Consumers' perceptions of social media advertisements

A cross-cultural comparison among Sweden, India, and Japan.

Joakim Månsson and Johan Wiberg
Abstract
The development of technology in the 21st century has led to extensive use of various social media platforms worldwide among consumers as well as businesses, which has led to an increased number of advertisements on social media across borders, where they may face differences regarding how their advertisement is perceived considering cultures, religions, and traditions. These cultural factors make it crucial for companies to recognize local cultural differences to succeed globally. Qualitative data collection with semi-structured interviews with fourteen participants from Sweden, India, and Japan was implemented to determine whether there are discrepancies concerning individual perceptions towards social media advertisements. The interviews were conducted by participants taking part in an artificial and recorded Facebook feed consisting of advertisements connected to four of Hofstede's dimensions, as well as pictures, and posts. The empirical findings suggest that the participants' perceptions are subjective and highly individual, but similarities could be linked to their attitude, brand recognition, imagery, and interest. In addition, when considering the Hofstede's model, it indicates that culture infuses the participants perception of the advertisements connected to all four dimensions examined in terms of femininity, masculinity, individualism, collectivism, restraint, indulgence, and power distance. However, the
dimensions had less measurable effect related to national culture among the participants regarding each represented nation. With the results of this study, we hope to contribute with increased insight into how consumers based on their national culture can interpret advertisements on social media.

**Keywords**
Attitudes, Advertisement, Imagery, National culture, Perception, Social Media
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter includes a brief introduction to social media advertisements from a cultural perspective. At the end of this chapter, the research question, purpose, and outline of this thesis are presented.

1.1 Background

Access to social media platforms has intensified the impacts of globalization, and societies are networking and connecting globally. Social media exacerbates and strengthens the impacts of interrelation by exceeding all geographical boundaries (Lievroux, 2011). Globalization and the advancement of technology have made it possible for companies to move from traditional media such as newspapers, posters, and television to more interactive social media platforms (Iglesias & Schultz, 2013; Naylor, Kamberton & West, 2012). The Internet has also made it possible for marketers and organizations to establish closer relationships with their consumers through two-way communication that has been developed by the growth of technology (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2010; Casidy, Driesener, Habibi, Maplestone & Valos, 2016). However, humans have always communicated with each other, exchanging information, experiences, ideas and opinions but also recommendations and complaints. Furthermore, Social media has become a global platform which allows users to interact with friends, families, and organizations. On social media, users can create content by publishing posts, pictures, or videos. Besides, users can engage with others' content by sharing, liking, or commenting, which sometimes leads to conversations with substantial numbers of users. In addition, social media has become prominent. On these platforms’ companies have found an opportunity to reach large groups within specific locations or with special interests (Carlsson, 2010; Meerman, 2010).

From an organizational perspective, on social media, businesses can target specific groups with the use of advertisements and change consumers' attitudes towards their brand. Consumers attitudes exist about different brands, and the first impression received is regularly the most crucial one, where initial impressions and attitudes are established (Blythe, 2007). Furthermore, consumers with positive attitudes towards advertisement on social media are more likely to engage with the message and want-to be associated with a
certain brand (Brodie, et al., 2011). Ideal social media advertisements generate more views from the target audience and contribute to better profitability and increased brand equity (Andersson, Fornell & Lehmann, 1994; Lassar, Mittal & Sharma, 1995). Although social media enables companies to reach their audience easily, it can be challenging to attract consumers' attention as companies need to consider that advertisements have to be informative to evoke emotions that trigger actions (Lien-Fa, Yung-Ming & Wen-Hsiang 2015).

A considerable number of consumers utilize social media platforms to conduct their activities. On the other hand, companies are taking advantage of the development of social media platforms by creating accounts to interact and reach their target market internationally (Bradley, 2010). This phenomenon has led to a new communication landscape (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre 2011). Social media and its technology have been contributing factors to a more globally oriented world, which has created opportunities, particularly for companies to expand and engage in international business. Moreover, social media has enabled companies to expand their advertisements overseas, which is the genesis of becoming global (Facebook, 2019; Naylor, Lamberton & West, 2012). Thereby, social media has helped marketers and businesses to exist globally to an extent that otherwise might have been difficult (Borcuch, Pilat-Borcuch & Świerczyńska-Kaczor, 2012). Kietzmann et al., (2011) claim the development represents the "social media phenomenon," which suggest that social media nowadays has the power to affect companies' reputations, sales, and even survivals. To understand the importance of applying social media platforms to businesses, context is necessary for a perspective on how far advertisements can reach publicity, and also the number of potential consumers that can be achieved since social platforms allow businesses to target their personas more precisely, which help businesses to create long-lasting relationships (Chung, Lim & Weaver, 2012). According to Kenny and Zysman, (2016), several opportunities open up through the growth of social media platforms that changes society radically. For instance, it revolutionizes how we socialize, work, and create value for the resulting profits.
1.2 Problematization

In a global environment, opportunities are brought by the contemporary internationalization of business. Although, companies still have to cope with challenges along the way (Cooper & Wahab, 2001). For instance, advertisements on social media are perceived differently depending on the recipient. Thus, users’ cultural identity has become a vital part of corporate marketing in order for international marketing strategies to not be misunderstood by foreign market consumers (Fromowitz, 2017). But social media is a possibility to communicate across national borders where there are difficulties (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). When companies cross a border, there is an imminent risk that disparities in terms of cultures, religions, and traditions will be encountered, which ultimately may affect how their message is perceived (De mooij, 2019). Thus, it can be difficult to muster how consumers perceive an advertisement on social media, and also what attracts them to click, like, share, or comment (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2015).

According to Okazaki et al., (2013) it is vital for companies to recognize local cultural characteristics to succeed in the global arena; and from an organizational perspective, knowing how consumers perceive their advertisement facilitates the understanding of how advertisements should be designed in different cultures.

One example which highlights the cultural perspective is when Dolce & Gabbana, the Italian fashion company, launched an online marketing campaign named “DG Loves China” in 2018. The social media campaign consisted of a Chinese woman who attempted to eat Italian food, such as cannoli and pizza, while a male voice commented on her actions and gave her advice on how to eat the dishes. The advertisement was received negatively as the Chinese believed that their culture was ridiculed and included a stereotypical and even a racist message. Chinese consumers boycotted the brand in order to mark their dissatisfaction of the campaign (Yilling, 2018). This example indicates how it is pertinent for organizations to understand local attitudes in global advertisers, and subsequently, to avoid addressing offensive messages. However, there are various issues when organizations establishing a new market, where national cultural discrepancies may be prominent. In addition, social standards, language, religions, values, norms, and attitudes, whose factors can differ in comparison to the domestic market, and thereby, are
considered as barriers (Harris & Morran, 1999). Thus, it is vital for expanding organizations to consolidate with the foreign market by transforming its organization, so it is suitable and fits into the specific market (Saxenian, 1994; Wood, 2005). With that being said, we believe, a better insight of national culture on social media can contribute to more successful advertisements.

According to Hollensen, (2007), professor of International marketing, several theories exist which describe cultural discrepancies that are applicable in a cultural examination about perceptions on social media. How national culture influences people's perception of an advertisement on social media is challenging to determine since previous research is limited. With this thesis, we want to contribute to an increased understanding of how individuals from different cultural affiliations perceive advertisements on social media. Thus, this research topic is interesting and relevant to examine, as there is limited previous research that has investigated possible differences in the perception of an advertisement from a cultural perspective. This research applies Hofstede's cultural dimensions, a cross-cultural theory, which was developed in the 1960s and 1970s by Dutch management researcher Geert Hofstede. Hofstede's theory is a framework based on divergence between the national cultures of the countries, and to discern the ways that business is applicable across various cultures. In other words, the framework is used to distinguish between different national cultures, the dimensions of culture, and their impact on a business setting. Hofstede's theory is useful in the field of national culture and is used in research and international business to become more proactive and gain a better insight of strategic and managerial decisions (Hollensen, 2007).

However, the success and effectiveness of social media advertisements regardless of the product or service offered can be evaluated through the level of perception of the consumers. Hofstede's cross-cultural dimensions were used to identify how various societies' culture relate to consumers' perception, which indicates that the individuals' culture infuses the perception of the advertisements. Therefore, the success and effectiveness of social media advertising are dependent on the ability of the business or advertiser to have knowledge of the target audience's culture so as to create an attractive advertisement that conforms to the beliefs of the consumers. Thus, we hope to contribute with a greater insight into individuals' perception of advertisements on social media,
especially with regards to being able to see to what extent national cultures can influence consumers' perception.

1.3 Research Question
Whether national culture influences individuals' perceptions of social media advertisements?

1.4 Research Purpose
The purpose of this study is to explore whether there are differences regarding individuals' perceptions of social media advertisements based on their national culture.

1.5 Outline
Chapter 1 discusses a brief introduction of the background information, the problem identified, and why this subject is relevant to the study of the research question and purpose. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework that guides us through this research. Chapter 3 describes the choice of the method used and how the collection of empirical data has been completed. Chapter 4 presents the results of the empirical data. Chapter 5 discusses the empirical results based on the theoretical framework and our model. Lastly, in chapter 6, the thesis is summarized, and conclusions are presented from both theoretical and practical perspectives.
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework introduces articles highlighting advertisements, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs. Additionally, theoretical models such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, as through its fundamental foundation contributing to discharge into a theoretical model.

2.1 Relationship between theories
In this chapter, all factors that influence how consumers perceive social media advertisements are presented. Attitudes and beliefs are the factors that are linked to perception. (Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders, 2008). In addition, theories about national culture, imagery, and recognition of brands have also been included in this literature review, since without that aspect, it might be difficult to understand what aspects of the perception of social media advertisements are affected by national culture. Hofstede's model of national culture is the theory chosen to examine whether there are cultural differences in perceptions of social media advertisements between individuals from Japan, India, and Sweden.

2.2 Advertisements
Advertisements play a significant role in marketing for businesses as they are used to communicate messages that, in turn, should encourage, convince, and manipulate their viewers, readers, and specific groups to act. Therefore, businesses cannot afford to overlook advertisements (Marina, 2013). The Where, when and how of advertisements has changed over the last three decades because of the technological development. There has been a shift away from traditional media such as television, newspapers, and catalogues towards social media (Abrahamson, 2017). Today, advertisements are all around consumers' daily lives. Research conducted in 2004 revealed that the number of advertising messages reaching consumers every day varies from 100 to more than 1000 a day, depending on how exposed consumers are (Tellis, 2004). In general, advertisements are descriptive and mediate messages that can be interpreted with a single glance. Moreover, an ad may be an image, text, or video that tries to capture the target audience’s
attention (Edwards, Hairong & Lee, 2002). Marketers do everything within their power to influence and impinge on consumers' awareness and change consumer attitudes, feelings, thoughts, and in the end, their buying decisions (Kotler et al., 2008).

According to Kotler et al., (2008) and Terkan, (2014), advertisements usually contribute to a positive brand image, which makes it easy for a business to attract new customers and retain existing ones and, hence, increase profits. Advertising is a useful tool for communicating messages. A conventional advertisement is mostly a one-way communication that does not consider reactions or responses. Furthermore, traditional advertisements are expensive and require a substantial amount of investment compared to social media advertisements (Karimova, 2011; Kotler et al., 2008). The purpose of an advertisement is to reach out to consumers, encourage sales, and build up brand awareness. In marketing, companies' reputations depend on how credible their message is, which entails how likely it is that consumers understand the message. Ducoffe (1996) suggests that advertisements should inform and entertain to allow consumers to choose the best-suited product for their needs. Advertisements that focus on information keep consumers updated and contribute to an increased desire among consumers that eventually leads to a purchase decision. Advertisements that contain relevant information are preferred and considered appreciated from the consumers' perspective (Ducoffe, 1996).

Advertisements which present their information in a more entertaining fashion generate more positive attitudes towards the advertisement and the brand's image for their consumers (Schlosser, 1999). Entertainment is a useful tool for receiving consumers' attention and building a desire for a brand or product (Jin & Villegas, 2007). However, an advertisement that contains an offensive or unclear message with little or misleading information tends to create confused and annoyed consumers (Alwitt & Prabhaker, 1992; Hassan, 2013). One common issue is that consumers are often interrupted by advertisements, which creates irritation. The irritation causes consumers to ignore the message and could lead to a negative attitude towards the brand or brand being advertised. Thus, disruptive advertisements are less effective compared to the ones that awake an interest among its audience (Ducoffe, 1995).
2.2.1 Social media advertisement
The growth of technology, particularly the Internet, has dramatically changed almost the whole concept of marketing. Today, companies focus on digital marketing rather than traditional marketing (Stelzner, 2014). The development of Web 2.0, which is designed to communicate in two directions and, in some contexts, becomes a so-called multi-way communication, has allowed Internet users to have full control over their social media accounts. Web 2.0 has been an essential piece in the development of social media where every user is able to contribute with his or her content, which makes social media a multi-way communication. Therefore, social media has become a useful marketing tool for companies that focus on relationship-building activities with their consumers to strengthen their brands' image (Mir, 2012). Social media advertisements are structured so that users have an opportunity to like, comment, and share the content, which contributes to the extra leverage of views (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004). Either way, companies have full control over their advertisements on social media, where they decide on which pages their content should appear, and who the receiver shall be. Social media advertisements are affordable regardless of the size of the company or its budget, as it only requires creating an account and having followers. The content that users are exposed to has more relation to them in social media compared to a traditional advertisement, implying that advertisements are more relevant and related to the specific user. Social media platforms enable consumers to control and choose the content with which they want to interact; therefore, they overlook the irrelevant content (Shelley, 2016). Relevant advertisements stimulate the users to interact with the content to a greater extent, contributing to a more positive attitude towards the content (Barbosa, 2017).

2.3 The brain and the brand
A brand that is designed concisely for its graphic and composition tends to engender recognition and consumers' attention. Moreover, previous knowledge of and relationship with a brand has an essential meaning in how consumers relate to a certain brand (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Lury, 1999). According to Moisander (2009), various meanings are aroused when consumers are exposed to a brand. To understand the causes and effects of the thoughts processed in the human mind about a brand, an introduction about symbolic language is required. The symbolic meaning, which consists of fundamental elements, the signifier and the signified, a two-part model of the signs composed by linguist Ferdinand
de Saussure (Koerner, 2013). The symbolic language includes an image with brief words that the image or the words generated by the human mind (Mick, 1986). The process from signifier to the signified is called signification, where the image, spoken or written word is categorized as the signifier, and the concept which the signifier stands for, is interpreted based on previous associations. For instance, the brand Coca-Cola (signifier) evokes associations (signified), such as preferences related to taste. However, the semiotic language that connects the image and the concept, can only relate associations between an image and concept when humans are aware of the meaning of the signifier (Broadbent, 1980). Moreover, since a brand evokes symbolic associations, companies must formulate the intended associations and meanings when consumers are exposed to its visual image or name (Wee & Ming, 2003; Arvidsson, 2005).

Several examinations have previously explored consumer perception concerning online advertising (Blythe, 2007; Brettel and Spilker-Attig, 2010; Park & Jun, 2003). The comprehension of consumer perception in our investigation is vital for getting insight into and understanding of consumers' cognitive reasoning will give a reasonable picture of consumers' perception of social media advertisements. The perception of price, value, and quantity configures and involves the consumers' purchase behavior and choice of product. Hence, the perceptions of consumers compile a standpoint of a product or service that subsequently determines consumer behavior towards purchase decisions. Moreover, the perception of the consumer represents the consumers' view of the world and how the surrounding environment is interpreted, and individuals have their subjective view and interpret information and messages differently (Zeithaml, 1988). The consumer perception refers to the selection and interpretation of marketing campaigns (Elliott et al., 1994).

Marketing aims to create exciting and engaging stimuli that are perceived as relevant for consumers. The stimuli are any physical, visual, or verbal communication that affects and influences the consumers' perception. In marketing, the stimuli can be categorized into primary and secondary stimuli. Primary stimuli are parts that are connected to the product itself, such as packaging. Secondary stimuli focus on influencing the consumer behavior and are expressed through words, pictures, or symbols. In social media advertising, marketers need to focus on secondary stimuli to form attitudes and beliefs, which are
ideal for the product. To arouse the curiosity of consumers, online ads should be updated regularly, avoid repetition, and create innovative ads which conform to the consumers' culture (Assael, 1994).

To clarify how consumer perception is related to advertisement images, it is desirable to apply the perspective of the visualization of images by considering how imagery functions. People perceive their surroundings through five sensory elements; eyesight, hearing, smell, feeling, and taste which illustrate and form the visual associations through sensory stimuli, that unconsciously enable and improve the shopping experience and influence consumers' decision making (Breda, 2009). According to Eriksson and Göthlund, (2004), humans develop by learning and seeing. Images are perceived subjectively and are, therefore, interpreted differently, depending on who the recipient is. In other words, this understanding implies that, two different consumers can view an advertisement differently because of, among other things, previous associations, experiences, and knowledge. Since imagery is perceived spatially and simultaneously, unlike the written form of language which expresses itself in linear and sequential forms (Eriksson et al., 2004). These facts make imagery a powerful visualization tool that influences the state of mind through attitudes, feelings, and ideas that have a consistent role within the advertisement. To ensure the participants' perceptions towards advertising on social media can be derived from the dimensions that are applied by our model, an understanding whether advertisements can be perceived differently, does not necessarily relate to cultural affiliation. Instead, the mechanism of imagery is worth considering when analyzing the empirical material, since human communication of images is based on three foundations, color, composition, and shape (Ericsson et al., 2004). Because images do not have any smell, taste, feelings or sound, these elements are not included in this framework. The only sense that is used to interpret images is eyesight. Eyesight is interlinked with colors, which affect how the advertisement is perceived. Colors have different meanings, depending on gender as well as culture. A single color could correlate to one brand and changing the primary colors of a product can be undesirable to loyal customers.
2.3.1 Advertisements focus on different things

According to Kotler et al. (2008), the underlying factors of perception are classified into three categories which are selective attention, selective distortion, and selective retention. Selective attention occurs when consumers are exposed to a lot of stimuli often in the form of advertisements. Selective attention assumes that an individual cannot be interested in all ads; thus, an active choice must be made where certain advertisements are prioritized. Consumers prefer advertisements that are aligned with their attention (Kotler et al., 2008). Selective distortion occurs when people have the opportunity to attach new information to personal experiences. If an advertisement contains unique information that consumers can connect to old experiences, the content facilitates memorization. The human mind can remember things easily that could be supported by past experiences. Moreover, there is a tendency to interpret new information in a way that strengthens the attitudes and beliefs of the consumer. Information that is consistent with previous perceptions and knowledge is easier for people to memorize and absorb (Kotler et al., 2008). Selective retention refers to the perception that focuses on information that supports a belief or attitude. In several cases, advertisements are usually not only displayed once for the consumer to view, but, for a certain period, the consumer encounters the same advertisement continuously. An advertisement that appears several times can be perceived as disturbing or perhaps a little fun, if, from consumers' point of view, the advertisement contains a lot of information and value. In cases where advertisements are perceived as funny or interesting, there is a personal relationship between the content and the person. Furthermore, for marketers to receive positive responses from their commercials, it is essential that consumers understand the message efficiently and correlate to it. Moreover, it is more likely that consumers choose advertisements that reminds them about their own experiences or strengthens their beliefs or attitudes (Kotler et al., 2008).

2.3.2 Attitudes and beliefs

Attitudes and beliefs are preconceived opinions a person has towards something. Kotler et al. (2008) describe beliefs as descriptive thoughts that an individual hold towards some element. Further, attitudes can be described as an individual's consistent preference opinions that remain negative or positive towards various ideas or objects (Assael, 1994). People have different attitudes towards religion, politics, clothes, music, and
advertisements. The way attitudes rise primarily depends on past experiences, knowledge, or emotions. Whether an individual has formed a positive or negative belief toward a product or service in his perception will be affected by his beliefs. A negative thought toward an object or idea makes it hard for the consumer to perceive advertisements as impressive (Assael, 1994). It is difficult for marketers to change consumers' attitudes and beliefs towards an advertisement (Kotler et. al., 2008). Attitudes considerably affect how consumers perceive advertisements and also how they choose to interact with them (Assael, 1994). Attitudes are closely linked to perception where a positive attitude determines how a person perceives an idea or object. It is difficult to change a person's attitude; therefore, marketing campaigns that are geared against their targeted consumers' attitudes tend to not succeed. Marketers should try to adapt their marketing campaigns, so they are aligned with their target audiences' attitudes (Kotler et al., 2008).

2.3.3 **Attitudes towards social media advertisements**

The attitudes of humans are based on collected experiences; whose attitudes exist towards different brands. The first impression received is regularly the most crucial one, when the initial impression and attitude are established (Blythe, 2007). The consumer knowledge about the world constitutes perception, and perception is the consumers' view of the world and how they analyze the environment. Every individual has its perception and own view that makes him or her interpret messages and information variously. Moreover, consumers can portray different attitudes towards various advertisements, and usually, are developed according to advertisements to which consumers are often exposed. Advertisements on social media are no exception, but the attitudes may differ among the users, whether they are active or inactive users (Wang et al., 2002; Kotler et al., 2008).

Internet advertisements are perceived as more relevant, interesting and less annoying when compared to traditional marketing, according to Zhou, 2002. In social media, advertisements are presented with a passive approach to give consumers full control over what content they want to engage with or ignore (Pavlou & Stewart, 2010).

Furthermore, Bevan-Dye (2013) argues that Internet marketing is often seen as fun or informative, which encourage consumers to share their feelings towards the advertisement. However, previous research has shown that people who are more exposed to advertisements tend to avoid them to a greater extent (Li et al., 2002; Wang et al.,
Active users are sometimes bored with social media advertisements, when they do not interact by commenting, sharing, or liking the advertisement even if they think it is interesting. This situation creates challenges for companies to reach active users on social media. This marketing requires specific targeting strategies to change their negative preferences against these advertisements (Chen et al., 2011). Barbosa (2017) maintains the importance of adding value to the users since advertisements can add value by sharing interesting information, and this information is needed to change attitudes towards advertisements among consumers. Research shows that attitudes are affected by human behavior, an individuals' own experiences and feelings towards a certain product or idea (Fishbein, 1967).

Furthermore, Kotler (2000) describes attitudes towards advertisements as how human behavior is preinstalled against the advertisements. On the other hand, MacKenzie et al. (1989) describe consumer behavior towards advertisements as whether the consumers will consider engaging with or ignoring the advertisement.

### 2.4 National culture

The historical definition of the word culture has its ancient roots from the Latin word "cultura", that can be translated into cultivation, suggesting that both land (agricultura) and people can be cultivated (cultura animi) (Dunkel, 2017). The word culture entered the Middle English language by the late 16th century according to the (Oxford dictionary, 2019), and there are several contemporary interpretations and perceptions of the thermology culture, which is configured in the well-defined interpretation of the word. Although this section is focused on national culture, it has also considered the degree to which a society is deeply embedded. Unconscious, and equally irrational shared values shape and possibly have an impact on people within the country and their perceptions regarding ads on social media platforms. Hollensen (2007) defines culture as shared beliefs, behaviors, norms, and values shared within a group, which is formatted by aggregated programming, where the trait of one affiliation distinguishes itself from another. Culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns that constitute a distinguished affiliation into a group of people (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). What separates one culture from another is expressed in individuals in different responses, interpretations, and preferences of the same situation (Rozin, 2003). Sackmann & Phillips, (2004) assert
that interaction is a vital component of the shaping and distribution of culture, while Matsumoto, (1996), argues that the shaping and creation of culture do not necessarily have to be formed exclusively by its surrounding social environment. Hence, the psychological forming of cultural affiliation, as much as it is shaped socially, individually formed since humans are individuals, constructing their own culture to some degree by shaping individual attitudes, beliefs, and values (Matsumoto, 1996). Fang (2005-6), equates the national culture with an "Ocean" and the word culture is difficult to define since the terminology is perceived as abstract and difficult to detect, examine, and analyze, which is reflected in the various definitions (Turner & Reisinger, 2002).

2.5 Gert Hofstede's theory

In the 1960s and 1970s, Geert Hofstede developed a cross-cultural communication framework. The ordinary model was based on results from a worldwide survey of employee values at the international computer company, IBM. The model is useful for explaining observed differences between cultures. To measure the different dimensions, a scale between 0-100 is used, where 100 is the maximum and 0 is the lowest score (Hofstede & Minkov 2005). The model's credibility is verified since researchers and consultants in various fields related to international business and communication, apply Hofstede's framework to get a better understanding of the cross-cultural perspective (Hollensen, 2007). Subsequently, each dimension is presented to illustrate and facilitate greater understanding.

The model begins by highlighting power distance, the first dimension in the framework, whose dimension entails individuals' educational and physical capabilities. This element implies that, a country's level of equality among citizens differs from equal to extremely unequal (Hofstede, 2001). Moreover, a national culture that endorses low power distance accepts that is more favorable to power relations that are consultative and democratic; it is considered to have many equal positions in society. High power distance, on the other hand, entails a small percentage of the population, who has substantial authority and influence, which usually are a few people at the top that have the authority to make critical decisions (Hofstede, 2001). The wealth and power distance are more accepted in these societies. However, the power widely dispersed is the only power distance that is
accepted in low power distance societies, and more humans are involved in decision-making processes (Hofstede, 2001).

Individualism versus collectivism is the second dimension and can be defined as "The degree to which individuals are integrated into groups." Individualistic societies tend to focus on individualistic achievements and individual rights. Individuals are expected to stand up for themselves and their relatives and choose their directions. In contrast, collectivist societies, individuals act predominantly as members of a lifelong and cohesive group or organization. Generally, people either define themselves as "I" or "we" in a society (Evans, 2013).

The third dimension is masculinity versus femininity, which can be described as the distribution of roles between genders in society by using an index. In masculine cultures, priority is usually given to values such as competitiveness, materialism, assertiveness, ambition, and power, while feminine cultures place more value on relationships and quality of life. Both genders emphasize modesty and caring in feminism cultures (Hofstede, 2010).

These dimensions also explain people's attitudes toward material success and quality of life. Conflicts are more common in masculine societies due to thirst for wealth (Hofstede, 1991). For instance, Sweden is an example of a feminine society, where material success is not at the forefront, and social roles are not divided by gender, and people tend to compromise and disuse more to avoid conflicts (Evans, 2013).

Uncertainty avoidance represents the fourth dimension; this dimension measures the level of uncertainty from an individual's perspective and the society's tolerance. It reflects how members of a society attempt to handle anxiety by minimizing uncertainty. It determines the extent to which societies prefer ambiguity and unknown situations or if they tend to follow laws and prefer an organized structure. Good living standard that can manage the future is connected to uncertainty avoidance; a society with high uncertainty avoidance is associated with planning, structure and is more focused on the future (Hofstede, 1991). This fifth dimension explains the differences between societies time horizon. Long term-oriented societies put more emphasis on the future rather than the present, cultures with
this perspective foster pragmatic values such as rewards, persistence, saving, and capacity for adaptation. Short-term orientation is about prioritizing the past and present. Nations that practice these cultures usually value stability, tradition, reciprocation, and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede, 2010).

The last dimension compares indulgence and restraint; this is the difference between how societies control their desires and impulses. Indulgent societies tend to value things associated with having fun, enjoying life, and allow relatively free gratification. On the other hand, restraint societies tend to value and focus more on strict norms and regulations (Hofstede, 2001).

2.6 The application of Hofstede's cultural theory

Hofstede's model is widely accepted research that has been applied for over five decades, highlighting national differences in culture. Steenkamp (2001) asserts that the framework can also be used in other contexts since it is the most widely used national culture framework in psychology, sociology, marketing, and management studies. This evidence reinforces Hofstede's (1993) theory that this model is a useful tool in different areas since the dimensions are common to use when culture is compared between countries on a national level even though the study only covers workplace culture. Moreover, the framework is useful in formulating hypotheses for comparative cross-culture studies.

Despite the success of his research, criticism exists concerning the creation and processing of the material which formed the foundation of the research. Besides, some scholars argue that Hofstede's model is outdated and obsolete. McSweeney, (2002) argued that Hofstede's approach to collecting data considering the way questionnaires were used, based on the administration of the survey, and states the composition of the surveys were conducted within groups instead of individually thus might affect the validity of the study's results. Furthermore, McSweeney, in his book, "A Triumph of Faith - a Failure of Analysis," discussed the reliability of the participants answers in the questionnaires on which is the foundation of Hofstede's study based by referring to an absence of insight of the participants' perceptions. The collected data on IBM's employees' behavior related to culture that was gathered mostly from middle-aged men that constituted a homogenous research selection of participants who did not demographically reflect the rest of the population (McSweeney, 2002). Hofstede made
the assumption of cultural homogeneity among the participating countries, which is not the case considering those nations are diverse to a greater extent and predominantly groups of ethnic units (Nasif et al., 1991; Redpath, 1997).

As mentioned earlier, Hofstede's model is based on data collected in the late 60s and early 70s. As such, it has attracted criticisms which show that the data is obsolete because the world has changed compared to the 20th century in terms of the international business environment and globalization (Papaconstantinou, 1995). The modern technology has enabled a convergence and transformation of the way of living and thinking. An "Americanization" and "McDonaldization" has affected cultures globally during the last century by its cultural homogenization (Grewal, 2008).

Furthermore, multinational organizations operate in the global market, developing cultural values and common rules that might to some extent create synergy and cultural convergence among various cultures (Schein, 1992; Baker & Inglehart, 2000). Thus, globalization might reduce cultural differences among recent generations (Rozin, 2003). Hofstede (1998) argues that cross-cultural disparities were based on centuries of collected data, and the presented material between countries' cultures is based on large samples to reduce individual differences, and cultural traits are not changing rapidly overnight. In addition to the opposition towards Hofstede's model, Chirkov et al., (2003) advocate for the importance of being aware of stereotypes that might come up when comparing culture consisting of more than one individual. Since Hofstede's dimensions of national culture provide an overall generalizing picture of a culture, whose national culture Chirkov et al., (2003) suggest is a rather a more complex phenomenon. Cristescu et al. (2013) highlight the importance of implementing cross-cultural orientation on an individual level to reduce any generalization and stereotypical influence.

2.7 Theoretical model

Our theoretical model identifies the parts that affect how consumers perceive ads on a social media feed. The model consists of two large circles representing national culture and consumers' perceptions. All constituents are placed in small circles and, according to our theoretical model, they influence the perception equally, because the circles are the same size.
Figure 1. Perception of social media advertisement

The circle to the right illustrates the part of consumers' perception such as recognition of brands, colors, shapes, composition, and attitudes and beliefs. Brand recognition highlights how consumers view advertisements and the importance of branding to their perception. Brands can simplify the interpretation of a message and say more than the picture itself. Colors are an essential part of advertising as they communicate the message and arouse the interest of consumers to get more information. Colors, along with composition, provide a clearer message, more than words, where ads can highlight the unique details of the products. Furthermore, composition focuses on how the image is constructed where different components are placed, and how they are connected. With the right composition, it will be easier for consumers to understand the message the ad intended to communicate. Shapes are about the geometric figures used in the ads; they include circles and squares and have different meanings. Different shapes impart different perceptions to different consumers. Attitudes describe opinions that people have developed towards objects and ideas which can be both positive and negative. Attitudes
are developed through past experiences but can also arise at first glance. Individuals' opinions are difficult to change and can affect their perceptions of advertisements.

The circle to the left highlights national culture where Hofstede's dimensions are selected to form an understanding of whether national culture affects consumers' perception of social media advertisements. The model uses four of Hofstede's dimensions to highlight different cultural phenomena where Power distance focuses on how accepting individuals are towards obliquely divided societies where a large part of the wealth lies with them in the society. Power distance can be divided into low and high-power distance where high-power distance is about the society which has great acceptance for the unequal distribution of wealth. The second dimension is masculinity and femininity. Masculinity highlights how interested people are of material things and are, to a large extent, self-centered, while femininity highlights the quality of life, which can be described as a balance between work and leisure. The dimensions of individualism and collectivism can be described as to what degree individuals are integrated and involved in a group, and to what extent people believe in belonging to "I" or "We" societies. Moreover, the balance between restraint and indulgent societies highlights the inhabitants' control over their desires and impulses. Restraint societies value strict norms rather than free gratification as indulgent societies are.

The model will be used in the analysis of the empirical material to categorize the participants into the various constituent groups to form an idea of how much each part influences their perception of advertisements on a social media feed. To be able to investigate which parts are affected more efficiently, the model has been divided into smaller components in order to quickly explain the effect of each part.
3.0 EMPIRICAL METHOD

In this chapter, the chosen research methodology presenting the theoretical method used for collecting knowledge. The research method is based on the research question and the purpose of this paper to contribute with suitable empirical data.

3.1 Research philosophy

Bell & Bryman, (2019) argue that research that has a "scientific" approach, in which the hypothesis is formulated and afterward tested using accurate measurement techniques. However, the way business research should be done is not universally accepted. Three spheres are used to seek understanding and make assumptions. These are epistemological considerations – questions about how the social world should be studied, the ontological - refers to the knowledge of what reality is and methodology - the best way to research facts (Bell & Bryman, 2019). The research philosophy contributes to a deeper understanding within which the research area of this paper belongs. There are three main categories within the research philosophy consisting of positivism, interpretivism, and realism, which describe how humans perceive the world and what assumptions are the bases for these interpretations (Bell & Bryman, 2019). Positivism is closely linked to quantitative data and is built on measurable facts with a big selection of samples that can contribute to high validity and reliability. Positivism is inspired by natural science and describes people's behavior from a natural scientific perspective to explain certain phenomena. Research-based on a positivist approach prefers empirical data that has been collected through observations of various phenomena which could be generalized into new theories. In contrast to positivism, interpretivism is a part of social science that in research contexts is linked to qualitative data and describes the world from a human perspective. Moreover, research from an interpretive philosophy tends to focus on words or images and is a more subjective form of research than the positivism (Bell & Bryman, 2019). This thesis is based on an interpretivist research philosophy to investigate the differences between how students from Sweden, India, and Japan perceive advertisements on social media. This report aims not to draw any general conclusions, but to create a deeper understanding of how different cultural influences on the perceptions of advertising/ An interpretivist research philosophy creates a more subjective opinion of what relationship cultures have to the perception of social media ads.
3.2 Research approach

There are three types of research approaches that are more appropriate for certain types of studies. They are abductive, deductive, and inductive. An inductive approach is linked to interpretivism and means that collected theory, together with empirical data of the explanatory form, is used to derive conclusions (Bryman & Bell, 2019). An inductive approach is useful to investigate an individual's perceptions of something. Research-based on a deductive approach is used in quantitative studies where different hypotheses have been formulated based on previous theories. A deductive research approach is useful in research areas with a lot of literature, facilitating the creation of hypotheses. The conclusions are derived from the hypotheses and the empirical data to show different correlations. An abductive approach is a combination of inductive and deductive, which means that the researchers are collecting theory to educate themselves about what is important for the phenomenon that they are studying and also collect empirical material. An abductive research approach can be of a qualitative and quantitative nature and be combined with an interpretive research philosophy. The abductive research approach is the basis for this thesis, and the theory has an essential part in this research.

3.3 Research design and strategy

Bell & Bryman (2019) suggest that concepts are key ingredients for theories and that researchers often collect data to show concepts and how they are linked together. The **abductive research approach** is the most suitable concept in this case since the research is supposed to investigate Sweden's, India's, and Japan's perception of advertisements based on several theories and frameworks. To succeed in investigating this phenomenon and what influences the perceptions, a qualitative approach is necessary. Denscombe (2014) claims that the abductive method is useful for creating detailed data material and in-depth analysis that it is recommended for use with qualitative methods when examining complex social situations. Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) argue that the qualitative method is an excellent alternative when the researcher wants to investigate how the interviewee thinks and feel about different things. The qualitative method is associated with research tools such as interviews, documents, and observations (Denscombe, 2014). Therefore, several semi-structured depth-interviews were arranged with 14 participants. Social media platforms have a crucial part in this thesis because such platforms are multi-sided digital frameworks that shape the participants' interaction with
one another (Baltimore et al., 2016). Kenny & Zysman (2016) also claim that digital social media platforms have become common worldwide, which makes it relevant for this study how the advertisement is perceived on social media in different cultures. Moreover, to discover and understand consumers' perception regarding advertisements on social media, a Facebook feed has been created and designed to make the investigation more real and credible.

### 3.3.1 Facebook Feed

Because of the acceleration of social media use (Statista, 2019), and the fact that Iglesias et al., 2013; Naylor et al., (2012), highlight the increase of advertisements on social media platforms in comparison to conventional advertisements makes it fascinating to investigate the perception of advertisements among different cultures, specifically on social media. To achieve the thesis objectives and conceive a solid conclusion, a Facebook feed has been created and designed (Appendix D). Furthermore, the reason for this approach is to investigate what the participants perceive and notice among several different brands, advertisement images, and updates from Facebook users.

The artificial feed consists of a mixture of advertisements that belong to our investigation, while the remaining part of advertisements and posts from individuals which exist to create a credible feed that may appear in the 'participants' daily lives and were simultaneously selected (Appendix D). The remaining advertisements were car advertisements from Skoda and Seat. In addition to these advertisements, posts that appeared among the feed were newspaper articles from The Economist, as well as food advertisements. The participants get access to a feed during each interview by observing a recorded video of a scrolling feed on Facebook and are encouraged afterwards to express their feelings, perceptions and answer questions connected to the theoretical framework of this thesis. This method is used to connect advertisements with social media and simultaneously establish an understanding of to what extent culture influences the perceptions of the ads. The idea with the feed is also to gain insight into alternative underlying factors that may affect consumers' perception regarding advertisements on social media and then compare them with the cultural impact.
3.4 Selection of countries

The choice of the comparison countries; Sweden, India, and Japan have its background in a network created through exchange studies across the world that has enabled the collection of empirical data from international students. Moreover, the countries exhibited measurable extreme values towards each other for national cultural comparison, according to Hofstede's dimensions are applied in the selection of countries to find divergent countries. If we look more closely at the figure 2, it can be observed that Sweden stands out towards India and Japan under the categories Power distance, Individualism, Indulgence, and Masculinity whose thesis perspective is from Swedish cultural point of view; thus, the thesis is limited to investigate these four out of six elements. Besides, difficulties are perceived when searching for relevant advertisements on social media that shed light on the perspectives of Uncertainty avoidance and Long-term orientation. Hence, these two perspectives are, therefore, excluded as part of this cultural examination of this thesis. The selection of advertisements is based on Hofstede's dimensions by categorizing each dimension's distinctions and subsequently comparing the participants' answers with each other and map if we can see any pattern between the countries.

Figure 2. A comparison between Sweden, India and Japan based on Hofstede’s dimensions.
3.5 Selection of advertisement images

The images are anchored in the theoretical frame of reference and more specifically, in Hofstede's model. Images whose interpreted messages related to Hofstede's model are applied and placed among other publications in the feed without the participants' awareness. Hofstede et al. (2005) assessed that there are apparent differences between societies with masculine values in comparison to feminine societies. According to (Figure 3), India, Sweden, and Japan are, according to Hofstede, distinguished on the masculinity/femininity dimension, which makes it interesting and relevant to select two advertisement images on this dimension. Image one has connections to masculine values, and it shows an expensive watch that simultaneously is associated with power, success, material assets, and expresses the importance of career. On the other hand, image one is linked to the feminine culture and prioritizes values that have a connection to a more caring and compassionate society. It emphasizes the importance of the balance in life between work and leisure, and the image displays a caring relationship (Appendix C).

Image 1

Image 2

Image three and four are chosen based on the same logical pattern. Sweden is a country with a higher degree of individualism (Figure 3), and the objective, in this case, is to see if there is any difference in perceptions of advertisements related to the dimension of individualism and collectivism between the selected countries. Image three is linked to collectivism, and it shows an ordinary family spending time and eating together at McDonald's (Appendix C). Furthermore, image four illustrates Ray-Ban, an individualistic advertisement that displays a cyclist standing out from the group, which is supposed to be more connected to the importance of achieving individual goals (Appendix C).
Image three and four are chosen based on the same logical pattern. Sweden is a country with a higher degree of individualism (Figure 3), and the objective, in this case, is to see if there are any differences in the perceptions of ads related to the dimensions of individualism and collectivism among the selected countries. Image three is linked to collectivism, and it shows an ordinary family spending time and eating together at McDonald's (Appendix C). Furthermore, image four illustrates Ray-Ban, an individualistic advertisement that displays a cyclist standing out from the group, which is supposed to be more connected to the importance of achieving individual goals (Appendix C).

The sixth image represents Hofstede's dimension of indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede et al., 2005). In this comparison, Sweden has the highest degree of indulgence, while India is associated with high restraint (Figure 3). Moreover, the image is connected to
indulgence is showing an enjoyable advertisement that is part of a campaign which motivates participants through their mobiles to engage with content to receive a free Coca-Cola (Appendix C).

Image 6

3.6 Participant selection

The basic principle of participant selection is that it is possible to produce consistent and accurate findings without having to collect data from each of the members of the study population (Denscombe, 2014). Denscombe, (2014) also explains that selection has many advantages, because it reduces the amount of data, hence, saving money and time without having to sacrifice too much precision in the findings. When researchers conduct a selection of the population, they can either make a representative selection - a cross-section of the population, or an exploratory selection - used to investigate unexplored topics and discover new ideas (Denscombe, 2014). The purpose of this study is to examine unexplored topics regarding how consumers from different cultures perceive advertisements on social media. Therefore, we need to make an exploratory selection to be able to draw conclusions by comparing individuals from Sweden, India, and Japan, and their advertisement perceptions, based on Hofstede's dimensions. The results are based on five interviews from each country to receive unique information regarding the subject. All participants with various backgrounds representing their country have been selected. We have deliberately chosen the participants, through a subjective selection method - used to create relevance for the subject and theory studied. It is also connected to the non-probability selection - When the researchers have a certain determination of the selection. In this study, we have permission from various nations and universities to
conduct the research. These requirements are created to increase the credibility and relevance of the qualitative method. The participants were asked to participate through a request via social media after completing studies abroad, and because the contact network from each country was limited, only five out of fourteen women could be selected. Moreover, a lack of a sufficiently large network resulted in a thesis containing one participant fewer from India. Below is a table that displays the origin of all participants; the table also aims to focus on gender, age, university, and the participants' educational program (Table 1).

Table 1. Matrix of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Educational Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Lunds University</td>
<td>B.Sc. Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Lunds University</td>
<td>M.Sc. Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Lunds University</td>
<td>M.Sc. Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Lunds University</td>
<td>B.Sc. Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Lunds University</td>
<td>B.Sc. Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>EDHEC Business School</td>
<td>M.Sc. Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>EDHEC Business School</td>
<td>M.Sc. Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>EDHEC Business School</td>
<td>M.Sc. Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>EDHEC Business School</td>
<td>M.Sc. Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Songkla University</td>
<td>B.Sc. Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Dokkyo University</td>
<td>B.Sc. Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>Keio University</td>
<td>B.Sc. Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Kobe University</td>
<td>M.Sc. Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Sonkla University</td>
<td>M.Sc. Engineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.7 Semi structured interviews

A research interview is a method used to collect data that utilizes people's answers as a data source, and there is a strong focus on *self-reporting* - What people say they do, what they believe, and the opinions of the participants have. The purpose of interviews is to capture views, perceptions, feelings, and experiences, where the purpose of the research is to understand in depth (Denscombe, 2014). We have chosen to use interviews, because it is a way of talking to students representing their own country, who can provide exclusive, valuable insights and knowledge and experience related to their nationality. The interviews are *semi-structured* - The interviewers have planned in advance which questions should be answered during the interview, are aware, and may need to be flexible. The most crucial thing is to let the interviewee speak extensively and let the person explain his ideas (Denscombe, 2014). The semi-structured interviews were conducted individually via Skype, and each interview lasted 40-45 minutes. After a deliberate decision to focus on the artificial feed, the empirically collected material was excluded from each specific advertisement (questions 14-17). Partly because this thesis became too broad and comprehensive, but also because the purpose of the thesis is to investigate cultural differences between nations through the participants' perceptions of the artificial social media feed, which cannot be answered by finding out about the participants' perceptions of the individual ads, which do not represent a social media feed. Thus, the empirical material was reduced, and parts of the collected material were excluded to support the purpose of the essay.

3.7.1 Interview guide

An interview guide, (Appendix A) was designed to facilitate the interviews during the semi-structured interviews and to establish a connection between the interviews and this thesis' purpose. The interview guide was formed from our model (Figure 3). The majority of the interview guide consists of open questions; the participants expressed themselves freely to ease our understanding, contribute more information, and knowledge about what may affect consumers' perceptions regarding ads on social media. Denscombe (2014) argues that the most favorable way to receive in-depth descriptions and new insights is a mixture of open-ended questions and closed questions. The interview guide that was used
during the fifteen interviews can be seen in *appendix A - interview guide*. The interview guide is divided into three parts; the first part contains *warm-up questions* to introduce the subject and let participants become familiar with it. Additionally, the idea is to gain insight into participants' preferences and their general perceptions regarding the subject. For instance, questions such as "*How do you perceive advertisement on social media*" are answered at this point (Appendix A). The second part of the interview is connected to the Facebook feed, where the strategy was to obtain the participants first perception and impression of what the feed contained. The questions in this section of the interview guide include questions similar to "*Mention a number of specific things you noticed?*" (Appendix A). At this stage, the primary purpose of the selection of questions is to figure out what the participants emphasize on a regular Facebook feed. At the end of each interview, the participants need to respond more specifically regarding the images that are part of this thesis and connected to Hofstede's dimensions. The objective here is to create an understanding of which ad images attract or do not attract the participants respectively and the reasons why. Subsequently, we analyzed the answers concerning their cultural character.

### 3.8 Data analysis

The collected empirical data based on 14 semi-structured interviews were transcribed and subsequently analyzed through a qualitative content analysis, an approach which categorized and sorted the collected material into coding associated with theories and the literature review, according to Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, (2008). The initial step of the qualitative content analysis begins in the transcriptions where the participants' statements are conceptualized based on the underlying patterns among the interviews. Thus, the theories and concepts that are derived from the literature review (Burnard et al., 2008). The next step was to move from the transcriptions and sort relevant statements, which are associated with the model's various elements in terms of national culture, attitudes and beliefs, brand awareness, and imagery. This part of the content analysis is called reduction and suggest that the empirical data is reduced to what is relevant, removing irrelevant text, and highlighting interesting statements and key phrases; in order to find out the participants' perception of the advertisements in the feed (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015).
4.0 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In this chapter, the results of the empirical data for each individual are presented. The material presented entails the participants' perception of the social media feed. This chapter also discusses the empirical data based on the theoretical framework and our model.

4.1 Findings from interviews

The participants were given a website link to an artificial Facebook feed, which contained six advertisements composed by the researchers, but also posts from individuals, shared content, and posts from different groups. The empirical data collected mainly focused on branding, imagery, and also how culture impacts the participants' perceptions of the feed. The participants perceived the artificial feed highly individually, but similarities were noticed. We found six statements that we interpreted relating to Hofstede's dimensions of national culture. The dimensions that were highlighted were high power distance, femininity, individualism, collectivism, and restraints.
Table 2. Overview of the participants’ response of the feed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>National culture</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Restraint</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Feminity</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>High Power Distance</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Indulgence</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Individualism</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Attitudes and beliefs

In the interview with participant 1, it emerged that she has an account on Facebook and Instagram but mostly uses the messenger part of Facebook to communicate with friends. She interpreted the feed as quite annoying because too many advertisements and a lack of posts with entertaining videos. In the second interview with participant 2, she explained that she has an account on Facebook and Instagram and regularly updates her Instagram with photos, and she mostly uses messenger on Facebook to communicate with her loved ones. She explained that the feed contained too many advertisements and too few posts from individuals and considered the artificial feed to be dull because the lack of entertainment. Moreover, she explained that several of the advertisements were not
anything for which she normally looks. In the third interview with participant 3, it occurred that he mostly uses messenger and rarely visits Facebook. Overall, he thought the artificial feed seemed regular, and neither enjoyed or disliked it, but according to him, the feed contained more advertisements than usual for beverages and food. In the interview with participant 4 from Sweden, it appeared that he uses Facebook frequently, both Facebook and messenger. Furthermore, he explained that, in general, he scrolls past a lot of advertisements daily and usually filters contents out. If something is interesting, he pauses to get a hint of whether it is worth reading thoroughly and explains that he prefers to use Facebook since it is user-friendly. According to him, this feed contained several advertisements and posts about food, and he declared that if this content were on his feed, he would probably not use Facebook as much. In the interview with participant 5, he explained that he mostly uses Facebook to find interesting posts, such as news, sports or posts from friends or relatives. He mentions that he frequently uses the messenger application to communicate with friends. Regarding the artificial feed, he did not have any specific attitude towards it but expressed that the feed contained a lot of posts about food that he would probably scroll past. He explained that he thought, in comparison to his feed the artificial feed entailed too many advertisements.

In the interview with participant 6 from India, no attitudes towards the feed were shown, and the feed was interpreted as considerably regular. He explained that normally when he looks at his Facebook feed, quite a lot of the content is not relevant to him, but he keeps looking further down the feed until he finds an item that may catch his interests. Moreover, he also explains that sometimes he does not find anything of interest to him on his feed and chooses to close the application.

In the seventh interview, participant 7 thought the artificial Facebook feed seems normal and that he would just scroll past the posts and advertisements, which are not relevant to him. He did not mention any specific attitude towards the feed and only mentioned that he could not determine if he would click on any of the advertisements in the feed.

In the interview with participant 8 who is a frequent user of social media, he explained at the beginning of the interview that he does not prefer too many advertisements on his
feed. However, he did not mention anything that was related to his attitude during the whole interview.

In the interview with participant 9, he said that he used Facebook when he was studying in France, but now in India, he mostly uses What's Up to communicate with friends. He considered the advertisements, in general, to have an appealing design and be presented with attractive colors to emphasize engagement. The advertisements and posts about fast food aroused feelings since he usually consumes this kind of food that resulted in him feeling a greater connection to the messages of the advertisements. Thus, he showed a positive attitude towards the feed.

In the tenth interview with participant 10 from Japan, she mentioned that she is a frequent user of social media. She has an account on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Line, and What's App. She mostly uses social media to communicate with friends and relatives. She did not show any specific attitudes towards the feed and thought it the feed looked quite regular. She continued to say that the feed contained a lot of posts about beverages and food.

In the interview with participant 11, he explained that he uses Facebook and Line to communicate with friends. As with participant 10, he did not show any specific attitudes towards the feed and thought the feed contained a lot of posts about food. He thought some of the posts about food looked quite tasty, like the one with Sushi.

In the interview with participant 12, it emerged that he thought the feed contained too many advertisements and too few posts. He wanted to see more posts and fewer advertisements about food and drinks. He showed a negative attitude towards the advertisement from McDonald's and Coca Cola and thought, is it necessary for McDonald's to lure children into eating fast food? He also mentioned that Coca Cola used a big logo, which was not needed for such a well-known brand. He explained that famous brands should focus on content quality instead of printing such a big log to attract new and returning customers.

In the thirteenth interview with participant 13, a negative attitude towards the feed was shown because he did not like the type of advertisements and thought the feed contained
too few posts from friends in comparison to advertisements. Moreover, she also mentioned that a lot of posts were about food. She explained that many companies try to focus on human basic instincts, such as hunger and grief. She wanted to see more advertisements and posts about intellectual products such as books.

In the interview with participant 14, only positive things about the feed were mentioned. She explained that the advertisement about Coca Cola aroused good memories about Christmas. She also thought the feed contained some interesting information which caught her interest.

4.3 Brand awareness

In an interview with participant 1, observations about images posted from individuals and in some sort of community at the right side of the artificial feed were noticed but were not of any interest or relevance to her. In terms of advertisements, she could not remember any specific brand in addition to the items already mentioned in the feed.

Throughout the interview with participant 2, it appeared that she admired the Ray-Ban brand and was familiar with its logo. Initially, she explained that she was not aware of what the advertisement or image was symbolizing until she saw their logo down in the right corner when she instantly understood that the advertisement was about sunglasses.

In the following interview with participant 3, he observed the posts from people in the feed, and advertisements from well-known brands such as Coca Cola, McDonald's and articles from The Economist. Furthermore, he explained that, in general, he consumes Coca Cola although he is not a tremendous fan of fast food.

In the interview with participant 4, he mentioned three brands, Coca Cola, Hublot, and The Economist. Moreover, he continued by explaining that he prefers to read about finance and politics in order to be updated about what is happening around the globe; and The Economist is one of the newspapers that participant 4 prefers to read, which frequently pops up on his Facebook feed because shared posts from friends and relatives. Later on, in the interview, he declared that Hublot is a great brand and he would like to own one of their watches because of his personal attachment to the brand.
In the fifth interview participant, 5 mentioned brand as McDonald's, Coca Cola, Hublot, and articles from The Economist. In addition, participant 5 expressed that he saw a great car in the feed with a dark background, but he could not figure out what brand it was.

In the interview with participant 6 from India, the brands Rolls Royce and The Economist were mentioned. According to him, the news article from the Economist was about how the population of Europe has changed during that last five centuries. He continues by saying that he is interested in historic events and changes. This article suits him well.

In the interview with participant 7 from India, he noticed some posts about food and groups on the right hand side. In terms of brands, Coca Cola and The Economist were mentioned. Furthermore, he mentioned that some advertisements from famous brands would be more interesting if he had more knowledge of those brands; otherwise, he might not even know the message of the advertisements. He argues that advertisements need to contain extra design elements to attract the target audience when they are not familiar with the brand.

In the eighth interview with participant 8 from India, Rolls Royce was mentioned. He explained that it is a famous brand that is mostly used by wealthy people. He did not observe any other brands during the interview but observed posts from individuals.

In the ninth interview with participant 9, he explicated that he is familiar with the McDonald's advertisement and was able to link the advertisement to McDonald's without seeing the logo. He first noticed this advertisement since he was hungry and was thinking of what to eat this evening. He explained he is a frequent customer at McDonald's. In the feed, he noticed a couple of articles from the Economist and an advertisement for an exclusive watch, but his thoughts were connected to food and McDonald's because of his hunger.

In the interview with participant 10 from Japan, she recognized several advertisements and specifically mentioned McDonald's, Hublot, and Coca Cola. Moreover, she mentioned that the Coca Cola advertisement portrayed a man standing and drinking from
the poster, which, according to her, was creative and caught her interest immediately since she had never encountered such advertisements before in Japan. She explained the advertisement was more appealing because she was familiar with Coca Cola and has a personal connection to the brand.

In the interview with participant 11, articles from The Economist were mentioned. He noticed images of sushi since he prefers to consume traditional food.

In the twelfth interview, participant 12 noticed several items in the feed like a bike, a car, and a sofa among other things, but he was also familiar brands such as Coca Cola, Ray-ban, Hublot, McDonald's, and articles from The Economist. He thought that the Ray-Ban advertisement was creative and playful but mentioned that he found it hard to describe the message. Subsequently, he changed the subject and started to speak about the Coca Cola advertisement, which he disliked because of their big logo. Cola-Cola already is a well-known brand, so they do not need such large logos. He illuminates that The Economist articles were the only arousing items in the feed that caught his attention, wanting to browse through the lines and perhaps visit their website to read more.

In the thirteenth interview, participant 13 mentions the Rolls Royce brand and thought it was appealing to her. Exclusive brands motivate her to work harder to succeed in her career and eventually become financially independent. She did not mention any other brands and she emphasized human rational behavior, suggesting that humans should learn to prioritize in life and try to remove unhealthy habits.

In the last interview with participant 14, Coca Cola and The Economist were the only brands that were mentioned and recognized in the feed; and she thought it was obvious and easy to notice that it was Coca Cola because of due to the considerable size of their logo. Lastly, she mentioned that an article about a demonstration from The Economist might be interesting that caught her interest.

4.4 Colors, shapes and composition
In the interview with participant 1 from Sweden, no opinions regarding colors, shapes or compositions were mention because the feed was not relevant for her, and she interpreted the feed as quite annoying.
In the second interview, participant 2 preferred the advertisement from Ray-Ban. For colors and composition, she liked that it was a group that was biking, and that one person was highlighted in the advertisement by jumping much higher. She liked the environment of the advertisement but thought it was quite hard to connect the image to Ray-Ban and sunglasses.

In the middle of the interview with participant 3, he mentioned that the pictures with more colors were better and more attractive than the ones with dark colors and mentioned that without colors, it could be boring and monotonous.

In the fourth interview with participant 4, it appeared that he preferred advertisements with a dark background because of better contrast. The products tend to come more into focus. He continued by saying that it makes the products feel more exclusive. During the interview with participant 5, he liked some of the images with food because of its appealing colors. He preferred the advertisements with more colors and thought that dark backgrounds do not enhance the products in the same way as colorful images. He also mentioned that it was easier to get a clear image of how the products would look in real life with white lights.

In the sixth interview, participant 6 described that he had an appetite for food, whose advertisement that caught his attention immediately because the images were well composed, according to him. He liked the colors, and how the food was presented in many of the posts in the feed. He thought the food was highlighted in a great way, so your mind starts to think about food.

In the seventh interview, participant 7 asserted that when people are not familiar with the brand, the advertisement needs to have some extra design elements to attract its target audience. Furthermore, he claimed that the designs whose colors a brand uses play a smaller lesser part since the brand has well-known recognition.

In the eighth interview, participant 8 mentioned that he preferred the Hublot advertisement because of the display of its technical features, which made him want to know more. He mentioned that it might be expensive. He thought the watch appeared
genuinely fancy in the feed and he liked the dark background because the product attracted more focus.

In the interview with participant 9, he first noticed the colors from the advertisement related to McDonald's because he was familiar with those colors. He asserted that advertisements, in general, need to have an appealing design and be presented with attractive colors to emphasize engagement. Without a good image that easily explains the message of the brand or product, it is hard to guess and understand the message. According to participant 9, messages that are easy to interpret by viewers have more penetration power.

In the tenth interview, participant 10 did not mention anything regarding colors or shapes but explained that she thought the composition of the Coca Cola advertisement was creative when the person was drinking from a poster. She also explained that she has never encountered such an advertisement. She thought the advertisement was well made, and the ideas to activate the viewers were genial.

In the interview with participant 11, it emerged that he liked the colors in the posts about food. He explained that there were several posts about food that looked fabulous and tasty because of the composition and exposure of the correct light. He said that he thinks images that are well made are better at highlighting its products than images that are a little blurry. He also mentioned that he preferred advertisements with more colors, and he prefers advertisements that are easy to understand.

In the interview with participant 12, the post about a red sofa was the best post, according to him, based on colors, shapes, and composition. When you looked at the post, the sofa comes into focus, and the colors and shadows beside it highlight the sofa in the background. It feels more real, and you become interested because the image is well made. Furthermore, he explained that he did not like the big logo from Coca Cola and thought it was unnecessary since consumers should recognize their bottles.

In the thirteenth interview, participant 13 had no opinions regarding colors, shapes or composition.
In the last interview with participant 14, it appeared that she believed that colors are essential to attract attention and black with some shadows is an excellent way to create fancy and modern advertisements like the one with a watch. If the picture contains too many colors, it becomes harder for the product to be the focus. She said that she preferred advance videos with new technology, because they are fascinating to watch.

4.5 National Culture

In the interviews with some of the participants, statements that can be related to national culture emerged, which are illustrated from the quotes below. Of all 14 interviews, 6 participants mentioned content that could be related to Hofstede's dimensions of national culture. Furthermore, the quotes were linked to Hofstede's dimensions of restraint, femininity, high power distance, indulgence, individualism, and collectivism.

Table 3. Matrix of the participants' quotes based on national culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Cultural Dimension</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Restraints</td>
<td>&quot;I would probably only click on something that I am interested in. I'm not a person who shares everything on social media, and I don't feel the need to print it on everyone else, even if I am interested.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Femininity</td>
<td>“The ‘We Care’ advertisement made me happy because of the smiles, and the nurse is helping the old man, I think this kind of image is appealing, and I think it is essential to have a healthy life.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>“I remember the advertisement about Rolls Royce and thought the car was interesting and was looking good, due to it is an expensive car which is used by rich people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Indulgence</td>
<td>&quot;The Coca-Cola advertisement when a man is holding and drinking Coke with his phone was creative, and after I watched the feed twice, I noticed the red Coca-Cola brand that got my eyes attention especially since I haven't seen an advertisement like this before.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“They target the most basic human instincts. Namely, hunger, greed, thirst, etc. The most easily consumable thing in our world. It shed light on how simple human beings are. They are mostly controlled by their fear of hunger, their most basic instinct. I haven’t seen any advert about books or intellectual products and, unfortunately, not many people are interested in those products.”

“I think it is really good about the Coca Cola advertise. You are drinking Coca Cola at Christmas and being around family having dinner with them. It is a feeling of being loved and being home.”

In the interview with participant 3, he showed signs of Hofstede’s dimension of restraint when mentioned that he might click on an advertisement that catches his attention and interest. He clarifies he would never engage with content by commenting or sharing. He expressed himself by explaining that he would not share information about what he thought was interesting with his friends. He prefers to keep his opinions to himself. Furthermore, he declared that he wants to have a small digital footprint, therefore he never comments, shares or likes posts.

In the interview with participant 4, he explained that he favored the advertisement “We Care” because he would like people to have a satisfying life with great wellbeing. Participant 4 have been coded for Femininity in Hofstede’s dimensions of national culture. He continued by explaining that he believes everyone has the right to receive the help they need to enjoy life. He also declared that this advertisement would be even more interesting to if he had some elderly people in his family who need health care.

In the interview with participant 8, he showed signs of high-power distance, which focuses on the cultural acceptance of unequal divided power in societies by mentioning that he saw a great car from Rolls Royce in the feed and explained that it is mostly used by powerful people such as presidents and businessmen. He explained that he cannot
afford such a car, but he does not dislike people that have enough money to use such cars. He said that he wants to work hard so he can afford such a luxury car in the future.

In the interview with participant 10 from Japan, she mentioned that she was curious about an advertisement from Coca Cola, which has been coded as Indulgence in Hofstede’s dimensions of national culture. She explained that she had never seen a similar ad and that this one intrigued her to try the product. She thought the idea of drink from a poster through a mobile application was a creative way to engage Coca Cola costumers.

In the interview with participant 13, she mostly focused on herself wanting to become successful and rich. Therefore, she has been coded for Individualism in Hofstede’s dimensions of national culture. She also explained that many ads and posts in the feed were targeting humanity’s most basic instincts, namely, hunger, greed, thirst, the most easily consumable things in our world. She continued by saying it sheds light on how simple human beings are, we are mostly controlled by fear of hunger, their most basic instinct. I have not seen any ads about books or intellectual products and, unfortunately, not many people are interested in those products.

In the interview with participant 14, it appeared that she liked the advertisement about Coca Cola. She mentioned that you drink Coca Cola with family and friends. Participant 14 has been coded for Collectivism since she explains that she drinks Coca Cola at Christmas with her loved ones, having a pleasant dinner with them. She has a good memory of Coca Cola, which, in her case, as she explained, brings her family together.
5.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the empirical data based on the theoretical framework and our model. Subsequently, the analysis and discussion of the empirical data forms the backbone of the essay to clarify whether individual’s perception of social media advertisements differ based on national identity.

5.1 Revised theoretical model

![Diagram: Describing perception of social media advertisements]

Figure 2. Describing perception of social media advertisements
In our revised theoretical model, personal interest has been added since 13 out of 14 participants mentioned that advertisements on social media are required to be relevant to them and preferably linked to their interests. The size of the circles has been changed to give a more accurate portrait of how much each part affects consumer' perception. An interesting observation that emerged during the interviews was that culture did not affect their perception as much as brand awareness, shapes colors, and composition, personal interest, and attitudes and beliefs.

5.2 Attitudes, Brand and Imagery
The empirical findings presented that the participants' noticed several advertisements among the items on the artificial feed. Prominent brands such as McDonald's, Coca-Cola, and Ray-Ban, whose recognition Kotler, (2010) argued has an impact of consumer brand awareness. Furthermore, as Wee et al., 2003; Arvidsson, (2005) note, specific symbolic associations evoke among the participants when recognizing these brands, which are linked to previous associations with a brand (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Lury, 1999). For instance, several participants noticed McDonald's in the feed as presented, having had both positive and adverse attitudes towards the brand. Furthermore, participant three associated hunger when saw the brand, while the Japanese participants thirteen and fourteen originally reacted with adverse attitudes towards both Coca Cola's and McDonald's advertisements. By criticizing the companies as for trap kids into an infinite loop of an “eat more, consume more” strategy, as participant 12 expressed himself about McDonald's food, whose attitudes and physiological impulses influence the state of mind (Branthwaite, 2002). Adverse attitudes towards an advertisement are built on the foundation of individuals' beliefs, whose attitudes affect the consumers' perceptions of advertisements and how they determine they should interact with the advertisement, according to Assel, (1994). Items that also were recognized in the social media feed were linked to the participants' interests and previous associations, which Zhou (2002) asserts gives consumers control over with content they want to engage. Thus, the symbolic language, which connects a brand to previous associations based on the signifier and the signified, aroused various attitudes and feelings among the participants (Broadbent, 1980).
The items in the feed which were mentioned by the participants were consistent with Barbosa's, (2017) theory, suggesting that advertisements are more relevant and related to the specific users compared to the conventional advertisement, where the content can contribute to a more positive attitude towards advertising (Barbosa, 2017).

5.3 The participants' perception of social media feed

The consumer perception of social media advertising is a critical element that influences the effectiveness of social network advertising (Kotler et al., 2008). The information collected from the fourteen respondents indicated that consumer' interests are aroused when exposed to a lot of stimuli, in this case, advertisements (selective attention). In the case of multiple advertisements, consumers make choices to choose the most relevant advertisements as per their interests and needs. Four participants noticed the Macdonald's brand first before identifying other brands because they were familiar with the brand which is often advertised. It connected with their past experiences. Kotler et al., (2008), notes that a motivated a person is ready to act as the perception usually influences him or her. Based on the response from the fourteen participants, it was found that:

- People typically notice a stimulus that is connected to their present needs. For instance, if an individual is hungry or loves food, he will be motivated to notice a food advertisement first.
- Consumers are more likely to notice stimuli that they anticipate. For example, one is likely to notice cars more than anything else in a car showroom because consumers do not expect to see anything else there.
- Consumers are more likely to notice stimuli whose deviations are large in relation to the normal size of the stimuli. One is likely to notice a Coca Cola, because it is prevalent.

5.4 Cultural differences related to national culture

There are studies that indicate Hofstede's model was developed with collected empirical data from a homogeneous group. In addition, Hofstede's framework is built upon data collected half a century ago, and the world have become more globalized which may affect the application of his model. Furthermore, as mentioned before, some critics of Hofstede’s model exist. Among other things, the criticism indicates that the model has
been developed with collection material from homogeneous groups, which is compared with the participants. On the other hand, Hofstede's model has proved to conform to the participants' statements excluding the participants' cultural belonging. Thereby, this study has shown the impact of what we have been investigating, which indicates that the model is still useful (Papaconstantinou, 1995; McSweeney, 2002).

5.4.1 Restraints
As participant three was linked to Hofstede's dimension of restraints. The person in question showed a restrained attitude that can be linked to restraints by not wanting to share what he perceived to be interesting (Table 3). According to Hofstede, of the three countries studied, Sweden should be the least linked to dimensional restraints. In this case with participant three, this finding is not at all consistent with Hofstede's theory and the person in question gives an impression of culture is not involved in this claim even though the claim is linked to the culture in question, but it is more the individual's preferences to not create an excessive digital footprint.

5.4.2 Femininity
Participant Four was re coded with Hofstede's femininity dimension since he expressed the importance of health care and emphasized that he wants all people to live pleasant lives. This dimension fits in with Hofstede’s theory of national culture where Sweden has the most feminine values of these three countries. The fact that the other people from Sweden did not show similar responses to the ad that has been coded as feminine to show emotions and the like may be because the feed was shown as a video and participants did not look closely enough. It may also be because the questions were asked after the people in question had a clear look at the flow, where it is easiest to remember those parts that so strengthen one's beliefs.

5.4.3 Power Distance
Participant 8 from India has been coded as high-power distance because his statement about Rolls Royce describes a high acceptance of uneven communities. According to Hofstede's model, India has a culture that has a high acceptance that wealth is unevenly distributed. Poor people do not dislike others with more money. The other participants from India did not mention any claim that could be linked to national culture or this
dimension of Hofstede’s model. According to Hofstede’s model, Swedes should oppose unequally distributed societies, however, none of the responses from the Swedes show that this is the case, which may be because national culture does not affect the perception of ads online to the same extent as during conversations with people from other countries.

5.4.4 Indulgence
In the interview with participant 10 from Japan, she stated something that has been linked to Indulgence in Hofstede’s model. She described that she wanted to give it a try and had never seen a similar advertisement like the Coca Cola ad in this case, where they tried to engage their customers to interact with the brand. In Hofstede’s model, people from Japan should be both Restraint and Indulgence, i.e. they like to try new things, and in some cases be very restrained. Unlike the Swedes who are going to be very outgoing compared to the Japanese and Indians, which our empirical data does not show. At the same time, only one of the Japanese proves to be Indulgent suggests there may be difficulties in reading how much influence culture has on the perception of social media advertisements.

5.4.5 Individualism
In the interview with participant 13, quotes related to Hofstede's dimension of individualism were mentioned. It was not a particular image or advertisement that caused the person in question to start focusing on himself, but this person started talking and discussing different things from a perspective that he is better than others. The person in question seemed egocentric, which has been linked to individualism. He is concerned about his individual success. According to Hofstede's model, people from Sweden tend to focus on themselves and are more individualistic than Japanese and Indians. The fact that the person in question was the only one from Japan who showed a self-centered focus suggests that culture, in general, may not play a role in this case, but exist more because of personal preferences.

5.4.6 Collectivism
In the interview with participant 14, she described that Coca Cola could be associated with good memories at Christmas when the family drinks Coca Cola. Participant 14 has been coded as Collectivism with these statements regarding being close to family and friends. According to Hofstede's model, the Japanese are neither collectivist nor
individualist but in the middle. That the ad in question aroused these feelings has to do with old memories that are linked to beliefs. She has previously had positive memories of Coca Cola, which paints a good image of the brand, and she welcomes its advertisements and products. According to Hofstede (2001), how consumers determine what they will purchase is heavily influenced by their culture. It was found that some cultures relate expensive items to the wealthy thus in an advertisement, they would not notice or be attracted to such things. Some items are also meant for specific gender in some cultures. In addition, certain products are consumed during specific times such as, for example, holidays. Coca Cola products are consumed during special events.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The last chapter in this thesis presents the conclusions of the research. The chapter begins with a summary of the thesis, and continues with the conclusion of this research, self-criticism and ends with suggestions for further research within the field of consumer perception related to advertisements on social media.

6.1 Summary

Social media platforms are widely used by consumers and businesses. When companies advertise across borders, they may face differences regarding how their advertisements are perceived considering cultures, religions, and traditions. Moreover, companies must recognize local cultural differences to succeed globally. A qualitative data collection including semi-structured interviews with fourteen participants from Sweden, India, and Japan was implemented to answer the question whether there are discrepancies regarding individuals' perceptions of social media advertisements. The interviews were conducted by participants taking part in an artificially recorded Facebook feed consisting of advertisements connected to Hofstede's four dimensions, as well as pictures, and posts. The empirical findings suggest that the participants' perception was subjective and highly individual, but similarities could be linked to their attitudes, brand recognitions, shapes, colors, compositions, and interests. When considering Hofstede’s model, which indicates that culture infuses the participants' perceptions of the advertisements linked to power distance, femininity, individualism, collectivism, and restraint. Hence, masculinity and indulgence had no measurable effect related to the national culture of the participants.
With the results of this study, we hope to give increased insight into how consumers could interpret social media advertisements media based on their national culture.

6.2 Conclusion
The study shows that national culture is not one of the most important factors regarding consumers' perceptions of social media advertisements. It is debatable whether national culture affects consumers’ perception of advertising. This research shows that national culture affects consumer perception to a modest extent, and only one of Hofstede’s dimensions correlated to our interpretation of his model. However, there are other factors that are more influential on consumer perception, personal interest, brand awareness, colors, shapes and composition, and lastly attitudes and beliefs. According to the empirical data, personal interest is the most important factor, which affects how consumers perceive social media advertisements. Without any personal engagement related to an advertisement, it is difficult to attract the consumer to spend time with it and it is unlikely that the consumer will be interested in the message. In addition, brand awareness is a factor, which affects consumers’ perception and makes it easier for consumers to understand advertisements because of the brand is present. Other factors that create interest in advertisements are colors, shapes and composition, which are crucial to awaken consumer curiosity and interest. Attitudes and beliefs are other factors which affect the consumers' perception. Attitudes and beliefs shed light on consumers' experiences and trust of similar products, brands or advertisements. Attitudes and beliefs can be positive or negative, but in this research, it has not been a significantly influential factor regarding consumers' perceptions.

To conclude, it is important for companies to create relevant advertisements that are not offensive from national culture perspectives. If the brand is well-known, it will be easier for consumers to interpret the message and may also have a great influence on their perception. Colors, shapes, and composition become important when new products or lesser-known brands advertise their products on social media to attract attention and interest. Attitudes and beliefs have a minor impact on consumers perceptions and should not be considered when creating advertisements. According to the empirical data, national culture is not a factor of sufficient influence to be considered consistently.
6.3 Limitations
This thesis contains a compilation of fourteen individuals' perceptions. The size of this sample is a limitation; maintain a sufficiently large network during our studies abroad has been a limitation. In order to gather empirical material, fourteen interviews are a substantial number of interviews for qualitative research. Since the empirical material is made up of students on exchange programs, the demographics do not correspond to the rest of the population, which may have an impact on the results because it is not only students who use social media platforms and are exposed to advertisements.

6.4 Practical and theoretical implications
The existing research which focuses on cultural discrepancies related to social media advertising are limited. Thus, with the results of this thesis, we hope to make a practical contribution to the literature by presenting how the participants in this thesis perceived social media advertisements. Hence, for practical reasons, this thesis and its empirical findings provide new insights on consumer perceptions of social media advertisements by looking beyond stereotypical traits of national cultures and by seeing individuals as mere individuals with individual characteristics. By approaching a rather unexplored field of perception of social media advertisements, this study extends the research into consumer perception; from a theoretical point of view, this thesis aimed to gain insights of the influence of national cultures on individuals' perceptions of social media advertising. To the best of our knowledge, no study has been executed which specifically focuses on the consumers' perception of social media between countries because previous research has instead focused on consumer perception as a whole.

6.5 Further Research
A similar phenomenon would be interesting to investigate in further research, using a quantitative approach instead of a qualitative one, to be able to generalize the thesis result in a wider context. Another idea is to examine a similar study, using different social media platforms such as Instagram or YouTube instead of Facebook, where the focus is on video advertisements instead of images. As mentioned earlier, in the selection of countries, long-term orientations and uncertainty avoidance has deliberately been excluded in favor of examining four of Hofstede's elements. Thereby, as a suggestion, it
would be interesting for future studies to apply these two components to investigate if the study would have a different outcome than this thesis.

For future studies, the collection of the empirical material could have focused on the characteristics of the individuals as the theory highlights the essentials of national culture cannot be generalized. Since individuals participated, it would be interesting to go into more depth by mapping the participants' personalities. This approach could be executed with, for instance, the Five-Factor Model also called ‘Big Five’, produced by the social scientists Costa & McCrae which chart individuals' characteristics into five different elements to compose individual features.

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**APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW GUIDE INDIA AND JAPAN**

**Warm up questions**

1. How do you use social media today?
2. How do you perceive ads on social media?
3. What do you prefer to see in a feed on social media?

Follow up question: Why do you like, alternatively not like social media advertising?

4. Are you a person who is affected by advertising?
5. Has an ad on social media affect you to make a purchase?
6. What is it that makes an advertisement interesting according to you?
7. What is the worst thing to see in an ad?

**After showing feed to the respondent**

8. Mention a number of specific things you noticed?
9. What was interesting?

Follow up question: How come that it was interesting?

10. Was anything in the feed interesting based on you interest?
11. Does any advertisement appeal to you more than other regarding shape, color or composition?
12. Do you feel any specific attitudes, feelings or ideas related to the ads?
13. When you see the feed, there is something you want to click, like, comment or share?

After showing each specific advertisement

14. What is the first thing you think of when you see the ad?
15. Is there any specific in the ad that appeals to you. Are you interested in knowing more?
16. Is there any specific part of the ad that does not appeal to you?
17. Can you describe the ads message?

APPENDIX B - INTERVIEW GUIDE SWEDEN

Warm up questions
1. Hur ser ditt användande av sociala medier ut idag?
3. Vad tycker ni om att se i ett flöde på sociala medier
Följdfråga: Varför tycker du om, alternativ inte om annonsering på sociala medier?
4. Är du en person som blir påverkad av annonsering?
5. Har en annons på sociala medier lett till att ni genomfört ett köp?
6. Vad är det som gör en annons intresseväckande enligt dig?
7. Vad är det värsta att se i en annons?

After showing feed to the respondent

9. Vad var det som var intressant?
Följdfråga: Hur kommer det sig att det var intressant?
10. Var det något i flödet av intresse baserat på dina intressen?
11. När du ser flödet, är där någon annons som tilltalar dig mer när det gäller form, färg eller komposition?
12. Känner du någon specifik attityd, känsla eller idé relaterat till annonserna?
13. När ni ser flödet, finns det något som ni vill klicka på, gilla, kommentera eller dela?
Följdfråga: Varför det?

After showing each specific advertisement

14. Vad är det första ni tänker på när ni ser annonsen?
15. Är det någon specifikt i annonsen som tilltalar dig. Blir ni intresserade av att veta mer?
16. Är det någon specifik del av annonsen inte tilltalar dig?
17. Kan ni beskriva budskapet i annonsen?

APPENDIX C – ADVERTISEMENTS

Advertisement 1
Advertisement 2

Advertisement 3
Advertisement 6

APPENDIX D - FACEBOOK FEED

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ochjThQxrIc