media advertising. The follow up question was whether they considered themselves affected or not.
On the question about the participants understanding of the intentions of social media advertising there were many contradicting comments, however, one pattern we could see was the answers were superficial and given without much reflection (this is not a comment on the intellectuality of the participants but the interviews didn’t allow for much reflection). It was clear that most participants noted that the purpose of these were either to sell products and/or services to the users/consumers, or influence the consumer one way or another. It is important to note here that most of the participants, although their fundamental attitude towards advertising was negative (as revealed in the beginning of the interview), most participants were not particularly concerned about their intentions. That is, they did not consider the intentions of advertising to be wrong. As Marilyn said: They have just found an effective way to do it by finding relevant things for us and then after that it’s up to us to buy something or not (Marilyn, 2016, appendix 4). One participant, Ida, however, went further and claimed that advertising not only makes us want other things but that its purpose is to make consumers unhappy and dissatisfied with what they already have:

“Because unhappy people, they want to make their situation better, thus it is a clever concept, they [the advertisers] make use of people’s automatic behavior [...] like the travel agency ad that I noticed, which I did not fully understand, it’s like they can afford to travel... They travel. Yeah, you know, jealousy, envy, dissatisfaction” (Ida, 2016, appendix 4)

This provided a new angle to the topic that, although it might not be the main intention of the advertisers, there are ethical concerns about the consequences of these ads. As seen via Ida, advertising may not only question ourselves and whether the lives we live are satisfactory or not, but may also further increase the dissatisfactions we may have.

On the question to whether the participants considered themselves affected by social media advertising, the result was interpreted in two ways: first, do they engage with the ad itself and second, does it lead to the purchasing on the product. In our study, several factors were considered for both types of answers, most of which were related to the caution taken by participants of ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ an ad because of fear that it will haunt me forever (Leah, 2016, appendix 4) or because I’ve heard that if you like certain pages you get more of it, and then you get really fun pages. But I don’t want them. Even if I think it’s fun. [...] It’s something I’m trying to avoid (Marie, 2016, appendix 4). This shows
concern and awareness of how much the participants share on their feed and what consequences the engagement with an ad can have. This is not unlike the cognition theory which explains the human capability to reflect upon oneself and the potential consequences of our actions (Bandura, 2001). However, it must be noted again that because not all ads were considered ‘bad’, these concerns could be limited to the ads deemed irrelevant at that time.

If a message is realized and actively consumed, it will lead to cognitive and behavioral consequences (Hall, 1977). Furthermore, if the message has a meaningful impact on the audience (i.e. responds to audience’s needs and desires, evokes emotions, entertainment and credibility), from Mangold and Faulds point of view (2009), the ad is most likely to be ‘shared’, clicked on or ‘liked’. In our study, although many ads were relevant, positively consumed and even laughed at during the think-aloud, it did not lead to reproduction because, as Bandura points out, people do not perform everything they learn; in order for there to be action, a message has to pass through a motivational process (2001). For example, if a user sees that a friend or family member has ‘liked’ or ‘shared’ an ad then that puts an approval stamp on it and can begin a motivational process to also ‘share’. However, this motivational process can also take an opposite turn; as users are aware of the consequences of clicking on an ad then that can be motivation enough not to share it (Bandura, 2001). This supports Hall’s argument that each stage in the communication circuit can constitute its own break (1977). In our study, many of the participants were unsure of what would happen if they clicked on an ad, by which some refrained because they assumed that they would automatically receive more targeted advertising from that company. These concerns demonstrate the audiences’ desire to remain control of their media, yet it also shows how little control they actually have seeing that they don’t feel free to click on whatever in their personal Facebook feed contradicting Tuten’s previous statement of the irrelevance of the interruption-disruption model because the audience has control of the contents on their social media feed (2008).

In regards to whether ads influence any purchasing behavior, the majority of the participants quickly exclaimed that “no, they don’t influence me”. After some reflection however, they agreed that isn’t that the purpose of a good ad: to subconsciously make you form opinions of a product or brand and to evoke some sort of emotion that is
recreated when you see it on the shelf? The purpose of internet advertising, as opposed to television advertising, is not to create awareness but to lead the user to direct action (Bandura, 2001). Clicking on an ad will most commonly guide you that page and prompt you to make the purchase. In our research it was clear that none of our participants usually click on ads, if ever. Moreover, one participant, Rebecka, repeatedly said *if I want something, I will google it* (Rebecka, 2016, appendix 4).

There are many strategies to influence consumers’ attitudes and thereby control what their conversations will be with other potential consumers. One strategy is to encourage friends and family members to ‘like’ and ‘share’ giving them stamps of approval which, advertisers and marketers hope, will active a motivation process to also ‘share’ and ‘like’. However, the motivation process can also work in a non-profitable way for companies as consumers are aware of the possible consequences they face if they were to ‘like’ something; something which showed to be true in our empirical studies.

7 Discussion

The main methodological concern we had along the entire research period was one identified by Sonia Livingstone (2004) who discusses the challenge of studying internet behavior because there often is a gap between what users say they do and what they actually do. We attempted to minimize this gap by using the think-aloud method and by conducting interviews both before and after. By using this method, we were able to identify concerns they had about advertising as a whole and advertising on their social media feed as well as witness their reactions as they verbalized their immediate thoughts when scrolling through the feed. We found that there indeed is a gap between how the participants initially thought of advertising (often negatively) and how they responded to advertising on their feed (ads were often disregarded or thought of as insignificant). The majority of participants, though acknowledging that advertising is necessary, and that they understand its presence on social media, carry a negative connotation towards the industry. Many mentioned that ads are annoying, disruptive and point to a heavily commercialized society. This, we believe, is an association already made from television advertising that is being mirrored to their attitudes towards advertising on a different
medium. We argue this because these associations did not translate into practice during the think-aloud method suggesting a misappropriated attitude.

By using Stuart Hall’s communication model (1977), in relation to the social cognition theory (Bandura, 2001), we were able to identify each stage a message goes through from it being encoded, produced and circulated to it being decoded, consumed and reproduced by the audience. By studying the process up close, and by asking critical questions, we gained in-depth understanding of the meaning making processes of advertisements which raised further questions and concerns about the consequences of social media advertising. One concern that was raised during our analysis was that not only do advertisers target the audience but the audience may start to identify with advertising because they expect to be associated with it. This raised questions whether there are social consequences; users expect to be a mirror of this uniquely personalized platform that it can manipulate the user to identify with its contents (via the use of targeted ads) (Todi, 2008). This is a consequence of thinking that users are in control of the platform. Several participants of the study such as Diana, Brianna, Felicia and Ida, point out the issue of control.

Even though we have discussed the audience in relation to the communication model and social cognition theory, we have yet to address them as an audience as a whole. When the television audience was researched they were considered to be passive “sit-back on the couch, family audience in the living room” (Livingstone, 2004; 2) and the studies were considered obsolete in regards to the internet. This is mostly because the audience today is so active in forming the contents itself and are therefore found to be more engaged with the content rather than the channel (Livingstone, 2004). Therefore, we conclude from the small sample size of our empirical research that the power relation between advertisers and users have changed since the users have control over whether they fully engage with an ad. However, the user still does not control the amount of advertising that appears on their social media feeds and since ads take different shapes, it is not always easy to identify an ad from a friendly post.
8 Conclusion

This thesis has explored the relationship between women aged 55+ and targeted advertising on Facebook. Through qualitative empirical research we conclude that our demographic of women have presumptions about social media advertising, rooted in their understanding of advertising on traditional media, that does not translate into practice. While most participants' first and overall perception of online advertising is negative, in practice, most of the ads on their social media feed were either accepted, simply ignored/not noticed, or not even perceived as advertising. Others appreciated the relevant information that had been customized and therefore relevant to their lifestyle. Through our study we also found that somewhat irrelevant ads were perceived as annoying and in many cases surprising. This, we argue, is a result of the participants thinking that they are in control over their own personal social media feed, something we can see is not entirely true.

In this study we were not only interested in how advertising is perceived, interpreted and decoded, but also whether the decoding process that takes place at the receiving end the message is activated by motivations (that can happen subconsciously) rather than active and aware interests. The motivation process is activated by either the rate of success by friends (which on Facebook often takes the form of ‘liking’ and ‘sharing’) and being aware of possible consequences (such as the ad continuously appearing on the feed). The associations that the audience makes with the ads is important as well because, we argue, the association goes deeper than genuine interest; it extends to what the audience wants to be associated with. Finally, the audience might find themselves associating with ads simply because they appear on their private and seemingly self-controlled, social media platform. This is a concern because that would suggest that advertising not only aims to sell products or spread awareness of a brand but that it, either intentionally or not, affects the audience's self-identity.
9 Final reflection

As a final reflection it is important to discuss the various factors that influenced the outcome of this research. While some of the strengths and limitations of the interview and the think-aloud method have already been discussed in the Methodology chapter, it still remains to discuss our influential role as researchers.

As in all empirical studies, participants are always (in one way or another) influenced by the way the researchers design and use the methods. In our case, the way we conducted the interviews, (e.g. the choice of location, tone of voice, how questions were phrased etc.) could affect the results. This does not have to be a drawback, but it is important to acknowledge that the results could have been different if we had used a different approach. Additionally, our personal interests may also have influenced the outcome. Although our intention was to stay objective throughout the interview, in hindsight we realize that, especially during the think-aloud, we might have guided the participants to notice particular things; that is, they might be descriptive to what they see and hope to answer the questions we are asking rather than verbalizing their immediate thoughts. As Charters explains, participants will often want to complete the task satisfactory to the researchers giving the ‘assignment’ (2003). This may have led the think-aloud method to not have been as genuine as we hoped.

Beyond this, we are also aware that the results strongly depend on our (the researcher’s) previous knowledge, opinions, interests and worldviews since these, both self and socially constructed beliefs, can determine what part of the interviews is relevant to consider in the analysis in the first place.

9.1 Ethics

There are a number of important ethical dilemmas to keep in mind when implementing a qualitative study. Since our research is mainly based on interview data, the main issue in our case concerned the involvement of research participants since the role of interviewers involves social roles, norms, and expectations (Neuman, 2005; 292). An interview can almost be thought of as a social interaction between two friends.
or strangers except for the significant difference that (as was true in our case) the
interviewer often aims to stay objective while at the same time expecting the interviewee
to be completely transparent. Furthermore, the participant is expected to allocate
time for the benefit of the researcher only. These two aspects immediately raises moral
questions regarding what is left for interviewees, i.e., why would they want to participate
in the first place? (Charters, 2003). As an attempt to make the best of the situation
we made sure to let the participants know in advance for how long the meeting would
take place (approximately 30 minutes), made sure to observe and stick to the time
limit, adapted to their location and schedule, and were careful to express our gratitude
afterwards. We are aware that this does not make the situation completely equal,
however, we believe and hope that the participants got something out of the interview
too. As a matter of fact, one of the participants, Felicia, said right after the interview that
she felt flattered to have been chosen, and Ida said that she was happy as she now had
become more aware of the advertising on her Facebook feed.

Another ethical concern refers to the protection of the participants’ privacy. Our study
meant that we would not only ask personal questions about the participants feelings
and thoughts about online media, but in addition, we asked them to show us and talk
about their personal Facebook feed. This can be seen as intruding in their private life. As
Charters (2003) points out, it is important to treat participants’ private life with respect
and be careful not make fun of the demographic. In order to act responsibly, we told the
participants from the start that there were no right or wrong answers, that the interview
was completely anonymous, and that we were not going to use any specific content from
their Facebook feed. This however led to some moral decisions. For example, during
the think-aloud method, we sometimes realized that it would have been helpful with
a few screenshots from their Facebook feed in order to supplement the transcription.
Although we believe that our participants wouldn’t mind, we wanted to keep what
we had promised. Also, many subjects are unaware or less concerned about protecting
their privacy rights than researchers (Neuman, 2005). Thus, we saw it as our obligation
to protect them and therefore continued to only take notes as planned. With these
decisions, though it added some difficulty to the analysis, we remained ethically correct.
Overall, we did our best to take responsibility and be as transparent as possible in informing the participants about what role they would play and what we would do with the information acquired through the interviews and the think-aloud. This resulted us, as researchers, to finalize the project with a good conscious.

9.2 Future research

In this particular study, we chose to explore the topic of social media advertising from the point of view of the audiences. An interesting next step to this research would be to view the topic from a business perspective so as to understand the meaning making process of ads in the mind of the advertisers. Just as the audience seems to have very limited control of the content on their Facebook feed, similarly, the producers cannot control how their content appears in circulation; when ads are produced in a context where it doesn’t make sense to the receiver, as learned from our study, the ad will not carry any meaning and will not be reproduced. Considering this, it would have been valuable to complement the present study by discussing our empirical results with professional advertisers so as to understand their way of dealing with this issue.

Another idea on future research would be to study brand awareness in the context of social media. Through our research, we noted, that some of the participants immediately came to think of certain brands when they saw a post from a friend who usually post ads related to those kinds of brands. This association occurred even though the actual brand was not shared in that particular post at this moment. With this in mind it would be interesting to, for future research, explore the different ways in which social media advertising through users can contribute to increased brand awareness, for good and for ill, and how this affects how users perceive each other.
10 References


Appendix 1
Stuart Hall’s Encoding-decoding model (1977; 510)

"Clearly, what we have labelled in the diagram (below) ‘meaning structures 1’ and ‘meaning structures 2’ may not be the same. They do not constitute an ‘immediate identity’. The codes of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical. The degrees of symmetry – that is, the degrees of ‘understanding’ and ‘misunderstanding’ in the communicative exchange – depend on the degrees of symmetry/asymmetry (relations of equivalence) established between the positions of the ‘personifications’, encoder-producer and decoder-receiver" (Hall, 1977; 510).
## Appendix 2

*Overview of participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Overall attitude to advertising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>2016-04-15</td>
<td>Often it’s nothing I need but someone tries to get attention but I’m aware of that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>2016-04-13</td>
<td>Don’t think about, use FB for personal communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ida</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>2016-04-13</td>
<td>Angry, first thoughts are &quot;why do they have to make money on everything?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecka</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>2016-04-23</td>
<td>It’s interruptive on TV, don’t think about them on FB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>2016-04-18</td>
<td>I want to be in control, if I like something it keeps appearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathilda</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>SWE</td>
<td>2016-04-11</td>
<td>Information, keeps me up-to-date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>CAD</td>
<td>2016-04-27</td>
<td>Useful, shows me what I need and want, no other opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>CAD</td>
<td>2016-05-03</td>
<td>Paid ads, google searches turning into ads, annoying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>CAD</td>
<td>2016-04-19</td>
<td>Same as any other kind of advertising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leah</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>CAD</td>
<td>2016-04-15</td>
<td>Restrictive, doesn’t think ‘outside the box’ b/ based on google searches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brianna</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>CAD</td>
<td>2016-04-18</td>
<td>Not disruptive on FB b/ they are more obvious, sneaky on Instagram.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

Interview guide

Interview length: Approx 30 mins. Introduce the project and explain that any answers, including “I don’t know”, are valuable.

Stage 1 - Intro Interview

1. What are your immediate thoughts when I say “online social media advertising”? (Feelings, opinions, examples of where they appear, according to the interviewee).
2. Can you, off the top of your head, describe the forms in which online advertising on social media make themselves visible? (Sponsored side-bar advertising / random advertising that suddenly appears in your feed / ads that appears because a friend “liked” something).
3. What shapes do they tend to have? (Video, animation, banners, games, interactive ads that call for action)
4. Are there any particular ads or campaigns that you can think of / remember most clearly? (Categories, specific ads, products, services, brands and so on).
5. What kind of targeted advertising have you noticed? (Advertising based on the interviewees previous internet behaviour such as google search, visited websites and so on).
6. How do you think advertising is affected by the fact that it appears in the context of your social media feed?

Stage 2 - Observation/think-aloud interview

Please scroll through your Facebook feed and verbalize any thoughts you have regarding the advertising on it. (Here we will explain the Think Aloud method to the participants to ensure that they feel free to continuously ‘think aloud”)
**Stage 3 Exit interview**

8. Was there anything in particular that surprised you when we looked through your feed regarding what you thought would be there, and the ads that actually appeared?

9. Can you give examples of ads that you notice more than others? Why these?

10. What is your understanding about the intention of the ads/campaigns that you have identified? Why do you think they are there?

11. How do you think these may have influence on you?

12. How does the identified advertising affect your perception of the products of services that are marketed through the advertising?

13. As regards targeting advertising, what keywords do you think you are associated with? How do you think the advertising reflects your lifestyle?

14. Again, how do you think advertising is affected by the fact that it appears in the context of your social media feed? This question is purposely asked both before and after stage.
Appendix 4
Interview transcript and coding

Interview Setting: The interviews were conducted individually, 6 in Sweden and 5 in Canada (for detailed overview of participants, see appendix 2, p. 55).
Interviewer: Jonna Adams and Louise Gejrot
Details: Full transcript of interviews, organized based on question and coded based on identified Key-Events (see colour themes below). Please note that long silences, cough, and irrelevant talk has been left out. All original names of participants, organizations they work for, and their relatives have been either anonymized or replaced with fictitious names.

STAGE ONE
Intro Interview

1. What are your immediate thoughts when I say Online Social Media Advertising?

Anna: Att nån vill lura mig till att köpa nåt. Oftast är det ju ingenting man behöver men det är ju nån som vill ha min uppmärksamhet, det är man ju medveten om. Jag är medveten om det hela tiden.


Ida: Att jag blir arg. Det är min först tanke. Nr två är "varför ska man ha det?" Varför ska man tjäna pengar på allting?

Rebecka: Jag tycker att det är jobbigt för det avbryter det som man har valt att titta på. Det avbryter om man titta på en film, så kommer det reklam mitt i, och ibland så går det i en halvtimme så kommer det samma reklam igen.

Jonna: Men när det dyker upp i Facebook t.ex. Avbryter det dig då?


Mathilda: Information... Va me i vad det är som händer, what's hype....

Anna: Menar du nu det som andra lägger upp? Ja jag, håller mig i ashol med det som är trendigt och vad folk pratar om och sådär, så det är information för mig. Update.

Diana: Not much, advertising as advertising right? I think its quite useful, I mean it shows we stuff I need and want. It can get quite distracting on social media though if its right in the middle but otherwise I don't have too many opinions about it.

Elizabeth: First things that come to mind is paid ads, previous google searches turned into ads, kind of annoying.

Marilyn: Not sure exactly what the difference is between advertising, online advertising and social media advertising. Maybe I'm old but doesn't it all seem like the same things? People advertising their stuff so that you will buy it.

Leah: I immediately think it's restrictive. Isn't online advertising based on google searches and stuff these days? So it kind of doesn't let you be advertised about things that are out side your box so to say.

Brianna (60): I think advertising on the side of my facebook page and pictures being sneaked into my Instagram account. You know when you're scrolling down and all of a sudden there's a picture that looks just like all the others but then you realize it's like a chip ad or something. On facebook its not too disruptive though because its all on the side and the ads that come up in the middle are usually more obvious. It's still a little annoying because I would think that I would be in control of my own page but I guess therers too much money in advertising that its sneaking in wherever.

2. Can you, off the top of your head, describe the forms in which online advertising on social media make themselves visible?

Anna: Det är ofta att det är lurigt att det liknar ett inlägg, det är jätteofta. Nå ja, något annat har liket? Ja det brukar vara i flödet där, kva brukar det vara bild eller video eller? Det kan väl vara både och. Det är ju bilder alltså, det liknar ju ett inlägg som en vän på facebook har likeat, och sen så kommer det ju mycket i...
3. What shapes do they tend to have?

Anna:


Felicia: Det är nog både och, alltså både text och video och... tycker jag att det är.


Diana: I think they’re mostly everything now aren’t they? It’s video, images, its in your page or on the side, they popup when you go on a website... they just try anything to get us to go there.

Elizabeth: See answer above.

Marilyn: Again maybe its because I’m old but I don’t really notice it too much. I mean I understand when it’s an add but I don’t mind it too much. If its good I’ll like it because people put effort into making a good video add.

Leah: All kinds of shapes, they would do anything to catch your attention these days. Its not only colors and set ads that can be ignored anymore, now its contents, sales, questionnaires and things to find out what your favorite color says about you.

Brianna: Well their both moving and still and sometimes it asks you to do something or it asks you to participate in something. Mostly its to win something so I guess its an incentive for the people on facebook to have more contact with a brand.

4. Are there any particular ads or campaigns that you can think of (i.e. remember most clearly)?

Anna: Ja jag kom snedeltal att tänka på ICAs matkasse men det är nog när någon har delat, eller nå det kan hånda att det är dem
som delar det i flödet. Det var det första jag kom att tänka på.

Marie: -


Diana: that’s hard to say I think but because right now I can mostly think of the ads I saw today because I’m looking at flights for my son to come home in the summer so most ads are about that. I guess that’s what they call targeted advertising. But generally I think the NHL ads are memorable as are the Ford! I guess it’s because I’m Canadian and that’s what we kind of focus on but their also quite memorable. Wonder why that is? Maybe because there’s so many of them or because its the playoffs so were watching a lot of hockey?

Elizabeth: I can’t recall any on facebook but Instagram for sure, there seems to be a lot of shoe ads on mine.

Marilyn: Mine are a lot of real estate but I guess that’s because it’s my field of work. I notice there are a lot of physio ads and I guess thats because I go to physio after my car accident last year. Other than that I can really remember the Doritos commercials – they’re so funny! And I also remember the Apple commercials – it’s so cool how much emotion they can evoke by images only.

Leah: Ad campaigns I distinctly remember are usually those that go in series. Like Canadian Tire, they have the same guy in all commercials and he’s so funny. I also remember Apple, and I really loved when they did the "Like a Girl” commercial, though I don’t remember what the product was, maybe Dove?

Brianna: I can always remember the Homes Hardware store commercial but thats on TV not on my social media. Its nice because it first gives you a tip on the house like how to fix the garden or put up a picture and then the next clip they’ll have a young ice-hockey player giving their pro tip” – it’s really cute.

5. What kind of targeted advertising have you noticed?

Anna: Nåe inget som jag kan komma på nu, men det har jag ju gjort.


Ida: Jag vet inte om det är just på Facebook men jag märker ju att så när jag har varit och tittat på en resa t.ex, vi äter ofta och hälsar på vår dotter i Barcelona och så fort jag har tittat där så varje gång som jag öppnar nänting så kommer det en reklasnell utom nån annan resa till Barcelona. Det är ju lite korkat om jag har köpt en så vill jag ju inte ha en till. Men det är ju inte bara så: en gång var jag ute och letade efter mönster till en sån här omlottklänning. Om man gör det så får man alltid upp Diane Von Furstenberg för det var hon som hittade på dem från början liksom. Sen plötsligt fick
I notice immediately when they target me because of google searches. I was looking at restaurants to go to for Mother's Day next Sunday and then I saw OpenTable.com on my Facebook and a commercial for flowers and holiday cards with a Mothers Day theme.

6. How do you think advertising is affected by the fact that it appears in the context of your social media feed?


61


Diana: Nå, och sen är det ju mycket, men det är ju inte kontrollerat på samma sätt. Nae, och sen är det ju mycket, alltör rier sig mycket fortare, så man kan ju scrola bort det.


STAGE TWO
Observation/Think-aloud Interview


Ja det här är tips från en kompis ”så ger man en humanistisk menskans livskvalité”. Eh... Det handlar om sjukvården. Ah, det är sår här, det tycker inte jag är reklam. Det är mycket ordspråk och... (carpe diem ordspråk), kloka tankar och sånt där tycker jag. Men det är väl för att det är så kloka kompisar, helhe.


Här har vi ica kvartten. Och där är en människa där. En facebook vän som ofta delar... och gör reklam för sin... Var hon handlar eller var hon träna och...


En artikel om romers rättigheter. [konstaterande] men det är väl ingen reklam heller.

Här har vi "Allpacka". Det måste väl vara reklam: "se österlen swedens filmlåt" Det skulle kunna tänka mig att titta på eftersom det är naturbruksprodukter som är intressant om man vill köpa garn eller sånt.

"Furums parti" är väl inte reklam, ja det är klart, de vill ju att man ska bli medlem så det är väl nån slags reklam. Jag är medlem, så det är väl information nu i det här läget! Men oftast tycker jag faktiskt inte om det som de skickar ut eftersom det är läskiga bilder. Såna här som man inte vill se.

Mhm och här brinner det, det är inte reklam. Här är en klinik, inte heller reklam. Take action to protect encryption" (det ser ut att ha med internet-krypning att göra, att man vill skydda sig).

Marie


Åh här, ja... Här, det här var jag på igår. Så det är ju kul. Det är ju kul att se här vad nån har gjort där. Hon är "intresserad" av det, ja just det. Det var kulturcentrum skåne.. (ohört). Och så brukar jag hålla koll på Lars Westman, han lägger ut så himla mycket, han bor i Brasilien, en kompis. Men han lägger ut så himla mycket. Och det gör så många andra också, hehe. Så att jag orkar inte titta på det liksom...

Oftast har jag redan tröttnat såhär långt Alltså jag... Ibland kan jag gå på nån, ja nu kan jag ju gå in här och se vad som har hänt (aviserings). Och ja, då är det nån som har lagt in ett inlägg där jag var igår: "Tack för världens bästa föreställning igår, ni var helt underbara". Det tycker jag är kul. När jag har varit där. Speciellt när jag blir ombedd att lägga ut mitt foto på deras sida [fniss], så det är kul.


Och så är det nån som gillar mitt foto där. Ja där är det andra fotot [beskriver fotot, organisationen och eventet, orelevant].

Jonna: Ja nu har jag ju tröttnat på det här... Och ibland kan jag ja gå in titta på och tycka såhär [klickar på nya aviserings för att rensa listan].


Ida

Ok så här har vi Jessika som precis har fyllt fyrtio. Usch, en kompis som precis har fått barn

Oj här har vi nån som blivit vittne till en grupp våldtäkt. Det handlar om "änder. "En stackars andkvinna har blivit överfallen av tre piska änder.. ursäkta haha.." Johannes, det är det som är nyheter och jag tycker väl ändå att det är ok jämfört med väldigt mycket. Alltså såna här bilder tycker jag är döden. Alltså herregud...

Hän, den tycker jag är väldigt trevlig. Den var en kommentar om Trump och andra som ger sig rätt att ha åsikter om vad lok med livmödrar ska göra med dem. Helt sjukt


Så nu är det nån som har varit på restaurang... "gå och bada" "Doria hotel och restaurang" Jonna: ja just det det är ju också reklam. Ja det har jag aldrig tänkt på, det är ju också reklam. Men jag vet inte var det är nänstans så jag kommer inte behöva gå dit.

Oj asså här är ju också reklam, fast det är ju en annan grej som jag är engagerad i. Gerillaslödare... "Virkillvolontärer" ganska fräckt. [klickar på reklamen] Jonna: och där klickar du in dig a, "Virkillvolontärer avsetta," där kommer jag inte [ohörbart]. Men det var väldigt tjusigt i varje fall. De har börjat med sån här hem... gerillaslödhare det är en tjej som har startat en site på Facebook... Det ska bli ett internationella gerillaslödare dag i juni och jag har varit och lämnat [...] jag var på biblioteket och lämnade en sån här jag tänker så man ska hänga upp å en stolpe! Jonna: så du är engagerad.... Ah, det händer när dår.

och det här var nåt annat det vet jag inte... hon skickar ofta reklam... Gudrun Schyden och såna... arghhh, känner jag. Alltså hon här degera gilla Gudrun Schyden men alltså jag gillar inte att hon gillar så ska man vinna nåt i framtidn. Nån som är sur på... Här har vi Robin [real name replaced].


Alltså jag hade ingen aning om att jag hade så mycket reklam. Jag trodde jag hade en om dagen men så var det ju inte riktigt.

Rebecka:


[scrollar ner, Rebecka förstår inte uppgiften, Jonna förklaras]

Ok jag men här kommer ju aldrig reklam, det tycker jag inte. Mycket sällan.

Där är kattjouren. Titta på den där [katten]. En liten pojke.

[ohörbart] Och här är ju... [ohörbart] (Reklam för "Lucks style") Jonna: Här är reklam jag. Mm, men när det är nåt sant så tänker jag att det är inget jag känner till så bläddrar jag förbi.

Och det här vet jag inte heller vad det är...


Där är "Guldkanalen", det är ju också en reklam. Hm, jag har faktiskt aldrig lagt märke till att där är reklam för jag bläddrar så ser jag vem det är ifrån. Är det nån jag inte känner så... [bläddrar vidare i tystnad]


Den här är kul den sidan där "tusentre dvd"...

Den här är också rolig den här [spelar upp en video som någon har lagt ut, orelevant]


Här är misskatt, naw en liten kille.


Där är också nät med Villa där, Jag vet inte varför. ["villavisning"].


Felicia:


"Ordet är fritt" och det har ju med tryckfriheten att göra förmodligen eh... [scrollar]

Och det vet jag inte precis. "Prova på pass" ja, det är ju också nån form av reklam va. Och varför det?

"Mindful running", ja det vet jag inte för det skiter jag ju i. Men jag trycker inte på "lås mer"


Och sen BTJ det är sån här bibliotekstjänst och det är ju min oransch och det är ju tal till Sveriges bibliotekarie så det kan jag ju också, ja helje, Jonna: *Relatera till?* Ja precis!

Och där är ju, det där jag är volontär. Mmm, *reklam för event* De åker runt, det är tjejer. Det här *work place* där jag är och där Khina är matlagare [berätta om organisationen, orelevant].

Och där är sydsvenskan och de har jag ju lagt till att jag vill ha information ifrån sydsvenskan. Jonna: *bar då?* Ja alltså, när det kommer nänting från Sydsvenskan, jag har en app från sydsvenskan så kommer det i nyhetsflödet. Så det pingar det då

[friend attending to event] Och det är min kompis då ja, mhmm, det är hon ju gå på om hon vill. *Det stör mig inte heller.*


Och där är [work place name] igen.

Och socialdemokraterna i Malmö. De har jag likat så därför kommer det upp.

Och poeten på hörnet har jag också likat. Och där går jag ibland.

Det här vet jag inte varför det kommer "lokala överenskommelser i Kristianstad". Har jag ingen aning om hurhåva varför det kommer upp.


Och så har vi svenska biblioteksforening, det är en ideell forening som jag har suttit med i styrelsen rätt länge. Så därför tycker jag också att den är relevant.


"Pedagog Malmö". Jag har likat den också så där får jag med, och jag går ibland när de har nänting.

"Motala bibliotek", Där har jag kompisar som har jobbat så jag har likat och då får man information om vad som händer på det.

Här är en kompis till mig, Linda som jobbar där på Bibbar, och eh Bokbussar är också...

[någon har likat] "Rädda Bjuv", det är hon som tycker det.

Här är en kompis till mig, de bor utanför Söderhamn och de arbetar med asylsökande, både Nisse och... så de skickar mycket lånkar om det, mm. Ja.

Och det här är Malmö anslagstavla. Men är har jag tänkt gå ut för jag får mycket skit, men det har jag inte gjort ännu. Jonna: *och det är "kostillskott..."* [läser reklamen, Felicia ignorerar den och går till nästa inlägg]

Och det här är "IBI", det är sån här bibliotekbarnboks...

Och det där är Lindängen, ett bibliotek här i stan...

"Kattkommando" det är hon.... Jag har inga katter. Men hon har...

Och det är också en kompis till mig. Hon gillar då "LO"

"Expressen" det har jag också lagt till som en app så att det är ok att det kommer.

Mathilda


Det första som kommer upp är Ylva, min syster. Hon tar ofta upp väldigt fina saker, djur och sånt. hon är inte så intresserad av politik. [Mathilda går in på privata meddelanden och spenderar en stund där, orelevant]

Nya aviserings. Varmdö kathem har två nya inlägg. Och så fort det handlar om katter så kan det vara tips på mats och sånt där. Vad som är bra för katter, och där kommer det ju med reklam indirekt skulle man kunna säga, men här handlar det om det inte...<br>

Ricko... Han håller på med Baobab, flyktingar och gör musik. Eftersom jag själv nu inte utövar musik så mycket så är det lite mindre intressant, men det är skoj att höra vad folk håller på med och vilka som kommer dit. Då ser jag lite grupperingar. Vilka är ute och tar sig tid och så va. Jag kollar ju ofta dottern då som är välintresserad, Sara. Om hon har nåt event som man kan göra reklam för. Och för min andra dotter som är med i Organisation brukar jag också föra vidare som reklam därför att jag blir
intresserad och vill att tjejer ska synas helt enkelt. Där väljer jag
ätskikningslöst även om jag tycker att det är fängiga grejer, vare sig
jag gillar det eller ej så sprider jag vidare politiska skäl.

Bob Hansson är jag väldigt rood av, det är en poet i malmö. Var på
radio sist med filosofiska rummet. han kan det här med ord. han
gör inte så mycket reklam men pratar mycket om välbefinnande
och indirekt påverkar med sin frågsättning. Är det här bra för oss
och sätt.

[Läser]: ”Jo att varenda människa som lämnar föreställningen
kommer vara yngre än de näsnin blir igen”. Då börjar jag fundera
på... What, vad är det här? Här kan man gå till ett event och så kan
man bli yngre. Det kallar jag reklam. Absolut reklam, och sär
stör du ”Ticketmaster”. Ah, just det. Eh... Vad är det han spelar på.
Jo, han spelar på att ta fram barnet i dig, att ta fram lusten i dig.

Det är lite lockande när han skriver så. Ehm, oavsett hur gammal
du är, när du går dit så kommer han väcka nåt barnsligt i dig. Det
är has budskap, det gillar jag. Men jag är inte vidare och tittar på
det för det har inte inte tid med för jag har så mycket aviserings,
hehehe. Hade jag varit redo att gå då så hade jag kanske gjort det.

och här är min egen reklam. X studio. ”Marknadsför sida” det här
har jag provat en gång och det snor pengar! Det händer ingenting
men det snor pengar. Så jag gör inte det. Här har vi fyra st som har
gett X, [Mathildas företag] och jag vet inte vad de gillar för jag är
själv aldrig inne där... asså det här är lika mysikt som vad som helst,
det händer ingenting. Det här är bara tafst(!?) för mig.

Det här med ”gilla” kan jag gilla när det kommer från dans. Då får
jag ett pling att någon har varit inne på min affär och favoriserat en
grej eller min shop. Då kan det hända att jag går in och tittar, vem
är det som gillar mina grejer för nu vill jag hitta min gata [pratar
om hennes företag, orelevant]. Här är mycket politisk men det kan
ju vara events som det görs reklam för i det här fallet är det en
liten fläcka hon talar om ”a reminder that babies are watching over
every move”. Det har varit så här livräddning hon har sett allt... [visar
video på bebis]: Hon tar på näsan och på munnen. Hon är
så lättrakt. Det tycker jag är fascinerande. ”Så gjorde man där och
så trycker man där...” Hon är så söt, så är så inne i arbetet. [Läser]:
”Wonderful” tycker nån då, Häkan Fritz, ja, det är wonderful, det
håller jag med om. Det blir jag glad av.

Sven går jag alltid in i, ”Univers”, han är väldigt politiskt
intresserad och där kan ju finnas event. ”Earth organization for
sustainability”. Han vet allt om de nya, här ser man då bilder på
träd på runda hus som kommer upp i himmelen. Ja det är som
en liten fläcka allihopa, så det är ju inget nytt. Upp-upp-upp-upp-
upp upp liksom. Det här ser ut som att det kommer ifrån ...
”ECO VILLAGE”. De här finns på riktigt i Saudiarabien. Det
är fascinerande. Och det ger en blink av vad framtiden kommer va
och då ser man jätteintresse grönt på taket. Det tycker jag faktiskt
är jätteintressant och jag tycker det är snygg också. Det är nya
byggen och det är fascinerande.

Nyhetflödet... ok ”Gomorrone Mathilda”, vem skriver det?

”Isotyo”, det är hon i Lund. Där har jag mina örhängen så det är
kopplat till min egen business. Hon gör reklam för african day
market. Hon påminner mig att göra musikörhängen som hon vill
köpa av mig. Hon är så trevlig och fräscht, denSame.

”Greenpeace”... De gör ju också reklam [Sponsrat inlägg]. Det
tycker jag är bra. Jag hade glöm bort Greenpeace om inte de hade
vackt mig och talat om vad de gör så det är jag väldigt glad för att
jag får se. Jag kanske inte går in och tittar på det men jag vet att
HOHO, här finns vi, vi jobbar”. YES, näntning bra i detta negativa
flöde. Det handlar mycket om politik faktiskt. [Läser kort serie] ”Jag har
inte låtit döpa Karl, han ska själv få välja sin tro när han blir stor
+ ”Jag pratar aldrig med Anna, hon ska själv få välja sitt språk när
hun blir vuxen” [Hållit] Där fick jag en tankeställare, harrarna.
”Vi ger dem ingen kultur alls” –liksom. Ehm, ”Du är fri!”. Då
tänker jag själv. Det gör jag för långt liksom. Den var rolig. Men det
var ju ingen reklam ifra, men det är en tankevåckare.

[Läser]: ”After long time of work I have finally become complete
with... renovation of” Aha då har han.. Mm, snygg.

Dennis Persson och Gunnar Valkare, de här var mina gamla
lärare där jag började spela Ammadina, och dennis är konstnär
i KAOS. Han gör jätteroliga saker. Här kommer nönting, ”Give
thanks”. Hellborg... Hon bor där ute ”the moment you start acting
like life is blessing, it starts to feeling like one”. Här handlar det
alltså om att beakta det goda i livet. Och det ser jag ofta i min
åldersgrupp kan jag tala om. Vi pratar inte så ofta om problem,
vi pratar om vad som ger lycka för att det är fokus på nönting annat.
For vi har redan haft våra krämpor. Eller vi har! krämpor men vi
skiter i dem. Vi måste ta tag i det där goda, det är en livsstrategi,
ekonomiskt. Mm, för att komma bort ifrån ont. Jag vet inte om det
är en flykt.

[Läser]: ”Remember” ”unify” ”everything heals, your body heals.
Your heart heals, the mind heals, wounds heals, our souls repairs
itsels, your happiness is always gone to come back. Bad times don't
last” [Mathildas pratar vidare om interna saker, ignoreras reklam]
don't because I'm not huge on beer but I do like my hockey, haha perhaps its because I'm Canadian. Its a clean commercial though so even without the sound it doesn't really interrupt my day in a way, you know what I mean?

Ok well going down down down down... there's one about the Lonsdale festival. I guess that comes up because I live on the North Shore, it looks to be a skateboarding festival or competition of some sort. Obviously not anything I would do but its nice that they advertise local events as well. I know I read about it, we could go and have a look at least.

Mhm here's a yoga one “be mindful”, I do go to yoga a couple times a week and its so relaxing. I'm not really into the whole mindful namaste stuff but its a great stretch! Mhm $59 for the first month at YYoga, too bad Im already a member, you know it costs me $120 a month and its a little annoying that their advertising such a low price when Im paying double. She is really fit though, shes doing the handstand thing I've been working on, maybe shes an instructor there and she could help with it.

Oh that's the tough mudder ad for Whistler. I did it a couple of years ago with some girlfriends for fun and it was amazing. People really helping each other finish the course with ropes and mud and there a huge ice bath you have to go through! Haha maybe I should sign up this year, that would show my kids haha.

These are all quite obvious ads, I guess when they're on video it becomes quite obvious even just because of the quality of the filming.

Note that she missed to talk about several picture ads on her feed - perhaps didn't think them relevant or even noticed them to be ads.

Elizabeth

I'm seeing a TD bank add about turning my tax refund into tax free savings and I'm not interested and yuck yuck is presenting John Dore and I have kids so I don't get to go to Yuck Yucks so I'm not interested in that either. Thats all that's showing up for advertising right now.

On the side im trying to see whether there are any sponsored ads, those are always fun, they're always about other irritating realtors.

Oh here we go “Suggested Post” Louise: do you notice when there are suggested posts as opposed to other ads? Uhh (yes) I always notice that it says 'suggested post' and sometimes I actually watch it because it's usually something that I have recently been looking at. So this one is for Remont and I was actually shopping just a little while ago for a sweater and now this has come up. Louise: would you be encouraged to go back to the website because it shows up in your feed? Uhmm... because of me seeing that? I don't think it would effect me much and make me go back to the website now but I wouldn't avoid it either.

Yeah heres a realtor now and I always look at those but thats because thats my business and its just a house for rent and hes written a really crappy tagline because there's nothing in it that makes me interested. Louise: would you feel the same about other advertising that even if its something you havent recently googled that you would be more interested in it? Yeah if its a little more engaging then I would click it, uhmm I dont like when it gives me to long videos to watch because I don't have the attention span anymore for that.

But now Im seeing another one, I dont know who this company is and their trying to show me 30 images that I would like a photoshopped but actually not and my first instict is to not believe them. And I'm not going to click it because there is nothing in there that give me any reason to.

Louise: when you see a post do you first see the image or do you pay specific attention to that if says 'suggested post'? I usually notice the image first and then I'll look to see if its a suggested post and sometimes its one of my friends that have liked the page so when it comes up as a sponsored page. And occasionally I do like it but not always. If one of my friends has liked it I'm more likely to pay more attention but if none of my friends have like it and its just showing up as suggestion most of the time I ignore it. I would ignore it depending on what it is. You know if I've just been bathing suite shopping for example and I see a bunch of bathing suites show up Ill kind of look on the initial picture and if theres something in the initial picture that intrigues me then Ill be likely to click it but if the first picture doesen grab me I dont go there.

Theres a jewelery one, I always look at those. I dont know how they know because I havent been looking at jewelery but maybe because I follow some jewlery related pages on facebook. Thats probably why, they probably pick people who follow those pages. But that one didn't grab my attention enough to do it.

Marilyn

Ok so lets see, I actually haven't been on facebook much today so there should be a quite a few new things on there. This will be fun, I don't usually pay much attention to the ads so lets see what they think I will like. Mhm, heres one about the phisio place in Lynn Valley, its just a picture and its not a sale or anything it just want to show me that its there I guess but I already go to a different one so Im not really interested.

Heres a video but it doesn't look like a friend has liked or shared it, mhm wonder where they get it from. This is a an for a lawn mower, they dont really hide that is a commercial. I think this is here because Ken (her husband) runs a farm up north around Prince George. Its quite a nice commercial, looks like a good lawn mower. Theres no sound though, oh here it is, the volume button. I guess you have to activate that yourself if you want to hear what it is. But I guess the brand name will pop up, oh here it is see, its Craftsman. Didn't need the volume to find that out.

Looking on the side there I see theres a spa in Vernon, thats a little far from here but it looks really nice. Sparkling Hill, I think thats the famous one up in the hills, I think there's agolf course nearby. That looks interesting, I think I would definitely click on that.

Louise: what makes you want to click on it? Oh I don't know, it looks...
like a nice place in a nice town outside of Vancouver, it would be nice to get away and relax for a couple of days.

This is just an add for a watch, or is it a jewellery store? Its kind of flashy, not really something I'm too into, besides I already have too many watches. No, I'm not quite interested in this. I'll move on.

Down here... Here's a post my friend Sheri has liked, I wonder if that forwards to someone, I won't get it in my email or anything will I? [Louise shakes her head.] Ok good. Anyway, lets see what Sheri is up to these days, mhm, looks like she's looking at mothers day packages from Body Shop. That looks nice, kind of shows how up to date these ads are, mothers day is next weekend after all. My mother's passed so this won't be anything I'll be looking at.

Leah

Alright lets do this. First thing I see is a house for sale in Burnaby, we don't do much business down there and at the moment I don't have any clients interested in Burnaby anyhow. "Luxury Living by Metrotown" - well thats just not true.

20% off FabFitFun boxes, I did just recently look into those. You can order boxes filled with fun seasonal stuff but I didn't order it, maybe thats what they're trying to get me to do. I just didn't really think there was enough stuff to make it worth ordering every 3 months.

Mhm heres another similar thing, another box but this one if for fitness stuff only like workout DVD's and clothes. Seriously though, does it look like I workout? They've got that one wrong. And this is what I mean with is being restrictive. They take on aspect of my life, or not even, just something I've recently googled, take it out of context and then just assume that's all I'm interested in. It doesn't allow me to see a larger variety of things.

Ok enough ranting, I'm just not that big of a fan of targeted advertising, I think its so limiting.

Anyhow, im scrolling down and mostly seeing stuff my friends have liked. Is it advertising if its video clips from shows like Jimmy Fallon or Ellen? Not sure, I mean sure its advertising but not really for a product like the others are because your not buying a product with physical money. Your more tuning in to a show that you like and I guess thats a way for them to make money without you spending any.

Now theresa a commercial for Budweiser, are those the ones with the little puppy that find its way home afte getting lost? I think that was one fo the Superbowl commercials. I remember those, and I think there's a horse in there as well.

This one I feel like clicking on because its a special for a The Keg, its just down the street from me and they have great steaks. Its just a little expensive so I don't go all the time. I also feel like I should share it so that my friends, most of which love going there, can see it but Im scared of sharing things. Im a little worried it'll haunt me forever.

Brianna

Ok so I've just opened up my Facebook and first I don't see anything. Its just events on the right and some suggested friends, thats nice though that ads aren't the very first thing you see. And so when I go down the first ad looking thing I see is a short video that starts right away but I can't hear anything. The video looks to be, oh yes it is, its a movie trailer but not really the trailer more like a short commercial. Its from OneFilms and its about Bad Moms - I guess they timed that for mothers day maybe. Its kind of funny and short and I love going to the movies. I go every Tuesday for cheap movie day with a friend. Maybe they know that?

As Im going down I actually don't see anything in th sidebars. Shouldn't there be something there? Don't know it all works but I always thought they'd be more on the side.

Oh here is one - oh actually its a list of three videos and their titled "suggested videos". There's three of them and their all different videos. They don't look like ads though, it looks like funny home made videos that are just being spread. I wonder what makes them think I want to see them? Are they sent by other friends or something? Anyway, I'm not really interested in looking at them.

Right after this one though there is one from StubHub, not sure what that is but underneath it says "Living isn't done in the living room - discover something epic to do this weekend". That looks interesting, and the video shows just like clips from different things I guess you can do weekend in Vancouver. Therers clips from an Opera, a concert and soccer games. I would think the Whitecaps are playing this weekend. I don't know if I would click on this because it doesn't really tell me anything but shows me fun stuff. I guess I could just google it after if its something I want to do.

But it looks like I can like the page too, but I don't think I'll do that, I think if I do it wont stop popping up on my facebook.

Now there's just pictures of friends, one is in New York, that looks like fun. And here is someone who shared a link. I don't think that classifies as advertising. Its in portuguese anyways so I don't get it but it has a picture of a DNA link chain so its probably biology or something , efinetly not my forte.

Now heres a video that was shared by a friends daughter. Its a river rafting adventure thing on ... uhm.. Oh Hawaii it says. That really looks like fun, their tubing down waterfalls and stuff, that seems like a more fun versin of river rafting which has always scared me a little. Too bad I'm not going to Hawaii anytime soon but if I did I think this is something I would be interested in. I wonder if there's a way to 'save' this link without having to like it or something so
7. Was there anything in particular that surprised you when we looked through your feed regarding what you thought would be there, and the ads that actually appeared?


Rebecka: Nä, ungefär som det brukar vara.

Felicia: Näe.

Mathilda: Nä.. The usual

Diana: No, not too surprising but still the ads for flights and hotels which is actually getting a little annoying. Get over it you know.

Elizabeth: I was surprised to find the Jewellery Ad, I’m not really into Jewellery and don’t recall searching or looking for it online either. The clothes make sense because I do a lot of window shopping online but the Yoga ad? No way that’s correct targeting, I would never do yoga!

Marilyn: Yes, well like I said before I don’t really notice the ads so it was interesting to see what’s really on there. It was interesting to see how kind of up to date the ads are. There were things I looked at today that popped up on the feed and even things I had necessarily specifically looked at. Like the lawnmower, I looked up farming equipment but Ken had mentioned he wanted to sell his old tractor and buy a new one so but I guess they assume I need a lawnmower also.

Leah: Not really suprised, it all made sense when I thought about it. They were either relevant to google searches today, work stuff or were part of something that’s on right now like it’s really hot out already so theroses bathing stuff, pool accessories etc.

Brianna: I hadn’t thought about what would be there, so I didn’t really think about what I would expect but I think most of it makes sense. It’s mostly relevant to my life and the lifes of my friends and family. I’m not sure how I feel about the suggested videos and not sure why they would think that would interest me but perhaps if I ignore it enough it’ll go away.

8. Can you give examples of ads that you notice more than others? Why these?

Anna: Näe... Jag säg den här cheesecace-biten framför mig. Jonna: Men du kommer inte ihåg vilket brand det var? Nänä


Rebecka: Ja nu kommer jag ihåg Zalando bara för det. Vad var det mer. Ja sen var det där med Travel Agency eller vad det var, flyg... och så var det där med Villa.
9. What is your understanding about the intention of the ads/campaigns that you have identified? Why do you think they are there?

Anna: Ja det är ju för det första att få mig att köpa. Sen, lite hjärntvätt också. Eller mycket hjärntvätt.

Marie: -

Ida: Ja alltså, den pylinriktade är ju att de vill att jag ska gå och köpa den här grejen. Också kanske lite att jag ska tycka att det jag har inte är lika bra som det som de visar upp och att jag ska bli lite missnöjd. Hela facebook konceptet där alla tår sin profilbild när de är så vackra och sminkade och tjuvisa som fan, så ska man sitta och titta på det här, alla ställiga människor med alla upplagda javla ... [ohörtlsskatt], och det gör en ju missnöjd. För missnöjda människor, de vill jag göra sin situation bättre, så det är ju ett smart koncept. Och här får man ju hjälp av allas automatiska beteende. Det är ganska intressant. Jonna: Ja just det, "köp det här så kommer du må bättre". Ja och så den här reserklamen som var här då, som jag inte fattade riktigt hur det fungerade men det är ju också sårbar "de har råd att resa, de reser". Ja du vet, avundsjuka, missundsamhet, missnöje. mm, det är nät rät.

Rebecka: -

Felicia: Jo men de vill väl att man ska fördjupa sig i det och eventuellt handla, för en del saker betyder ju att man ska handla.

Mathilda: I am not particular conscious about that. I just eat it. Thats life... If they're interested. I'm interested. I notice mostly what is relevant to my current searches, I don't really notice the ads full of 'pazzaz'.

Marilyyn: Yes well I'm still thinking about the spa in Vernon. Sparkling Hill. [laugher] What makes you remember that exact ad with location and name? Not sure, maybe just because its something I like to do, go to Spas and relax just because of the hectic life we live here with driving back and forth, dealing with sellers, buyers and other realtors in this insane market.

Leah: Maybe I'm a little cynical but I've been thinking about these kind of ads for a while and I notice mostly what's not there rather than what is there. I remember the two ads for boxes you can order; one for a mix of things and the other one assumed it was for fashion apparel though I don't ever work out. I think I get annoyed that marketers make assumptions about me so incorrectly.

Brianna: Well I thought the Hawaii one seemed fun and interesting but I couldn't tell you what the brand name was or anything. I also quite liked the video of the clips on what to do in Vancouver. It's relevant because its where I live and the videos were nice and I remember it was called StubHub or something. I think I remember that because I remember thinking its probably a company that sells discounted tickets, like stubs.

10. How do you think these may have influence on you?

Anna: [laugher] I am not particular conscious about that. I just eat it. Thats life... If they're interested. I'm interested. I notice mostly what is relevant to my current searches, I don't really notice the ads full of 'pazzaz'.


Diana: Still the flights and hotels but more now because we talked it earlier.

Elizabeth: I notice the clothes and bathings suites. I guess I notice more of what is relevant to my current searches, I don't really notice the ads full of 'pazzaz'.

Marilyyn: Yes well I'm still thinking about the spa in Vernon, Sparkling Hill. [laugher] What makes you remember that exact ad with location and name? Not sure, maybe just because its something I like to do, go to Spas and relax just because of the hectic life we live here with driving back and forth, dealing with sellers, buyers and other realtors in this insane market.

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11. How does the identified advertising affect your perception of the products of services that are marketed through the advertising?

Anna: Hmm, min syn på företaget... Ibland så vet man ju att det är dåliga produkter och om det är t.ex. en HandM-annons så "nästa dag kommer jag inte att se" så tänker man lätt om barnarbetare och sånt där. Så särer kan man ju länka till det när man ser. Vissa som har sånbanner med sig, jag vet att det är reklamerade. Många av dem är gott, men det är det att ta det på alla deras produkter. Man ska inte känna att man väljer mellan dem utan att det är det man ska välja.

Leah: Not sure, I guess like other advertising it influences you more sub-conciously. I like to think I’m more critical to it but I guess it depends what is going on in your life right now and what you advertise, the more relevant it is to what you are doing the more influence I guess it has on you.


Rebecka: Ibland så tänker jag att de man ser ofta är vältaget aggressiva i sin marknadsföring. Jag vill helre gynna nån annan som inte är så mycket på. Så det tänker jag också att de använder jättemycket pengar på marknadsföring och det ska de ju tjäna in på nåt!


Diana: The good ads that have that kind of story I told you about earlier, they’re really good but I couldn’t tell you what the ad was for but I could tell you the characters and the story. I guess that’s not their point. And other ads, I don’t know, it all depends if they do it well or not. I see a lot of ads and for it to stick out its gotta be really good. A bad ad will usually result in me not really liking the brand or product.

Elizabeth: -

Marilyn: I don’t mind it, of course if there is something distasteful that pops up without permission I wouldn’t like it but mostly it’s either fun, informative or entertaining. I understand that people need to advertise and because I take part in some self-advertising myself for my brokerage I can’t be too critical to it.

Leah: I just get annoyed when they advertise completely irrelevant things. I like little clips from talk shows where you don’t really need to go much further in looking for the full video, like the short one on Facebook is enough to get the joke or story, its the others that annoy me. If its a brand or product that makes me put too much effort into it I almost always just disregard it.
13. How do you think the advertising reflects your lifestyle?
Kanske har jag tjockare filter på facebook, jag vet inte. 


Ida: A ena sidan så förjurar den ju uppmärksamhetsgrad. Särskilt om jag letar efter ett inlägg från Emelie [participants daugther’s real name replaced] t.ex., då skiter jag ju i allting. Men å andra sidan så kommer de ju också under min uppmärksamhetspårr. Liksom man läser massa grejer omedvetet och får in ett budskap undermedvetet. Jonna: Ja och det är ju svårt att veta vilket det är. Ja det är det verkliga. Så jag vet inte men jag antar att de har gjort studier så att det vet att de tjarar på det...


Elizabeth: I guess I’m a bit more cautious, or at least I should be. I’ve always gone in and deleted cookies and my browsing history quite regularly. It’s like flyers these days, you used to get newspapers filled with 800 flyers and my mom used to make the week menu depending on what kind of coupons and sales there were. The newspaper just gets thinner and thinner and the ads are more and more. I guess I’m also a little more tolerant to it because advertising is such a big part of my profession and it is a really good way to target specific people. A lot of realtors go door knocking but that doesn’t guarantee you get the kind fo people you are targeting.

Marilyn: I don’t really mind, I realize that its probably more accuract to my current interests but I don’t pay too much attention to it.

Leah: I just think they manage to be more up-to-date with what they think I want to see but they make inaccurate assumptions and it gets me quite annoyed that the advertising on my facebook is based solely on what they think I like, it makes it so limiting.

Louise: so you wouldn’t mind more advertising? Perhaps I would mind if there was more of it but I like diversity, thats kind of my lifestyle, and so I would like it if they reflected that.