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TARGETED SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING AND CONSUMER DECISION MAKING IN ONLINE BUYING BEHAVIOR

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The aim of this research is to understand how targeted social media advertising influences online buying behavior. More accurately, this research focuses on the five-stage consumer buying decision process model and how targeted social media advertisements affect each stage of the model. This research approaches the subject through phenomenography, where the objective is to concentrate on the attitudes and opinions of individuals and gain a deeper understanding by observing the phenomenon closely.

Research theory examines prior research of social media marketing, targeted social media advertising and consumers buying behavior. In this research social media marketing and the possible reactions towards targeted social media advertising are interpreted to be able to create a comprehensive understanding of current research. The online specific features of the different stages in the buying decision model are acknowledged in the research theory and included in the theoretical framework of the research.

The empirical research is conducted as a qualitative research and semi-structured interviews are utilized to gather the empirical data. The research target group consists of young adults, who are active social media users and make purchases online on a regular basis. The 24–27 year-old interviewees in this target group participated in the research. Abductive reasoning guides the empirical analysis of the research and the empirical data is analyzed by dividing data into relevant themes.

The findings of this research indicate that targeted social media advertisements affect the consumer online buying behavior throughout the whole buying decision process. The influence of targeted social media advertisements is greater depending on the stage of the process. Targeted advertisements can arouse different reactions and affect positively to the online buying intention, when the advertisements are correctly targeted. This research complements the prior social media research by emphasizing the significance of effectively targeted advertisements. According to this research, online buying behavior follows the five-stage buying process model, but is also influenced by online specific variables.

The research findings provide further information about the effects of targeted social media advertisements and increase the understanding of consumer online buying behavior. This research also emphasizes the importance of effective targeting of social media advertising and provides means for implementation of targeted advertisements. It needs to be acknowledged that the narrow target group and the subjective nature of phenomenography limit the generalization of the research findings.

**Keywords**

- targeted advertising
- targeted social media advertising
- online buying behavior
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1 INTRODUCTION

Social media channels, for example, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube, are becoming more and more popular. When it comes to Finland, 93% of 15–55 year-old Finns have utilized social media during the past 3 months (MTV, Kurio, Laurea ammattikorkeakoulu 2015). Young people are usually more active in social media – 86% of 16–24 year-olds use social media daily or several times per day (Statistics Finland, 2015).

When consumers are seeing and consuming company’s content and advertisements in social media are these advertisements affecting their buying behavior online? This is a very relevant question, since according to Statistics Finland (2015) nearly 90% of consumers aged 16–44 have purchased products online within the past 12 months. Some of the consumers are more active shoppers online: 67% of 25–44 years old consumers have purchased products or services online within the past three months and over 55% of these consumers have spent over 100 euros on these purchases during this same timeframe (Statistics Finland, 2015). If consumers are spending more time on social media and more money online, it is rather interesting to understand the relations of social media advertising and consumer buying behavior. This research aims to understand how consumers’ online buying behavior is affected by targeted social media advertising.

1.1 Research background and justification of the research topic

The very traditional definition for marketing is that marketing is an activity that consists of different actions that will arouse the wanted reactions and response from the targeted audience (Kotler & Keller 2006: 7). This same definition is still a rather valid one, but the different actions have drastically changed during the past years. According to Klaus (2013) people are merely searching information online and during the recent years the number of internet users has doubled worldwide. For this reason, different online channels influence both industries and markets in various ways. Klaus (2013) adds that the new digital age has changed the way consumers make purchase decisions and how companies market their offering.
As Kotler and Keller (2006: 13) state "marketplace isn’t what it used to be". By this the authors signify the emphasis of evolving technology and globalization (Kotler & Keller 2006: 17). This is very true, since global markets, digitalization and explosive growth of social media are enabling completely new ways to advertise products and services. Marketplace is not geographically dependent anymore and businesses can promote their offering worldwide (Kotler & Keller 2006: 55).

The enormous change in media consumption has forced companies to be active in social media. Companies are merely marketing their products and offering online (Frambach, Roest and Krishnan 2007). The level of involvement has increased, since online environments have made it easy for consumers to interact and communicate with companies (Demangeot & Broderick 2007). Social media has, above all, become a channel, through which company can engage and interact with its customers (Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman, Kannan 2016). Companies are directing their marketing efforts to social media – social media advertising is fairly popular, when a company is marketing its products and services and wants to reach their potential audience (Zhang & Mao 2016). This is not a surprise, since according to Zhang and Mao (2016) social media is a channel that is closely connected to advertising and marketing communications. There are different social media channels a company can use for advertising purposes, but advertising is only relevant if it generates sales. To generate sales, social media advertising should activate consumers by affecting their buying behavior. If a consumer is already browsing digital content, the natural continuum is to continue purchasing in the same environment – online. If a consumer is only a passive respondent for advertisements on social media, companies are throwing valuable money away from their marketing budgets.

Internet and social media have revolutionized marketing. These channels play also a great role in online buying behavior. Since social media is a big part of people’s lives, it will most likely have an effect on their purchasing behavior. Demangeot and Broderick (2007) have noticed that some consumers might generate perceptions about companies and the future of the relationship with the company based solely on their observations on online shopping environment. Hence it is remarkably important to understand the impact of the shopping environment on consumer perceptions in
marketing planning (Demangeot & Broderick 2007). Powers, Advincula, Austin, Graiko and Snyder (2012) have acknowledged the need to research the relations between social media and buying behavior, since social media channels in general have widely changed the way people consume and spend their money.

Social media is constantly evolving and different social media channels are providing new ways for marketers to promote their offering. Additionally, there are also new ways for marketers to target their social media marketing efforts. These are the facts that are also important to acknowledge, when comparing the state of current research – a lot can change in a rather short period of time (Knoll 2016). This is one reason, why new research on social media advertising is important. Lee, Hosanagar and Nair (2015) state how the constantly developing filtering algorithms on social media platforms are, for example, changing the content users will interact, when they are using social media. Lee et al. (2015) also add that this will have a significant impact on the group of people companies can reach on social media without using any marketing budget. It is hard to evaluate the impact this will have on companies and whether they are actually making changes to their social media presence. According to Lee et al. (2015) it is hard for companies to succeed without creating better and engaging content.

Researchers recognize that further research on social media advertising is needed (Taylor, Lewin & Strutton 2011, Zhang & Mao 2016, Knoll 2016). For example, Knoll (2016) has implemented an empirical review of current research on social media advertising and argues that despite the existing research on online advertising, comprehensive analysis of social media advertising is missing. Also, Lee et al. (2015) state that only little research is made on the empirical consequences of social media advertising or too many implications took place after a research executed in laboratory settings. Current research on social media advertising is mostly carried out into quantitative methods (Taylor, Lewin & Strutton 2011, Duffett 2015, Lee et al. 2015, Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman & Kannan 2016, Zhang & Mao 2016). Many studies have also included interviews or questionnaires, but Knoll (2016) has identified the need to study advertising and behavioral actions, which are the result of being exposed to social media advertising. Zhang and Mao (2016) share this same perspective as they reason that there is no comprehensive theory to explain
the effectiveness of social media advertisements. Okazaki and Taylor (2013) also identify that no comprehensive research is made on international social media advertising. This might be a result of the fact that the usage of social media for advertising purposes has quite recently increased (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

Since research on social media advertising is limited, there are only few studies, which investigate how buying behavior is affected by social media usage. This argument is supported in a research complete by Lee et al. (2015). When it comes to the field of buying behavior research, quantitative research methods are often utilized (Comegys et al. 2006, Demangeot & Broderick 2007, Frambach, Roest & Krishnan 2007). Many researchers recognize that buying behavior is a process of many stages. Buying behavior can be perceived through different models, but the five stage buying decision process model by Kotler and Keller (2012: 166) is one of the most frequently utilized. The model has been used, for example, to study and identify the online buying behavior of students (Comegys, Hannula and Väisänen 2006).

1.2 Purpose of the research and research questions

The main purpose of the research is to understand how targeted social media advertising is affecting consumers’ online buying behavior and what are the reactions that took place after consumers are exposed to social media advertisements. The aim of this research is also to understand online buying decision process and the different stages that took place in decision making. Consequently, research pursues to provide information on consumer online buying behavior that companies could utilize in their social media advertising strategies. The main research question will help in understanding the vast entity of social media advertising and the occurring consumer reactions, which are included in the online buying behavior.

*How targeted social media advertising is influencing consumer’s decision making process in online buying behavior?*

There are two sub questions, which contribute the main research question. The aim of the first sub question is to identify, what aspects are involved in consumer’s online
buying behavior and what are the differences, when comparing online buying behavior to the traditional understanding of buying decision process.

*What are the stages in consumer’s online buying process?*

The second sub question will complement the current knowledge of the consumer reactions to social media advertising. Together these two sub questions may utilize social media as a part of their buying process.

*How consumers are reacting to targeted social media advertising?*

1.3 **Definition of the key concepts**

The most relevant key concepts are identified to clarify their meaning in this research. If other concepts appear in the research later on, the definitions are provided, when the concept or term is mentioned for the first time.

*Social media*

Okazaki and Taylor (2013) define social media by explaining the way of how it differs from computer-centered communications: there has been a shift towards greater accessibility and increased interaction in value creation – the locus of power has also shifted from companies to consumers. According to Zhang and Mao (2016) social media can be defined to be an entity of “online social networks, social gaming, media sharing, discussion forums, reviews, blogs, and microblogs, has dominated today’s online world”. Social media is also accessible and scalable (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger & Shapiro 2012).

The common integrative factor in all the social media definitions is the interactivity, collaboration between different counterparts and user generated content (Okazaki & Taylor 2013, Antonio, Javier & Rubio 2014). Remembering these three core definitions, social media and all its platforms can be described by the nature they create new ways for people to interact with each other.
Buying behavior

In general, buying behavior defines how consumers make their purchase decisions. Buying behavior can be interpreted by different models, but one of the most popular definitions is to understand buying behavior through five stage buying decision process model by Kotler and Keller (2012: 166). The model illustrates how consumers are going through different stages before the actual purchase (Comegys, Hannula & Väisänen 2006, Kotler & Keller 2012: 166). Consumer’s buying behavior has evolved in a way that makes buying behavior more complex than before (Kotler & Keller 2006: 11).

Targeted social media advertising

Targeted social media advertising enables companies to display advertisements on social media to a certain target group based on consumers’ demographical and psychographic information (Enders, Hungenberg, Denker & Mauch 2008, Kelly, Kerr & Drennan 2010, Taylor et al. 2011, Gironda & Korgaonkar 2014, Schumann, Wangenheim & Groene 2014). The data is collected from the users according to their browsing behavior and interests (Schumann et al. 2014). Taylor et al. (2011) add that the demographic data for relevant advertisements is collected from user profiles and contextual keywords. Targeted social media advertisements are usually an integral part of social media content and often indistinguishable from the content consumers create (Taylor et al. 2011).

According to Schumann et al. (2014) targeted advertising is increasing companies’ advertising revenues. Doorn & Hoekstra (2013) point out that the intention to purchase a product or a service is expectedly higher, if the advertisements fulfill consumer’s needs. When the advertisements are targeted efficiently, only the consumers in the relevant target group will see the advert – with targeted advertising a company can reach a specific group of people (Gironda & Korgaonkar 2014).
1.4 Methodology

This research is conducted by utilizing qualitative research methods. The main justification for this research method is to understand the chosen phenomenon adequately and comprehensively (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009: 164). The aim is to perceive how targeted social media advertising is influencing online buying behavior. Qualitative research method is chosen, since it enables deepening the understanding of the research subject – not to explain the current state of consumer behavior or to provide modifications to the current situation.

The theoretical framework for the research is created on the basis of current research, since examining current studies will help in acknowledging the different aspects of the research subject. Theoretical framework is composed based on the findings of prior research on social media and buying behavior. The theoretical framework is utilized, when creating the body for consumer interviews. According to Koskinen et al. (2005: 33) qualitative research methods will help understanding the consumer perceptions of their reactions towards social media advertising. The interviews are addressed through empirical analysis and the results are reflected to the research theory and theoretical framework.

1.5 Structure of the research

This research constructs of two parts, which are further divided into separate chapters. The theory behind social media advertising and consumer buying behavior is first integrated in order to understand the phenomenon closely. The latter part of the research encompasses the empirical research, empirical analysis and the research conclusions.

The theoretical background for the research is constructed in chapters two and three. Chapter two combines together the current state of social media advertising research. In chapter three the aim is to understand consumer buying behavior throughout the purchase process – first in offline and then in online environment. The research theory will build the foundation for empirical research by bringing together consumer online buying behavior and the current state of social media advertising.
As previously stated, many of the current studies on the efficiency of social media marketing or advertising are carried out into quantitative methods (Taylor, Lewin & Strutton 2011, Duffett 2015, Lee et al. 2015, Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman & Kannan 2016, Zhang & Mao 2016). The same methods are often utilized also in the field of buying behavior research (Comegys et al. 2006, Demangeot & Broderick 2007, Frambach, Roest & Krishnan 2007). For this reason, the aim of this research is to understand social media advertising efforts in a comprehensive manner – the chosen research method is qualitative. Qualitative research aims to comprehensive understanding of the chosen research topic (Koskinen, Alasuutari & Peltonen 2005: 16).

The fourth and the fifth chapters of the research are entitled to research methods and the empirical research. The fourth chapter further explains the research methods and in chapter five the qualitative interviews are completed and analyzed. The interviews strive to collect and gather together the interviewees’ opinions on about the research subject (Koskinen et al. 2005:33). In this research the interviews will clarify the thoughts consumers have about their online buying behavior and whether their buying decisions are influenced by targeted social media advertising. The material of the interviews is collected in as genuine environment as possible in order to gain reliable answers (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 164). The role of empirical research is to strengthen or reject the information gathered through current research Koskinen et al. 2005: 155). The last and the sixth chapter of the research will introduce the research results and how they answer the research questions. Theoretical contribution, managerial implications, research liability and limitations, and suggestions for future research are presented in the last chapter as well.
2 TARGETED ADVERTISING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

The aim of this chapter is to understand the current state of research of social media marketing and what kind of alternatives companies have for targeted social media advertising. As Knoll (2016) argues, social media is today a part of our everyday lives. This might be one reason, why different social media platforms have become more important for businesses around the globe as well.

2.1 Marketing in social media

Social media has remarkably changed the field of digital marketing (Lipsman, Mud, Rich & Bruich 2012, Li, Lin & Chiu 2014). It has enabled companies to communicate with its consumers without any restrictions regarding time or place (Antonio et al. 2014). At the same time, different social media channels are strongly built on voluntarism – consumers can interact with their friends and family free of charge. According to Enders et al. (2008) advertising on social networking sites has become common, since consumers aren’t willing to pay for the services themselves. This might be one reason, why Antonio et al. (2014) state how success in social media marketing requires well-defined communication strategy that is implemented accordingly to meet the strategic objectives. Real time marketing and interactivity in customer experience are serious advantages in effective social media marketing (Antonio et al. 2014).

Berthon et al. (2012) define social media to be a series of innovations that has led to cost-efficient content creation, interaction and capability to interact and function with others reciprocally. During the past years, companies’ presence in social media has increased. According to Okazaki and Taylor (2013) this trend indicates no signs of stagnation. Why slowing down, when social media has allowed greater accessibility, change in the value production from companies to consumers, a shift of power from companies to consumers, and the usage of mobile devices – consumers can browse social media regardless the location or time (Berthon et al. 2012). Klaus (2013) states that social media is an important driver for customer experience in multichannel environment. Companies use social media to interact with different stakeholders and utilizing social media enables tracking consumers and competitors (Klaus 2013).
Company’s social media presence could deliver important insights for the internal and external marketing strategy (Klaus 2013).

Powers et al. (2012) state that companies are under a pressure: they should leverage their marketing potential in social media to keep up with the rapidly changing business environment and competitors. According to Powers et al. (2012) the companies that use social media strategically have been able to deepen connections with their consumers and have managed to build loyalty among consumers. To succeed in their marketing, companies should utilize both digital and social media with the kind of strategy that is appealing to companies’ consumers (Power et al. 2012). Powers et al. (2012) also pinpoint that social media marketing shouldn’t be implemented as a separate function; social media marketing should be integrated with company’s other marketing efforts.

Companies’ social media efforts can be roughly divided to the efforts that don’t include any advertising budget and to social media advertising. Usually the non-advertisements in companies’ social media accounts are content: pictures, videos or text that a company produces (Berthon et al. 2012). Many companies are also actively maintaining interactive conversation – customer service in social media is highly important and many companies are, for example, answering customer feedback in social media. Even though the traditional role of the firms has changed, many firms are able to leverage their potential in social media (Berthon et al. 2012).

2.2 Social media advertising

Lee et al. (2015) state consumers are spending more time browsing and utilizing different social media networks. Social media is also a fast growing and increasingly important marketing platform (Taylor et al. 2011, Lee et al. 2015). Companies are also using larger shares of their marketing budgets on social media advertising (Lee et al. 2015). Many organizations are also planning to increase their social media marketing budgets (Zhang & Mao 2016). Marketers need to reach their customers in their natural habitat and currently the best environment is to advertise and to be active on social media. This argument is supported by Taylor et al. (2011), who imply that social media advertising is a great way to find new customers. Besides
connecting with the consumers, social media advertising is a great way to generate more sales (Gironda & Korgaonkar 2014).

The nature of social media advertising differs a little from traditional advertising methods, such as TV-commercials, advertisements on magazines or newspapers or even displays advertisements. Social media research highlights the consumers’ role and increased mobility, since social media advertising enables higher engagement, relevance and deliverability of targeted results when compared to typical internet advertising (Gironda & Korgaonkar 2014). According to Taylor et al. (2011) consumers perceive social media advertisements informative and entertaining. Consumers also feel that these kind of social media advertisements have a positive effect on their attitudes towards social media advertising in general (Taylor et al. 2011). On the contrary, participative nature of social media wasn’t influencing positively on consumers’ perceptions of social media advertisements (Taylor et al. 2011). Okazaki and Taylor (2013) add that social media enables increased mobility, involves consumers in generating information and establishing social networks.

Okazaki and Taylor (2013) explain that social media involves consumers in generating information and establishing social networks, emphasizes possibilities that social media brings to the brand-image, and enables increased mobility. Companies could to efficiently leverage their social media advertising potential, when they utilize these possibilities (Okazaki and Taylor 2013). However, recent social media research implies that social media advertising is sometimes perceived to be more intrusive than traditional advertising or online advertising (Zhang & Mao 2016). Social media advertisements are usually in between the content created by other users and this way they may interrupt the flow of new updates, when consumers are interacting with their friends, family, and other social media users.

2.3 Targeted social media advertising

Targeted advertising enables companies to increase their advertising relevance, effectiveness and revenues (Schumann et al. 2014). By acknowledging this, it’s not a surprise that targeted advertising has been an increasingly popular method to reach consumers in the digital era (Taylor 2009). There are different forms of targeted
advertising – according to Li et al. (2014) display scheduling and personalized recommendation are two important approaches in targeted internet advertising. Behavioral targeting is also an internet-based advertising strategy that helps companies to target internet advertisements to consumers (Summers, Smith, & Walker Reczek, 2016). Targeted internet advertising is based on the information that is collected from the internet users (Jay, Yu & Cude 2009, Summers et al. 2016). However, the results of targeted advertising have been quite different depending on the company, since new marketing platforms and methods are often utilized through trial and error (Taylor 2009) – some companies succeed on the first try, some need more time to adapt the new environment. Even though targeted advertising is a popular method online, the focus of this research is in targeted social media advertising.

According to Okazaki and Taylor (2013) interactive social media is well suited for personalized targeting. This same observation is made by Enders et al. (2008), who predict social media advertisements that are based on demographic and psychographic data become increasingly popular. Social media is an effective tool for personalization and this means also that consumers are able to participate actively, if they want to produce or distribute content (Okazaki and Taylor 2013). This makes any digital environment, such as social media, effective advertising platform in the eyes of marketers (Taylor 2009). Okazaki and Taylor (2013) argue that social media will play an important role in global advertising strategy, since it is a channel through which consumers can be reached on a daily basis.

Targeted advertising also enables more effective marketing. According to Doorn and Hoekstra (2013) customized advertisements are more relevant to consumers as the advertisements meet the needs of consumers at the right time. The other significant benefit of customization in advertising is that it makes information search easy and effortless – and in the best scenario unnecessary (Doorn & Hoekstra 2013). Schumann et al (2014) reinforce this viewpoint by stating how targeted advertising is powerful marketing method, since it enables companies to display advertisements according to consumers’ interests and behavior. This higher relevance of advertising can lead to higher purchasing intentions, when an advertisement completes the wishes a consumer has (Doorn & Hoekstra 2013).
Social media marketers have actually a various range of opportunities to target their advertisements. Usually, advertisements on social media are targeted based on demographical or psychographic information (Enders et al. 2008, Kelly et al. 2010, Taylor et al. 2011, Gironda & Korgaonkar 2014, Li et al. 2014). Facebook, for example, provides different ways for marketers to target advertisements. For instance, Facebook Business (2016) offers guidance to targeted advertising, as marketers can target advertisements according to location, demographical information, interests, behavior, and connections. This is an enormous advantage for marketers, since a company can reach the consumers, who are already interested in the same kind of products, have a certain marital status, are located within 20 kilometers from a company or belong to a certain age group. Consequently, advertising on Facebook has made targeted advertising possible for even smaller companies (Taylor et al. 2011). Taylor et al. (2011) also add that targeting advertising based on demographic and psychographic variables can be rather effective.

Effectiveness of social media advertisements depends on multiple different aspects. According to Taylor et al. (2011) the most effective social media advertising is entertaining, impressing consumer’s friends, providing the needed information or enhancing consumer’s self-image. If the advertisements aren’t consistent with consumer’s needs and motivations, they will most likely be perceived negatively. The most valuable advertisements on social media are the ones, which are either entertaining of informative. Additionally, companies that are able to blur the line between advertisements and other content on social media can possess a great advantage compared to other marketers. (Taylor et al. 2011.) These same findings are supported by Gironda and Korgaonkar (2014). Positive attitude, the prospective advantages and meeting the needs influence on the tendency to click advertisements (Gironda & Korgaonkar 2014). Favorable norms, opinions of close friends and family and greater self-efficacy influence consumer behavior positively, when social media users see advertisements on social media (Gironda & Korgaonkar 2014).

According to Kelly et al. (2010) some consumers understand that the social media advertisements are targeted based on the information they have provided themselves. However, consumers feel that the advertisements on social media might not be
related to their personal information (Kelly et al. 2010). For this reason, high relevance and fit are vitally important in effective targeted advertising and companies need to be able to increase the relevance of targeted advertisements (Schumann et al. 2014). When targeted advertising is meeting the needs of consumers, consumers are also more willing to accept the advertisements they see (Schumann et al. 2014). On the contrary, if social media advertisements are poorly targeted, they are not effective nor do they lure potential customers. Targeted advertising can also lead to negative consumer actions as Schumann et al. (2014) acknowledge. These kinds of challenges are vital to address, when a company is utilizing targeted advertising (Schumann et al. 2014).

2.4 Reactions to social media advertising

It may seem like a simple task for a company to go out there and to market their offering on social media. Unfortunately, successful marketing isn’t relatively easy, especially when there is a certain target group for the advertisements (Berthon et al. 2012). It’s important to acknowledge the consumers’ reactions to social media advertising, when understanding the effectiveness of targeted advertisements (Gironda & Korgaonkar 2014).

2.4.1 Negative reactions to social media advertising

It can’t be denied – different social media channels are full of sponsored content. Consumers consider advertising to be intrusive, annoying and above all interrupting their normal browsing (Retie 2001). Social media advertising could have become more intrusive or annoying to consumers, since it interrupts their normal interaction and communication between friends (Doorn & Hoekstra 2013, Zhang & Mao 2016). Zhang and Mao (2016) also mention that the unique environment of social media could influence the way consumers feel about advertising. Even though targeted advertising leads to higher purchase intentions among consumers, the positive effects are often weakened by the sense of that advertisements are too intensely interrupting consumers (Doorn & Hoekstra 2013). After these findings, it’s not a surprise that the prior research implies that targeted advertising can simultaneously lead to higher purchase intentions and higher levels of perceived intrusiveness. Higher levels of
perceived intrusiveness have a negative effect on the intention to purchase a product or a service. (Doorn & Hoekstra 2013.)

Schumann et al. (2014) imply that consumers are rather skeptical when it comes to targeted advertising. Skepticism towards internet advertising has been acknowledged before, but the intrusiveness of social media advertising has only quite recently been a subject for marketing research (Kelly et al. 2010). Kelly et al. (2010) completed a research on social media advertising avoidance and their findings indicate that consumers often avoid social media advertisements. One of the reasons for avoiding advertisements is that consumers feel the advertised product isn’t relevant to them (Kelly et al. 2010, Doorn & Hoekstra 2013). Taylor et al. (2011) agree on these arguments – consumers feel that social media advertising is invasive and generates privacy concerns. These concerns may cause negative attitudes towards social media advertising (Taylor et al. 2011).

According to Doorn and Hoekstra (2013) consumers are even more skeptical towards social media advertising, when the message they receive is highly personalized. This finding is closely related to the privacy concerns that consumers might have, when they face targeted advertising on social media (Doorn & Hoekstra 2013). Consumers are uncertain how advertisers have discovered the particular details about them and might feel intimidated because of it (Taylor et al. 2011). One possible outcome for this perceived intrusiveness is that consumer end up withdrawing from the initial purchase intention (Doorn & Hoekstra 2013).

2.4.2 Positive reactions to social media advertising

Acknowledging the challenges in effective targeting, advertisers need to learn how to create social media advertisements that affect consumers positively, when they are browsing social media. Because of the skepticism and conscious avoidance, marketers face a challenge when advertising on social media. It can be difficult to determine whether social media advertising generates positive or negative attitudes. The same ads that originally generated positive response can develop negative attitudes, if consumers feel their privacy had been compromised. (Taylor et al. 2011.)
Targeted and personalized advertising can also arouse positive feelings when advertisements are done correctly and they meet the individual interests of the consumers (Schumann et al. 2014). Even if consumers feel they are avoiding social media advertising, they’re reactions and opinions are rather positive, when they find the advertisements engaging (Kelly et al. 2010). Doorn and Hoekstra (2013) agree on this: the negative effects of targeted advertising are compensated if the advertisements meet the needs of consumers. When advertisements are targeted based on the behavioral information, consumers’ reactions are likely to be positive (Summers et al. 2016). Additionally, the intention to buy is higher, when an ad meets the needs of the consumer (Doorn & Hoekstra 2013).

According to Gironda and Korgaonkar (2014) social media users are commonly reacting positively and open-mindedly to social media advertisements. When it comes to the actual clicks on social media advertisements, users tend to click advertisements, if the offering looks useful, user already favors the brand, advertisement contains valuable information, user needed the product or the advertised product was compatible with user’s existing products (Gironda & Korgaonkar 2014). Gironda and Korgaonkar (2014) also add that the probable ease of use and the influence of family and relatives are also affecting the user’s propensity to click an advertisement.
3 DECISION MAKING IN ONLINE BUYING BEHAVIOR

The aim of this chapter is to understand online buying behavior and to recognize the different stages and variables there are. By gaining comprehensive conception of the current knowledge of the subject, it is possible to gain deeper understanding of how online buying behavior is influenced by targeted social media advertising.

3.1 Consumer buying process

Kotler and Keller (2006: 11) imply that the traditional buying process has evolved in a way that makes buying behavior more complex than before. The traditional way of purchasing should be reconsidered, since people interact with companies more often than before as they search for information, engage with the brand and hear about it on social media. Demengeot and Broderick (2007) agree with this argument, since they refer to social media as an enabler of active discussions and peer reviews: something that is completely new compared to traditional purchasing, where market place is a physical environment for exchange of goods and services.

In general, there are certain stages that are recognized in buying behavior and the way consumers make their purchase decisions. The traditional five stage buying process model by Kotler and Keller (2006: 177, 2012: 166) (Figure 1) is the foundation in understanding consumer decision making process (Comegys et al. 2006). The model is also known as EKB Model, since it’s originally introduced in 1968 by Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell – now the model is widely utilized in understanding consumer behavior (Engel, Kollat & Blackwell 1995). The five different stages of the model are need recognition, information search, evaluation, purchase decision and postpurchase behavior (Kotler & Keller 2006: 177, 2012: 166). The model illustrates how the first four stages of buying process take place before the actual purchase (Comegys, Hannula & Väisänen 2006, Kotler & Keller 2012: 166). Purchase decision is affected by different factors even before the actual purchase is made.
The model comprehensively describes the different aspects of the buying process and gives also a greater understanding of how marketers could benefit from their marketing activities. Kotler and Keller (2012: 166) define that the model is important in understanding how consumers make their purchase decisions. Also, Kotler and Keller cover the possible exceptions, since there is a possibility that a consumer doesn’t necessarily go through all the states in every buying situation (2006: 229). This finding will give the purchasing process more opportunities for variation in occasional situations.

### 3.2 Buying behavior online

The volume of online shopping has significantly increased in the past years (Comegys et al. 2006, Demangeot & Broderick 2007, Vazquez & Xu 2009, Faqih 2013, Ashraf, Narongsak & Auh 2014, Wann-Yih & Ching-Ching 2015). This means that internet has become a common platform that is utilized in the buying decision process (Comegys et al. 2006). Since volumes and buying frequency have increased, it is important to understand consumer buying behavior in online environment. Guo and Barnes (2011) imply that the channel preference and the actual decision whether the purchase is made online or offline is rather relevant, when it comes to understanding online buying behavior.

Channel choice is important from a company’s perspective as well, since according to Klaus (2013) consumers’ compelling online experiences have a positive effect on company’s success. Guzzo et al. (2016) state that consumers are more willing to purchase online, since online shopping is reducing the time and money spent on shopping. According to Powers et al. (2012) more and more consumers are connected to each other through different digital channels. Power et al. (2012) imply that consumers, who are constantly online, consider online shopping as normal
everyday activity – they might not perceive shopping as separate action. For this reason, the traditional and linear buying decision process doesn’t necessarily explain consumer’s buying behavior online. Consumers might enter the buying process at different stages and the traditional model should be reconsidered. (Powers et al. 2012.)

There are few aspects that may affect online buying behavior. Technology acceptance and attitudes towards online shopping have a high effect on intention to purchase something online (Vazquez & Xu 2009, Faqih 2013, Ashraf et al. 2014, Pascual-Miguel, Agudo-Peregrina & Chaparro-Peláez 2015, Wann-Yih & Ching-Ching 2015). This factor is acknowledged also in the early online buying behavior research by Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999), who imply that online buying behavior and volume of the purchases are affected by the time available and the competences to utilize technology. These findings illustrate that consumers with high competence in using electronic equipment are more likely to purchase products or services online.

The perceived risks also affect the attitudes towards online shopping as well as the online purchase intention (Faqih 2013, Wann-Yih & Ching-Ching 2015). Korgaonkar and Wolin have also made the same suggestion already in 1999, since they propose that transaction security, privacy, and non-transactional privacy affect the online shopping tendency. For example, the liability of product shipment and the permission to use personal information are few prerequisites in online shopping, where the issues of trust and risk play a significant role (San Martín & Camarero 2009, Guzzo et al. 2016).

According to Vazquez & Xu (2009) attitudes and motivations affect the intention to purchase online. Motivations are typically divided into utilitarian and hedonic motives; hedonic motives are related to fun and enjoyment whereas utilitarian motives are related to, for example, price and convenience (Childers, Carr, Peck & Carson 2001). Online purchase intention and online information search are significantly influenced by utilitarian and hedonic motives (Vazquez & Xu 2009). Childers et al. (2001) recognize that hedonic motives have stronger impact on the attitudes towards online shopping. Utilitarian motives are often more goal-oriented and the initial goal might affect the channel choice between physical and online stores (Childers et al. 2001).
Shim et al. (2001) add that attitudes towards online shopping are important in predicting future purchasing behavior. Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) also recognize motivations: social escapism, information, interactive control, socialization, and economic motivation that influence consumers’ web usage and the tendency to shop online.

Wann-Yih and Ching-Ching (2015) add that personal traits are related to online purchase intentions. Ranaweera et al. (2008) also argue that personality characteristics and traits are affecting online purchase intentions and the likelihood to buy online. Even though consumer’s personal traits are significant in online buying, attitudes and attitude formation are even more relevant in affecting person’s buying intention (Wann-Yih and Ching-Ching 2015).

3.3 Consumer’s buying process online

Buying process model is traditionally viewed as a linear series of actions that take place offline. However, Demangeot and Broderick (2007) argument that shopping environment is completely different online, since products are only presented online and they aren’t physical goods that people could touch and evaluate. Kotler & Keller (2006: 192), Powers et al. (2012) and Sunil (2015) also recognize that the marketplace is significantly renewed for good: consumers can shop online, offline or utilize both channels. These findings indicate that online buying behavior might differ from traditional buying process offline. The argument by Wann-Yih and Ching-Ching (2015) support this view, since they acknowledge the fragmented nature of prior online shopping research and imply how motivations, risks and trust in online buying could differ compared to traditional buying processes.

Comegys et al. (2006) address the online buying behavior among Finnish and American students. They utilize the five stage buying decision process model by Keller and Kotler (2006: 177, 2012:166) and note that even though online buying processes resemble the buying process offline, there can be identified few changes and modifications that took place in online shopping environment.
3.3.1 Need recognition

According to Kotler and Keller (2012: 167) the buying process begins, when a consumer recognizes a problem or a need that is triggered by an internal or external stimulus. This group of actions forms the first stage of the process: need recognition. The effectiveness of different marketing efforts lies in the extent to which a company can generate the external stimuli (Kotler and Keller 2012: 167).

According to Comegys et al. (2006) every stage of the buying process has its own implications online. In stage one the frequency of purchases is a game changer: if a consumer is buying products or services on a frequent basis, the behavior of the consumer changes. Instead of seeking different options, consumers tend to lean on routines and make their decision based on previous purchases giving marketers the possibility to increase their sales, if they succeed in lowering the threshold for shopping (Comegys et al. 2006, Powers et al. 2012).

3.3.2 Information search

The second stage of the buying process, information search, can be divided into two different categories: heightened attention and active information search (Kotler & Keller 2012: 166). Kotler and Keller imply (2012: 191) that from a company’s point of view, the most interesting factors in the stage two are the possible information sources that encompass personal, commercial, public and experiential sources of information. Even though consumers usually receive most of the information through commercial sources, the personal sources are often the most valuable ones (Kotler & Keller 2012: 166). According to Demangeot & Broderick (2007) all shoppers are seeking information regardless the intention: consumers may be engaged by pre-purchase information gathering process, or they might be carelessly glancing through interesting product categories.

Demangeot and Broderick (2007) state consumers use online shopping environments, when they are exploring the company’s offering. The ease of finding information is one key driver in buying process online and offline (Sunil 2015). For this reason, online environment plays an important role in information search
depending on the skill set of the consumer. The differences in information search vary between consumers with various skills or expertise – if a consumer is good in searching for information or has an excellent knowledge about a product; he or she will likely spent less time on information search. The actual need for information search decreases in the first place, if a consumer is more capable to make decisions concerning the offering. If consumer lacks information, but possesses a great knowledge about the search methods online, the process of searching information is relatively easy and the time spent on information search is reduced, because of the search efficiency. The efficiency of information search is a rather fundamental implication, since browsing is one of the most common search methods online. (Comegys et al. 2006.)

Stibel (2005) and Powers et al. (2012), however, recognize that the vast amount of information available makes it difficult to find the desired answers online. Because of this, company websites should be designed to meet the usability needs of the consumers, otherwise consumers might end up making purchases elsewhere (Stibel 2005). Sunil (2015) agrees this viewpoint, since easy browsing of the available offering impacts the buying decision online and offline. Ashraf et al. (2014) reinforces the impact of perceived ease of use when it comes to online buying intention, especially among the consumers, who aren’t actively making purchases online. The way information is presented to a consumer has an enormous impact on how the information is interpreted and used (Stibel 2005). Therefore companies should apply models through which they enable consumers to use and process information effortlessly online (Stibel 2005, Powers et al. 2012, Faqih 2013).

3.3.3 Evaluation

Evaluation is the third stage of the buying process and it describes how consumers compare the value and the brand of a product. This stage of the process can be very different depending on the consumer itself or the purchase she or he is about to make. There are few features that can be identified, when consumers are evaluating a good: consumers will seek for ways to fulfill a need and they look for the benefits that the purchase brings – these are both recognizable in the attributes each product includes. Most consumers judge products by several different attributes and
emphasize the attributes that bring them the best benefits (Kotler & Keller 2012: 168–196.) According to Comegys et al. (2006) this stage includes only the products that contain the minimum requirements for the desired product or service.

Consumers tend to evaluate the offering differently depending on different attributes, such as price, ease in processing the brand information, reliability of the product or service and positive correlation between the features of product or service (Comegys et al. 2006). According to Sunil (2015) other relevant variables besides price are special sales, rebates and coupons. The importance of different attributes may vary. Comegys et al. (2006) argue that consumers shopping online, quite surprisingly, pay only a little attention to the price of a product, which is an important attribute in offline buying behavior. This claim has also opposite arguments – for example Vazquez and Xu (2009), Sunil (2015) as well as Guzzo, Ferri and Grifoni (2016) state that price is one relevant variant in online shopping. Comegys et al. (2006) demonstrate their thought by stating consumers might feel that prices have only minor variation online and price won’t be an important attribute because of this.

The actual evaluation process is also different, when evaluating products or services online. Sunil (2015) emphasizes that physical examination of products, brand selection and variety, exchange refund policy for returns, quality of the merchandise, ability to compare product are important elements of evaluation. These variables differ strongly, when purchase is made online. Perceived risk can also diminish the intention to buy online (Smith & Sivakumar 2004, San Martín & Camarero 2009, Faqih 2013). According to San Martín and Camarero (2009) the risks in online buying are also often related to the limitations to evaluate the desired product or service. Guzzo et al. (2016) adds that trust plays an important role also when it comes to the evaluation of different websites. Trust influences the attitudes that consumers generate about the company and affects the buying behavior in general (San Martín & Camarero 2009, Yih and Ching-Ching 2015).

3.3.4 Purchase decision

When it comes to the actual purchase decision, stage four, consumers make parallel sub-decisions about brands, dealers, quantity, timing and payment methods. The
more the purchase has to do with everyday routines, such as groceries, the fewer sub-decisions consumers will make. This is probably a conclusion from choice heuristics, when consumers make “mental shortcuts” in their decision making process (Kotler & Keller 2012: 170–171.) In addition to sub-decisions, decision making is influenced by the attitudes of others as well as the possible unexpected factors that may occur, when the purchase decision should be made (Comegys et al. 2006).

The effect of external factors in online buying generates differing opinions. Comegys et al. (2006) state that external factors play usually a smaller role online, since consumers are more likely making decisions in a more private environment, where other people’s influence is significantly reduced. More recent research has a rather different approach: social factors and family members’ experiences of a product will affect the buying intension online (Sunil 2015). Sunil (2015) also adds that the availability and the speed of selection influence the purchase decision.

Ashraf et al. (2014) argue that technology acceptance and trust are also together influencing the consumer’s purchasing decisions online. This happens because of the intangible nature of online buying – the importance of trust increases, when the product is not in your hands at the moment of purchase (Ashraf et al. 2014). San Martín and Camarero (2009) also pinpoint the meaning of trust creation as a fundamental aspect in online store development. Faqih (2013) adds that companies should understand how consumers perceive risks and how they are trying to diminish them in their buying processes. Consumers might fear, for example, the loss of credit card information or other personal data (Smith & Sivakumar 2004). Service and website quality as well as customer satisfaction are crucial when diminishing the lack of trust and perceived risk. Additionally, the final purchase decision is affected by the ease of use – if company website isn’t easy and effective to use, consumers might draw back from the initial intention to purchase (Guzzo et al. 2016). This same finding is supported by Wann-Yih and Ching-Ching (2015); perceived ease of use has a significant impact on online buying intention.
3.3.5 Postpurchase behavior

The last stage of the buying decision process is postpurchase behavior. This resembles marketers that they need to monitor not only the factors preceding the purchase, but also the satisfaction, actions and product uses after the purchase is made. Consumer satisfaction tells marketer whether the good or service has met the expectations consumers had. The level of satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) results in postpurchase actions that consumers make. Satisfied consumers will likely purchase again, while dissatisfaction may lead to disposal or returns of the purchased items. Dissatisfaction might also result in poor feedback, which might be very harmful from the company’s point of view. Consequently, postpurchase communication is an important feature in successful CRM (customer relationship management). It is also relevant to follow postpurchase usage, since it is closely related to the frequency of repurchases. Frequently purchased goods and services are, without a doubt, more beneficial to the company than rarely purchased ones (Kotler & Keller 2012: 172–173.)

The last stage of purchase process model is drastically affected by online buying behavior, since online environment enables consumer to react differently, since there are actually different ways to communicate online. Especially when consumers are dissatisfied, there are some differences in the complaining threshold and the level of contentment when comparing online and offline purchases (Comegys et al. 2006). Berthon et al. (2012) also point out that online environment is actually a public channel for postpurchase behavior. Internet and social media are channels, where complaints might easily spread internationally (Berthon et al. 2012). According to Khalifa and Liu (2007) and Guzzo et al. (2016) satisfied consumers also tend to react more positively towards online shopping and the tendency of repurchasing is relatively higher. For these reasons companies should not underestimate the last stage of the buying decision process – particularly in online environment.

Online buying process model (Figure 2), represents the buying process model by Kotler and Keller (2012), which has been completed with the online-specific variables. There are few features that are closely related to the original model and these variables are presented being a part of the different stages of the buying
decision process model. Furthermore, it can be recognized that technology acceptance and attitudes towards online shopping as well as motivations and traits can affect the consumer buying behavior at any stage of the buying process, when purchasing takes place online.

![Figure 2. Online buying process model (adapted from Kotler and Keller 2012)](image)

### 3.4 Social media advertising and online buying behavior

The environment, in which consumers operate, has an effect on the consumer behavior (Kumar et al. 2016). This argument is supported by Powers et al. (2016), who state that digital and social media have changed the way consumers feel about purchasing. Hudson and Thal (2013) agree this viewpoint and acknowledge how social media has changed the consumer decision process. Therefore it is important to learn how social media influences consumers’ emotional and behavioral responses in order to create more effective social media marketing strategies. This is also important, when examining purchase decisions – according to Guzzo et al. (2016) consumers utilize social media, when they deciding what to buy.

According to Kumar et al. (2016) the consumers, who are familiar with the company, good in using new technologies, and active users of social media, are most receptive for social media marketing content. Additionally, after Lee et al. (2015) the long-term value can turn into consumer engagement and increased awareness of the company. This means that connections between a consumer and a company can be strengthen through social media (Kumar et al. 2016). Engaging consumers can also turn into profits, since the content generated by a company on social media has increased the spending on company’s products (Kumar et al. 2016). This is rather relevant, since growth in sales is certainly one key driver in social media advertising. Powers et al. (2016) identify that companies should understand when and how
consumers utilize social media in their buying processes. Despite the fact advertising on social media has increased, Zhang and Mao (2016) have also acknowledged that companies are having difficulties to identify how social media ad clicks are leading consumers to purchase company’s products.

Zhang and Mao (2016) state that consumers, who are motivated to shop or consume are more willing to perceive advertisements on social media. The current state of motivation will also influence the way consumers perceive advertisements: if the advertisements are either informative or entertaining, consumers will more likely react to the advertisements. The relevance and content of the adverts have also a great influence on the way consumers will react and whether the reaction is positive or negative. The more the advertisements are compatible with the social media content consumers consume, the more consumers will generate positive responses towards the advertisements. (Zhang & Mao 2016.) This argument is supported by De Keyzer, Dens and De Pelsmacker (2015), who state that personalization improves the response towards advertisements. These opinions are in line with the findings made offline. According to Turley & Milliman (2000) atmospheric variables have also an influence on buying behavior offline and Lee & Labroo (2004) state that if consumers are repeatedly exposed to a product, they would position it more favorably than others.

According to Powers et al. (2012) a little over one fifth (21 %) of the consumers believe that social media provides information that helped them decide what to buy. Almost as many consumers (18 %) believe that they could find new brands and products from social media, they didn’t even new exist (Powers et al. 2012). These findings are supported in the social media advertising research concluded by Kumar et al. (2016), who state social media marketing is powerful method for companies, when they want to embrace and nurture the relationships with their customers. Hudson and Thal (2013) add that social media campaigns are used to drive people to company’s websites. Investing in social media marketing will have a positive impact on consumer behavior and the purchases consumers make (Kumar et al. 2016). This finding is supported by Duffett (2015), who states that Facebook advertising has a positive influence on buying behavior among young people.
Consumer behavior can be understood when interpreting the behavioral intentions that result after consumers have been exposed to company’s content (Zhang & Mao 2016). According to Zhang and Mao (2016) the reactions to the advertisements and the intentions to purchase a good or service are affected by the feelings consumers have before even seeing an advert. Social media advertisements should be consistent with the current motivations – otherwise they might be interpreted in a negative manner (Taylor et al. 2011). If consumers are either informed or entertained by the social media advertisement, the ad will probably be processed differently compared to an ad that doesn’t arouse any emotions (Zhang & Mao 2016). Quite surprisingly, consumers may react positively to different social media advertisements even though online advertising is in general considered to be intrusive and interruptive (Retie 2001). The prior-advertisement feelings can also impact the reactions to the advertisement: if consumers are in a mood for shopping, social media advertising can reinforce the effects and lead to purchase (Zhang & Mao 2016). Comegys et al. (2006) point out that customization will have a positive effect on the consumer behavior, since relevant advertisements will more likely awake consumers’ attention. Accurate targeting enables companies to target their advertising directly to individual respondents (Comegys et al. 2006).

Whether consumers click advertisements on social media depends on the perceived informativeness, entertainment, and attitudes towards social media advertisements (Zhang & Mao 2016). According to Chang and Mao (2016) social media advertising can affect consumer buying behavior at any stage of the buying process. Even though researchers pinpoint the importance of consumer motivation, the tendency to click an advertisement and the initial intention to purchase can all be affected by social media advertisements.

3.5 Targeted social media advertising and consumer decision making in online buying behavior

The theoretical framework (Figure 3) for the research is conducted by the theoretical findings. In chapter 2 the emphasis was on social media advertising and especially on targeted social media advertisements. The focus of chapter 3 was on online buying behavior that is approached with the buying decision process model by Kotler and
Keller (2012). In this research, online buying behavior is perceived through the traditional model and the different features that influence buying behavior in online environment.

Taylor et al. (2011) acknowledge that social media marketing will increase and gain more importance. The findings indicate that targeted advertising is a great enabler, when it comes to increasing company’s revenue (Schumann et al. 2014). Targeted advertising is a common trend (Taylor 2009) and social media is a well suited platform for personalized targeting (Okazaki & Taylor 2013). The advertisements on social media are most commonly targeted based on consumer information: demographical or psychographic data (Enders et al. 2008, Kelly et al. 2010, Taylor et al. 2011, Gironda & Korgaonkar 2014). It is also quite evident that different negative and positive reactions affect the attitudes to the advertisements and consumer behavior (Taylor et al. 2011, Doorn and Hoekstra 2013, Gironda and Korgaonkar 2014, Schumann et al. 2014, Zhang and Mao 2016).

The traditional buying decision process model by Kotler and Keller (2012) has its focus on traditional buying process that takes place offline. However, multiple features can be identified that have an impact on the buying process, when the purchase is made in online environment. Comegys et al. (2006) concentrate particularly on the implications of the purchase process model in online buying, but many other significant findings can also be attached to the stages of the buying decision process as well (Stibel 2005, Demangeot and Broderick 2007, Berthon et al. 2012, Powers et al. 2012, Faqih 2013, Sunil 2015, Pascual-Miguel et al. 2015, Guzzo et al. 2016). The traditional model is completed with online-specific features to demonstrate the buying process online. Additionally, there are few features that impact online buying behavior, but cannot be divided to meet the stages of the traditional buying decision process. These features are technology acceptance and attitudes towards online shopping and motivations and traits (Vazquez and Xu 2009, Wann-Yih and Ching-Ching 2015). These features might impact consumer behavior at different points of the buying process.

Targeted social media advertising is clearly affecting consumer behavior and the way consumers make purchases (Powers et al. 2016). Zhang and Mao (2016) believe that
response and reactions to social media advertising depend on consumer motivation and the level to which the content meet consumer’s needs. Consequently, social media advertising is influencing consumer behavior (Hudson & Thal 2013, Duffett 2015, Kumar et al. 2016, Powers et al. 2016, Zhang & Mao 2016). Current research is yet fragmented and fails to provide further understanding of how targeted social media advertising is affecting buying behavior.

Figure 3 illustrates how buying decision process online (Figure 2, adapted from Kotler & Keller 2012) is influenced by targeted social media advertising. Even though the influence of targeted social media advertising is acknowledged, the impact on the different stages of online buying decision process is uncertain. For this reason, there are no specifications for the possible consequences on the different stages – it is interpreted that social media advertising might affect buying behavior at any point of the process. As stated in chapter 1, this research aims to understand how consumers’ online buying behavior is affected by the company’s targeted social media advertising. The arrows from targeted social media advertising visualize the possible relations and influence of targeted advertising to each stage of the online buying process.

Figure 3. Targeted social media advertising influencing online buying process
4 DATA AND RESEARCH METHODS

In this chapter the chosen research method is introduced as well as the research implementation; how the target group is determined for the interviews and through which methods the empirical data is analyzed.

4.1 Qualitative research

The chosen research method is qualitative, since the aim is to further understand the phenomenon (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 27, Koskinen et al. 2005: 16). In qualitative research, the need for explanations or simulations is often less significant (Koskinen et al. 2005: 16). The objective is to understand how humans perceive, think and feel and what are the motives behind their actions (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 27). Through gaining wider understanding, it is possible to find different meanings (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 28). To be able to create new, a researcher has to interpret the research subject with a fresh viewpoint (Koskinen et al. 2005: 24).

In a qualitative research, there are different strategies for gathering information. The chosen strategy in this research is phenomenography, where the aim is to describe or write about the chosen research topic. Specifically, phenomenography is a common method to understand the perceptions and opinions people may have. It is good to acknowledge, how people may have very different ideas on the same topics, depending on the age, education, previous experiences and gender. In phenomenography the research implementation follows a certain structure, where the theoretical research is completed with an empirical research that usually utilizes interviews, where the researcher strives to understand the perceptions and groups the gained data based on the answers. (Metsämuuronen 2003: 169-175.) Hirsjärvi and Hurme (200: 168) add that phenomenography strives to find new ideas of how individuals could perceive the chosen research subject from a new viewpoint. In phenomenography, the aim is to find deeper meanings by observing the phenomenon closely (Eskola & Suoranta 1998: 146).

The most common methods for gathering empirical data in qualitative research are interviews, questionnaires, observation and analysis of pre-existing documents.
Interviews are often completed as face-to-face interviews, were the interviewees answer the presented questions orally (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 75). The great asset of interviews is in the interactive nature of the interview: the interviewer can explain or repeat questions and provide additional information to the interviewee (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 75). In this research, semi-structured interviews are used to gather the empirical data for the research. According to Saunders and Thornhill (2009: 318) interviews are a useful way to gather reliable data to answer the research objectives. Interview is a relevant method for information gathering, when the aim of the research is to understand and interpret the results in a way that provides descriptive examples of the chosen topic (Metsämuuronen 2003: 187).

4.2 Research implementation

The empirical research is implemented by gathering data through semi-structured interviews. The pre-defined target group is determined for the interviews and the reasoning behind the target group definition is introduced. The planning and implementation of the semi-structured interviews is also presented in this subchapter.

4.2.1 Research target group

To narrow done the target audience, it is important to find a relevant target group for the research. This is a rather common method in qualitative research, were the target group is often defined to meet the research objectives, not chosen by random sampling (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004: 155). Choosing the target group for interviews is extremely important, since defining target group will affect the research and the different limitations of the target group will affect the research settings as well as the research outcomes (Koskinen & Alasuutari 2005: 24). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002: 88) justify that one relevant method for sampling of the target group is to choose interviewees that have a great knowledge on the research subject (2002: 88).
As stated in the research introduction, young consumers are active users of social media – nearly 90% of the 16–24 year-old Finnish young adults use social media several times a day (Statistics Finland, 2015). According to Taylor et al. (2011) different social media networks are an effective channel to engage and contact consumers. The aim of the research is to understand the possible influence of targeted social media advertisements on online buying behavior. For this reason, the target group consists of interviewees, who make purchases online. According to Statistics Finland (2015) almost 90% of 16–44 year-olds have purchased something online within the past year. This demographic group is rather large, and in order to narrow down the sampling, the respondents are chosen within a smaller age group. This is a relevant argument, since 25–44 years old consumers are even more active shoppers online – 67% of consumers in this demographic group have purchased products or services online within the past three months (Statistics Finland, 2015). Over half of the consumers in this target group have spent over 100 euros on their purchases in the last three months (Statistics Finland, 2015). Guzzo et al. (2016) also imply that young adults find online shopping to be easier than consumers in other age groups.

Table 1. Interviewees’ information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Interview location</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
<th>Interview length (min)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Private apartment</td>
<td>19.3.2017</td>
<td>51:57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Professional athlete</td>
<td>Private apartment</td>
<td>23.3.2017</td>
<td>36:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Public health nurse student</td>
<td>Private apartment</td>
<td>25.3.2017</td>
<td>34:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Practical nurse</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>25.3.2017</td>
<td>47:07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Medical student</td>
<td>Private apartment</td>
<td>28.3.2017</td>
<td>65:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
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<td>Car rental officer</td>
<td>Private apartment</td>
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<td>G</td>
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<td>Economics student</td>
<td>Private apartment</td>
<td>31.3.2017</td>
<td>49:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Salesperson</td>
<td>Private apartment</td>
<td>5.4.2017</td>
<td>48:33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.2 Semi-structured interview

Metsämuuronen (2003: 186–187) defines that an interview is pre-defined, guided by the interviewer, always interactive and strives to gather systematical information. The aim of an interview is simple – interviewer strives to clarify the interviewee’s opinions and ideas (Eskola & Suoranta 1996: 86). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002: 74) point out that interviewing people is a powerful method, when the aim is to understand, what people think and what are the reasons behind their behavior. It depends on the research, whether the framework for the interview is strictly guided by the theoretical framework of the research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 78).

A semi-structured interview regularly constructs from a list of questions that are structured according to the existing themes (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 77, Saunders & Thornhill 2009: 320). Instead of creating numerical generalizations or statistical analysis, semi-structured interviews strive to understand relationships between different variables (Saunders & Thornhill 2009: 322). Semi-structured interviews, however, give the interviewer the possibility to highlight certain questions, ask additional questions and go through the questions in different order to maintain the natural flow of conversation (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 75, Saunders & Thornhill 2009: 320). Freedom and the adjustable nature of semi-structured interview diminish the risk that there might occur misunderstandings, since interviewer can explain and repeat the questions if it is necessary (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 75). Despite the possibility of certain freedom, the interviewer should address all the relevant questions to ensure that the necessary information is gathered during the interview (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 103). The additional research questions might be relevant when it comes to the research findings, since the additional questions commonly play a great role in gaining a better understanding of the interviewees’ own opinions (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 125, Saunders & Thornhill 2009: 320). During a semi-structured interview the researcher can guide the situation without controlling the conversation too drastically (Koskinen et al. 2005: 105).

Because of the freedom and the conversational nature of semi-structured interviews, the interviews may differ a little from each other (Saunders & Thornhill 2009: 320). The actual interview is also a social situation, where the interviewer and interviewee
can reflect and affect each other’s actions – there is the need to listen to carefully and to adapt the presence of the other person (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 94). For this reason, interviewees can also affect the possible outcomes of the interview, since they can lead the conversation to different areas and deepen the understanding of the subject in a way the interviewer didn’t expect (Saunders & Thornhill 2009: 324). Saunders and Thornhill add that even though semi-structured interviews allow interviewer to approach the chosen subject or topic in various ways, interviewer must also be aware that the way individuals interact with each other can affect the interview outcome (Saunders & Thornhill 2009: 324).

The framework for the interviews is in a key role in creating successful empirical analysis. A good framework guides the interview and will help in securing the natural flow of conversation (Koskinen et al. 2005: 108). Koskinen et al. (2005: 108) also pinpoint that the importance of the interview framework is twofold: it creates a basis for the research and helps the interviewer to address all the important aspects of the interview.

For the implementation of data analysis, the semi-structured interviews are audio-recorded to ensure that the answers of the interviewees’ are utilized accordingly (Saunders & Thornhill 2009: 320-321). When interviews are recorded, all the communication in the interview is recorded without disruptions (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 92). Audio-recording also gives the interviewer the possibility to concentrate on performing the actual interview instead of writing notes of the conversation (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 92).

The interviews were all completed in each interviewee’s private apartment, where the possible disruptions and distractions were excluded from the situation. Preventing the possible distractions is important in gaining reliable results, especially if there are other people, who might interrupt the flow of the interview (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 127). According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002: 75) the themes of the interview should be explained to the interviewees to gain successful results. The interviewees were explained the most important themes to ensure that they fit the relevant target group that is defined for the research. On the contrary, in order to gain spontaneous and reliable answers, the complete interview framework wasn’t presented to the
interviewees before the interview. For this reason, every interview began with a closer introduction to the themes and subjects of the interview.

Seven out of eight interviews were completed as face-to-face interviews and the conversations were audio-recorded with the permission of each interviewee. One of the interviews was completed as a Skype interview and the interview was recorded on a video. The length of the interviews varied from 30 minutes to 55 minutes.

4.3 Data analysis

The aim of empirical analysis is to create new information about the research subject (Eskola & Suoranta 1998: 138). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002: 96–97) imply that qualitative data is often analyzed using inductive (from individual to general) or deductive (from general to individual) approach, where the reasoning is based on the common interpretation of the research logic. In this research, however, abductive approach is used in analyzing empirical data. Abductive approach is utilized, since abductive approach enables an analysis that is based on the assumptions that are made in the research theory (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 136). To gain further understanding of the research subject, abductive reasoning utilizes elements from both research theory and empirical analysis. For this reason, theoretical models are utilized parallel with empirical data driven analysis. The data is covered utilizing theory-bound analysis, where empirical data is guiding the analysis. At the beginning of the analysis, the data is analyzed by emphasizing the meaning of empirical findings – research theory is utilized more thoroughly at the last stages of analysis. Often theory-bound logic comprehends abductive reasoning: the research process is based on both empirical data and existing theoretical findings (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 98–99.)

According to Eskola and Suoranta (1998: 145), the fascinating aspect in an analysis is the interpretative nature of the interviews. A relevant part of the data analysis is to understand the empirical data and to reveal unexpected findings (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2004: 155). This can be achieved through a careful observation of the empirical material – relevant themes need persistent and critical examination before researcher can separate the relevant aspects into the actual analysis (Koskinen et al.
Saunders and Thornhill (2009: 482) add that summarizing and categorizing empirical data is important before the actual analysis can take place. Categorization helps in acknowledging relationships between the different attributes (Saunders & Thornhill 2009: 492). Material thematizing (categorizing empirical material according to themes) is analyzing material according to themes that are common in different interviews (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 173).

Transcribing audio-recorded material is a common procedure that it used before the actual data analysis can begin (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004: 210). However, there is no certain guide for the transcription process (Hirsjärvi et al. 2004: 210, Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 139). The audio-recorded material can be transcribed selectively, where only some of the material is transcribed or word-to-word, where the whole dialogue is captured (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 138). In this research, all of the interviews were completed in Finnish and the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed word-to-word. In the empirical analysis, the citations of the transcribed material are used to thematize the data and to make empirical conclusions (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 138). Dividing the empirical data into themes helps the researcher to evaluate the different subjects in each interview that are relevant from the research target’s perspective (Eskola & Suoranta 1998: 175–176).

In this research the empirical data is categorized according to different themes. This allows the researcher to understand and divide the opinions, which are addressed during the interviews (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 95). Categorizing empirical data around relevant themes also makes it possible to find themes that occur repeatedly in the data. The main themes according to the analysis are: online buying behavior and attitudes towards online shopping, reactions to social media advertisements and the influence of targeted social media advertisements on online buying behavior.
5 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

In this chapter the semi-structured interviews are analyzed using the methods described in chapter 4. Empirical results are introduced in this chapter and theoretical framework is updated accordingly to meet the research results.

The beginning of the empirical analysis usually includes a thorough examination of the empirical data – this helps in acknowledging certain themes that may repeatedly stand out from the material (Koskinen et al. 2005: 231). This preliminary exploration will make it easier to proceed in the actual analysis (Koskinen et al. 2005: 232).

5.1 Online buying behavior and attitudes to online purchases

According to the theoretical findings, the tendency to buy online is affected by the opinions and behavioral customs a person might have. Therefore it is important to acknowledge the basis of online buying behavior in order to understand the role and effects of targeted social media advertisements.

All of the interviewees are gladly using and experimenting new technology – especially, when the electronic appliances are equipment that they would normally be interested in. This might help in understanding the tendency to purchase online, since this positive mindset will more likely generate positive attitudes towards online buying.

"It (new technology) is exiting! I’m not always good at using new technology, but I’m eager to try." Person A

When it comes to the actual volume of online shopping, the tendency to purchase online depends on the person. The most active shoppers evaluate that they purchase something online at least once a month, when a few interviewees make purchases online only couple times a year.

The interviewees find online shopping relatively easy and convenient. According to the data utilitarian motives are greatly affecting the channel preference – if it is easier
or more affordable to buy a product online, interviewees tend to choose online shopping over traditional stores. Price is also a strong influencer, when it comes to the online buying motives; all of the interviewees mention that price motivates them to choose an online store over a traditional one. Additionally, better assortment online and the perceived ease of shopping are great influencers in online buying. Interviewees find it more comfortable to purchase something online, since they can make purchases quickly, filter different options effortlessly and test the products without leaving the house.

“There are multiple options online and all of them are easy to get. The other option is that I have to go to a shop and search, if I’ll find the product that I’m looking for.” Person A

“I find online shopping useful, when I can order products online that I can’t find in store – that's the biggest advantage for me.” Person B

### 5.2 Interesting but irritating targeted social media advertisements

When it comes to the actual usage of social media, there are some differences between the interviewees. Interviewees spent 0.5–4 hours in social media daily. Social media channels that interviewees use are Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest. WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram are also the social media channels that the interviewees utilize the most – other social media channels are only used occasionally.

All of the interviewees are active in social media and they utilize different social media channels. All of the interviewees have come across social media advertisements. The main channels, where the interviewees have come across advertisements are Facebook and Instagram. The opinions of social media advertisements and the attitudes towards them differ depending on the person.
Table 2. Interviewees’ social media usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Social media channels</th>
<th>Average time spent on social media a day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Pinterest, WhatsApp</td>
<td>1–3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp</td>
<td>2–3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Youtube, WhatsApp</td>
<td>1–2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>WhatsApp, Instagram, Youtube, Snapchat</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp</td>
<td>about 1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, WhatsApp</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp</td>
<td>0.5–1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp</td>
<td>2–3 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.1 Perceptions of targeted social media advertisements

Since targeted social media advertisements might be unfamiliar for the respondents, interviewees were asked to explain, why they think they see certain social media advertisements in their news feeds. Targeted social media advertisements are familiar to the interviewees and they have a quite good knowledge of how the advertisements are targeted to them.

All of the interviewees had some opinions why social media advertisements are targeted to them. Interviewees know surprisingly well the reasons they see certain advertisements – all interviewees were able to name few reasons that influence the targeting of advertisements. According to the data, consumers are well aware that targeted advertisements are based on their behavior in social media and online.

“Well, all the clicks and the pages that I’ve visited affect. (…) My Google searches affect clearly on the social media advertisements. If I visit a website once, I will see the site’s advertisements after that.” Person F
Based on the data, some consumers know that their own profiles and information that they give to social media channels affect the advertisements they see. These consumers represent the minority, since only three of the eight interviewees mentioned that they feel personal and demographical information affects the targeting of social media advertisements.

“Advertisements are maybe targeted to certain age groups, since it (Facebook) knows the age of the users. I think gender could also affect the advertisements. (…) Could my friends also affect the type of advertisements, what I see?” Person C

“I’m not sure if this is right, but I think the advertisements depend on age, gender and other information that you have personally added to your social media channels. But I doubt that if you are logged in, social media channels will also examine your behavior on the internet and register, what you do. This way the advertising will be even better targeted to you.” Person B

5.2.2 Reactions to targeted social media advertisements

According to the data, consumers easily scroll pass the social media advertisements without paying a lot of attention to them – especially if advertisements are not relevant to consumers. Some interviewees feel advertisements belong to social media channels. According to the data, consumers are well aware of the different advertisements in their social media feeds, but they are also very good at neglecting them. If a consumer scrolls pass an advertisement, the probability that the user returns to look at the advertisement is relatively small.

“Some of the advertisements, for example a fitness center advert, are like that – I could take a better look. But usually I go past the adverts without paying much attention to them.” Person C

"I have no certain thoughts about the advertisements, pretty neutral attitude I guess. I think they (advertisements) belong there (to social media).” Person H
"Well, it depends. If I have an existing need, I might take a closer look. If there is no need, I am so used to the adverts that I just go pass them." Person G

In general, the attitudes to targeted social media advertisements differ. Some of the interviewees react to the advertisements in a rather negative manner, when they feel that the advertisements are not targeted to them, contain irrelevant information, are written in poor Finnish or repeatedly appear in social media newsfeeds. Some of the interviewees have a much brighter approach and they don’t get annoyed by the poorly targeted advertisements. For this reason, they might tolerate the advertising better than the other interviewees. The interviewees, who think advertisements belong to social media, also feel that there is not too much advertising in different social media channels. Additionally, the attitudes of the more sceptic consumers are a lot more positive, if the content of the advertisements meet their needs. All of the interviewees think interesting content and advertisements are not disturbing.

"In general, it is positive that the adverts are usually related to the things I’m interested in – they’re not something like company Y that has nothing to do with me. Advertisements don’t disturb, if they are interesting." Person F

When targeted advertisements succeed in meeting the needs of consumers, the advertisements are more likely to be described interesting in the eyes of social media users. The material from the interviews proves that an advertisement has to meet the consumer needs or preferences. If the advertisement is targeted to a consumer according to these needs and includes relevant content, it will be more interesting to the consumer.

"Well, those advertisements are interesting, which are in a best way targeted to me." Person B

"If something is advertised to me really well – if it is, for example, a piece of cosmetics that meets my needs, it’s definitely more interesting." Person A
"Yes, I think the advertisements are targeted to me; I get a lot of advertisements from different clothing brands and ads related to sports. Clearly the things I follow in certain social media channel affect." Person D

When the advertisements fail to provide interesting content, the attitudes change. Some interviewees find the poorly targeted advertisements especially irritating. Other interviewees feel that they don’t pay any attention to the advertisements that might not be targeted to meet their needs. If advertisements seem fake or contain irrelevant information, they might be perceived intrusive. On the other hand, there were also few interviewees that don’t perceive even the poorly targeted social media advertisements disturbing. These interviewees feel that only few of the advertisements they see are irritating. According to the data consumers also feel that they can easily pass the irrelevant advertisements, if they see them. Social media advertisements are perceived more intrusive in some social media channels than others – couple of the interviewees noted that the advertisements they see on Instagram are a bit strange. Lastly, few interviewees say that they are a bit intimidated, since they don’t know why all the advertisements appear in their newsfeed.

"Not all the ads arouse irritation, but irritating ads are the ones that I might filter without reacting to them. Sometimes I feel certain ads are unnecessary and I don’t know why I see them. I remember some ads in Instagram – there are sometimes really weird ads and I have no idea, how they are in my feed.” Person E

"Even if the ads are optimized to me, they aren’t the things I’m interested in.” Person A

“I have seen all kinds of advertisements: from clothes to shoes and fitness club advertisements. Sometimes the advertisements I see are completely random and I have no idea, why I’m seeing them." Person C

Different attributes are influencing the way interviewees notice social media advertisements. The different elements also affect the reactions that interviewees
may have after they are seeing the advertisements. Some interviewees pay attention to the visual appearance of an advertisement, when others read the texts more precisely. The content of the advertisement also impacts on the possible attractiveness of an advertisement – different features, such as discounts, new products, beautiful pictures, and preferred stores, affect the reactions consumers might have. This is important, since according to the data, the ads that succeed in drawing attention are also the ones consumers tend to click. Interviewees also remember the interesting advertisements after being exposed to them. Some of the interviewees say neither the visual appearance nor the texts matter; the advertised product has to be interesting before they even consider paying more attention to the advertisement. This implies that the advertisement itself isn’t usually the thing that makes it interesting. The advertised product or service should also be relevant to the consumer. Some interviewees clearly appreciate the advertisement content over the visual effects.

"I am a visual person so it catches my eye, if it (advert) is nicely done. Like every piece has its one place and there are cool photos, contrasts or layouts. (...) When the photo is about some nice theme, it usually creates associations to the photo or to the product or service that is advertised.” Person C

"The first thing is the visual presentation; whether the picture is aesthetically adjusted and how the shoe looks like in that photo.” Person B

Data indicates that if the advertisement includes mentions about sale, discounts or campaigns, it will draw attention more effectively. Advertisements that include up-to-date information are also relevant, since few of the interviewees mentioned they like advertisements, from which they see what’s new or trendy. If the advertisements provide information on the topics consumer has been thinking lately, the advertisements are often accounted more interesting. These features are also relevant, when it comes to the effectiveness of an advertisement. Mentions of discounts and coupons are affecting the actual ad clicks and the purchase intention.

"Of course it matters, if there is a price tag in an ad and I recognize it’s cheap.” Person G
"Well, when I see all those advertisements for clothes I know what kind of stuff is in fashion and what the new novelties are.” Person H

If the advertised product is already familiar to the consumer, the probability to notice the advertisement becomes higher. A recognizable product also affects positively to the probability to become interested. Also, if an advertisement includes a product that a consumer has already been looking for, the reactions to the advertisement are often positive. This is not a surprise, since according to the previous mentions, meeting the consumer needs is vitally important in targeted advertising. If an advertisement meets the needs of a consumer and offers a product a consumer is already familiar with, the possible positive reaction is likely to be stronger.

"Well if the advertisement includes something I’ve really searched for, I might be excited about that. But maybe often I am irritated by those (advertisements).” Person E

"If the ad is about a product that I usually order online, the advert has a big impact. If the product is already familiar, then the ad affects, but if the product is new, I can easily ignore it (ad).” Person B

According to the data consumer’s own preferences matter too when it comes to the reactions to the advertisements. If consumers tend to make purchases in particular shops, they are more willing to see advertisements from these advertisers. This same finding is supported, when the feelings are negative – if consumers don’t want to make purchases in some store, they are more likely to react negatively to the social media advertisements.

"Some of the ads are advertising places, from which I don’t want to purchase anything. So, I don’t know the reason why I see those ads. Mostly I think I pay attention to the advertising of different clothing stores – they are the ones I make purchases from.” Person E

According to the data, repeatedly displayed social media advertisements are causing rather negative reactions among consumers. Some interviewees feel that
advertisements are frustrating, if they see the same advertisements often. The attitudes aren’t completely consistent, since the repetition might affect the behavior positively – if a consumer is exposed to the same advertisements often enough, they might react to the advertisements.

"If I have seen many advertisements before and the new ad doesn’t bring anything new to the table, I usually just go pass it and don’t react to it more than that. (...) I don’t want to see the same ads every time. Therefore I’m a bit fed up with the ads, when there are the same products or the same stores.” Person A

"It is infuriating, if I come across the same ad over and over again.” Person B

"And there were a lot of those (advertisements) at a certain time and when I had seen them often enough, I finally clicked the advertisement.” Person C

5.2.3 Ad clicks

According to the data, consumers tend to click advertisements in social media a couple times a month on average. Some consumers are more active and click advertisements almost daily, but majority of the interviewees imply that they click advertisements only once or twice a month. According to the data, the tendency to click the social media advertisements is relatively low compared to the time that is spent on social media. Interviewees themselves acknowledge this too, since almost every interviewee note that they click different advertisements rarely although they might utilize social media several hours a day. Interviewees often just look at the advertisements without reacting to them. One interviewee also justified this behavior by stating that the advertisement itself provides the necessary information and there is no need to click the ad.

Empirical data provides different reasons that identify, why consumers click certain advertisements on social media. There are several reasons: consumers find advertisement interesting, advertising is topical, and advertisement includes information about sale, discounts or novelties. Consumers also click advertisements,
when they want to look for further information or they are already interested in the advertised product. The most probable reason for ad clicks is the monetary advantage that consumers might get after clicking the advertisement. Advertisements should also be relevant and well targeted to the consumers – otherwise advertisements are easily neglected and consumers pass them without clicking.

"I click advertisements that include topical information for me or something, what I have recently been thinking or searching. These are the ones I look at. I click perfectly targeted advertisements more often compared to the ones that don’t just fit me so well.” Person B

"Also these ”great deals weekend” advertisements make me click to the advertisers’ website, to look for the products that are on sale. Or the novelties – what kind of new products are about to come to the store.” (Person A)

"If it (advertisement) is interesting and there is a product that I like and the product catches my eye.” (Person H)

"I think there has been some kind of an offer and the price has been good. Or then I have wanted to read and know more.” (Person E)

After the click consumers usually search for additional information and browse through the advertised content. According to the data consumers might scan the whole offering of an online store, if the initial advertisement leads them to the website. An ad click often leads consumers to look for other interesting products at the same time.

"I might take a look at the product, if it is something that I have seen before. Then I might check, whether the product is in stock or on sale. Often it has been something particular and there haven’t been any pieces left in my size and that has been the end for the shopping. But usually I check the available sizes and price. I might check if there’s something else I’d like, since I don’t order just one product at a time so I have started to search for something that I might also need.” (Person A)
According to the data, the purchase decisions don’t usually take place after the first ad click. Consumers often browse the website for a while and read more information about the product, but then leave the website without making a decision to purchase anything. This argument is very consistent and repeats itself in every interview. Interviewees might browse the advertised product and end up going through the other products or the whole assortment of the online store. This is also very common, since nearly all of the interviewees think they browse the online store more thoroughly after the click.

"Well, I rarely buy anything straight after it (ad click). Usually I think I browse the offering on a website, but after that I leave.” Person E

"The company X was a bit strange to me, so I clicked the ad, when I wanted to know more about the company. Quite rarely I end up buying something. Actually, I don’t remember that I have ended up buying something after seeing an advertisement. More often I go to the website to look at the products – I don’t spontaneously click an ad and decide to buy something straight away.” Person H

5.3 Targeted social media advertising as an influencer in online buying behavior

According to the theoretical and empirical data, consumers usually utilize the different stages of the buying process, when they make purchases online. There might be few exceptions, when the product to be purchased is something consumers order or buy often (routine purchases). When something is bought on a regular basis, the amount of information search and evaluation diminishes. Otherwise, the different stages are recognizable in the online buying process. For this reason, it can be assumed that the different stages of the buying process model are relevant, when the aim is to understand the role of targeted social media advertising.
Need recognition

In most situations, interviewees have already an existing need, when they are entering different online stores. All of the interviewees emphasize the meaning of a need, since they don’t often do spontaneous decisions online. However, few of the interviewees add that they have a couple of online stores they visit regularly, even without a need for something special – they want to see, if there are any new products in stock or items on sale. This is ordinary for the interviewees that make purchases online at least once a month. Interviewees that don’t shop online as often are only going to an online store when the need to purchase something has occurred elsewhere. Additionally, if the product is something that an interviewee buys on a regular basis, the need to buy a product occurs automatically and the whole purchasing process is also often more straightforward.

According to the data, targeted social media advertisements arouse strong need or desire towards the advertised products, when the advertisements are targeted effectively to the consumers. When interviewees described their feelings after seeing advertisements on social media, two of the interviewees used the term obsession and one of the interviewees described that advertisements may haunt her. The possible obsession is usually stronger, if the product is already familiar or there is a need for a certain product, but it can also occur without the pre-existing need for something. Interviewees feel that the advertisements are fulfilling their possible needs and also creating new ones – the rising need may cover completely new products that interviewees haven’t thought of purchasing. In many cases the need already exists and the targeted advertisement provides a solution at a right time. Despite the need or desire, consumers won’t make hasty decisions. All of the interviewees say they usually consider the different options before making any decisions.

"I think car advertisements bring about these positive feelings and even an obsession to buy a new car. Then I might browse through different manufacturers’ websites and things like that. These times it (advertisement) has fit my needs quite well, if I start browsing the websites right away, although I don’t buy a new car every time, but anyway.” Person B
"Of course I have had feelings of desire or need, especially if I see something new I didn’t knew existed – so some new things in an advertisement can probably bring about that feeling. (…) Also, for example, a video looks great, if there is a product that meets my needs.” Person D

"Those advertisement that have affected me have been really tempting and the product has sort of hit the right spot – I’ve felt that wow, I really need that.” Person G

*Information search*

Data shows that interviewees have commonly a certain product or product category in mind, when they start searching for information. Information is usually gathered from different online stores, blogs, peer-reviews, different online forums, websites, social media, or from the reviews and opinions of friends and family. Interviewees often begin their search by using few online stores they have good experiences from. They read the product information that these online stores provide and if the same products can be found in different stores, they often compare the information that is available to create a better understanding of the product. All of the interviewees have certain information sources they use regularly and the information search is often quite easy. The process of searching information is usually quite efficient, since interviewees already know where they start their information search. Only, if the product is expensive or new to the interviewee, more time will be spent on information search. The prior knowledge also affects the information search. If interviewees are purchasing a product they already know or have purchased before, they may skip the information search completely.

Interviewees mainly utilize digital channels, when they search for information. In some situations, interviewees might also go to a physical store to find more information about a product, even if they have decided to buy the product online. Nearly all of the interviewees think that website usability affects their information search, behavior and tendency to make purchases online. If browsing or filtering the products requires a lot of effort, there is a high possibility that an interviewee decides to use another online store for information search.
"The more irritating or difficult the proceeding in the shop is, the easier it is to leave the shop and find another website.” Person C

"Usability affects a lot. When I can’t see the product physically, I don’t usually buy from websites that have nonexistent product information. (...) Some online stores have their apps and mobile versions that make buying more than easy.” Person D

Information search can be triggered by social media advertisements. Usually interviewees have an existing need and advertisements succeed in providing alternatives that meet these needs. Interviewees have searched for further information after they have seen advertisements in social media. However, advertisements have to be correctly targeted, before interviewees are even eager to begin the information search. If the advertisement is not interesting, there is no intention to search for additional information. Only one of the interviewees (Person D) was a bit uncertain, whether the advertisements had affected his behavior. All the other interviewees replied advertisements have affected their information search or they have begun to search information, when advertisements have been interesting enough.

“The level how interesting the ad is, I can’t specify it, but the ad has roused special fascination. (...) I have started to google it or even looked if I could find the product on Instagram.” Person B

"Well, if it is targeted well enough according to my browsing history or search history, I might have begun to browse and find out, what the product is and where I could find it. So I might have started to survey the product.” Person A

"For example this company Y. I hadn’t heard a lot about it before, so I went to their website and searched for further information. (...) Maybe I did it because I could get a wider perspective of the company and what it (advertisement) was about. I also wanted support to my own ideas that I had and to look if there website has information that confirms my perceptions.” Person C
"Well I might have had a feeling that I need it or that even if I didn’t buy it now, I might buy it a little later. I might glance it (product) through and ponder if it interests me or not. If it is really interesting, then I usually browse websites and look for information.” Person E

"Yes, I tend to search for information… Lately I haven’t seen so much of those interior advertisements, but when I had seen them and I had seen something really nice, I have started to browse the websites that sells the nice products.” Person H

_Evaluation_

According to the empirical data, interviewees often narrow down the possible alternatives before evaluating them. The variables recognized in research theory are relevant in product evaluation online: price, ease in processing the brand information, reliability, special sales, rebates and coupons, and limitations to evaluate the desired product or service. Empirical data indicates that price is an individual variable that has the biggest effect on the evaluation. Product appearance and different social factors are also relevant during evaluation. Time spent on evaluation differ depending on the product or service. If the product is something that interviewees buy often, interviewees spent only little time on evaluation.

Reliability of a webstore has an effect on the consumers’ buying behavior and especially the evaluation – interviewees also evaluate the different online stores in addition to the product evaluation. If there are any reliability concerns, the purchase is easily interrupted. Reliability of an online store is often evaluated through website outlook, information on the website and according to peer-reviews. By evaluating different stores and gathering feedback interviewees can diminish the risks they feel there are. If a website seems unreliable or risky, the majority of interviewees state that they won’t make a purchase or they would search for the same products in some other online stores. Foreign online stores are often evaluated more critically and if it’s possible, interviewees usually prefer domestic online stores. Only few
interviewees feel that evaluation of the online store is difficult. This opinion is based on the viewpoint of the difficulty to evaluate the trustworthiness of a website.

“There are certain risks (in online shopping). I usually buy products from online stores, which are provably good, and from which I have heard good feedback or I personally have good experiences.” Person A

”Of course I feel reliability affects my shopping, but when I search for information and evaluate different shops I usually eliminate the even slightly suspicious alternatives.” Person D

”There are risks and I feel terrified to order something from an online store, I’ve never heard before. Then I have to start a massive background check, whether people have ordered something before I can do so.” Person E

”Well today it is impossible to make an evaluation, since anyone can create a website that looks what they want. So you shouldn’t think the website outlook too much.” Person F

”Well there are privacy issues, since there are situations, where credit card information has been compromised. That’s why I don’t order stuff from websites I haven’t heard of. I only use websites that are popular.” Person H

When it comes to the evaluation of different alternatives, the interviewees’ attitudes differ quite a lot. There are clearly two kinds of consumers: some might include a new product to the group they are evaluating, while others are not easily taking new products under consideration. One interviewee (Person C) had no opinion on the subject. According to the data, nearly half of the interviewees might be affected by targeted advertisement, but the other half of the interviewees describe they have already evaluated the products and aren’t eager to find more alternatives. Some of the interviewees find it hard to describe their actions, but when they were given an example of the possible situation, they were able to acknowledge certain repetitive factors in their behavior. When the attitudes are negative, interviewees usually search the products they evaluate and don’t recognize that advertisements matter. If
advertisements have affected the evaluation, interviewees think they might have found products that possess more favorable variables than the initial alternatives. Targeted social media advertising can also lengthen the time spent on evaluation, if interviewees find interesting products to evaluate.

"I don’t recall any situation, but I think something like this might have happened, since I am quite precise and I evaluate the products and search for information about certain product categories – I want the product that has the best price-quality ratio. This means that when I search for information about a product I believe is good and I’ve heard good reviews from, I might end up finding another better product after information search. I think this might have happened too, when it comes to these advertisements.” Person A

"Possibly a product that’s been advertised, might be more interesting than the other one, which might start to feel like worse option. So often the thing that is advertised is interesting and I think that then the advertisement was targeted to me quite well, met my needs or at least created positive associations, even if it might not be better or cooler.” Person B

"I don’t know… I think I search the different options myself and I don’t feel like the advertisements I see in social media have helped me in those situations. I don’t add that much weight to the advertisements in social media.” Person D

"I don’t think so, since I have already evaluated the products and if I see an advertisement I may think that a company X just wants to do so. I don’t get a feeling that I have to buy the product, when it’s advertised in social media. On the other hand, it is possible that some ad makes me evaluate a product, because I think I’m easily affected by those kinds of things.” Person F

*Purchase decision*

When it comes to the actual purchase decision, positive feedback from family members and friends can speed up the decision making – if there are already good
experiences from a certain product, the threshold to buy is significantly lower. The same finding is supported, when deciding where to buy; if there are reliable experiences from certain online stores, consumers are more open to purchase from a store they haven’t utilized before. However, there are many factors that might affect the online purchase decision negatively. Website usability has a great effect on the behavior of some interviewees, but others imply they have already eliminated the websites that aren’t easy to use, when they evaluated the different products and online stores. Even if consumers evaluate the reliability and the possible risks of an online store, when they evaluate different alternatives, the same variables are considered again before the actual purchase decision. The possible risks and the perceived reliability of a website are also key drivers, when it comes to the final purchase intention. Risks are often related to the loss of personal information and the fear of not receiving the purchased product. Some of the interviewees find the possible risks are lower, if they use secure payment methods. Reliability has a crucial effect on the purchasing tendency. Most of the interviewees state that they won’t make a purchase, if the website seems unreliable. For these reasons, trust is an important factor, when interviewees are making purchase decisions. If the online store is already familiar, interviewees tend to make purchase decisions faster, since they trust the online store and are familiar with the available payment methods, quality and speed of customer service and the ways order is processed and shipped.

"It (reliability) is maybe one of the most important aspects. If an online store seems unreliable, I won’t make a purchase.” Person B

"Well I think today there are fewer risks. (…) If you don’t receive the product, you usually get a refund and the actual risk is really low.” Person D

When it comes to the actual purchase decision, targeted social media advertisements are often reinforcing the existing intention to buy. Especially, if interviewees have already a need and they have been evaluating different options, they might proceed to the purchase decision faster, if they see an advertisement on social media at the right time. In those situations, where an advertisement has included information about different campaigns or discounts, the threshold of buying something is low. Even if few interviewees were a bit skeptical about the possible influence of social
media advertisements, they admitted that there is a great possibility that targeted social media advertisements affect the purchase decisions unconsciously.

"If an ad includes a mention about a free delivery, it will be more interesting and it will lower the threshold to make the decision. It might bring a positive feeling. (...) I haven’t necessarily made the purchase decision, but it can push me towards the decisions. It might not be final, but the advertisement will add the interest towards the product.” Person A

"Well, I try to think that those targeted advertisements don’t affect me, but I think they unconsciously will, when I see them all the time on social media without being able to pass them. So when the products are continuously displayed to you, you may start to imagine you need something that you have seen in an ad, even if you wouldn’t actually need it or want it at the first place.” Person D

"I don’t really know, how the advertisements have affected me. I only purchase something when I need it. So maybe I have sort of made the purchase decision, but I haven’t decided that from which store I’m going to make the purchase before I see the product in question in some social media ad. Of course, if I see something for the first time on social media, but usually there are the same products that I have already browsed in different online stores so they are familiar to me.” Person G

Couple of times the actual purchase has took place in a physical store after an advertisement is seen on social media. The reason for the channel choice is in the perceived ease of the purchase. The price is also a relevant factor, since the decision to buy product offline is clear, if the price is lower in a physical store.

"Well actually I have bought an electric shaver after I saw an advertisement of a new model on social media. I looked at the ad and then I compared the prices and noticed that it will be the cheapest to buy from a company Z. When I saw the ad, it reinforced my thoughts and I decided to buy that.” Person F
Postpurchase behavior

When interviewees purchase products online, the whole process of how the purchase went affects the postpurchase behavior. If the online store is easy to use, products can be relatively easily purchased from the store, and the shipment of the products is fast, the tendency to purchase again will be high. If there have been some problems during the process, the way an online store handles the possible claims will also affect the postpurchase behavior. This means that negative situations can be solved in a way that reinforces repurchase intention – good customer service can lead to repurchase, if error handling is effective and strengthen the idea of reliability of an online store. Otherwise negative experiences diminish the repurchase intention.

Even though interviewees are all active utilizers of consumer feedback and peer reviews, they are not actively writing reviews themselves. According to the data it doesn’t matter whether the experiences are positive or negative, the probability to write a review online is quite low. Some interviewees mention they sometimes evaluate products, if they think it would help other consumers to make decisions or they receive an email that suggests the evaluation of the purchased products. However, experiences are actively shared with family and friends – both positive and negative comments are often shared during face-to-face conversations.

Data implies that targeted social media advertisements can influence postpurchase behavior. All of the interviewees are more interested in repurchasing, if they have been content with the initial purchase and they see an advertisement from the same advertiser. Positive experiences are often a requirement for repurchase intention, since negative experiences tend to diminish the tendency to buy something else from the same online store. Targeted social media advertisements can also arouse contentment, if the purchased product has been really good – interviewees feel that they have succeeded in making a good choice. Interviewees respond quite positively also to the advertisements that include products that are compatible with the initial purchased product. Half of the interviewees think that they might easily purchase a product related to their previous purchase, if they would see advertisement that would support this behavior. Some of the interviewees also add that targeted advertising makes sure that they remember the specific online store after the
purchase. Targeted social media advertisements can also foster negative behavior or attitudes. Three interviewees think that they might be a little irritated if they see an advertisement in social media after the purchase and notice that the product they bought earlier is now on sale.

"If I have been pleased with a certain online store and I see their ad, it is easier to start browsing the assortment. It might easily remind me that hey I could also visit there. (...) Well negative thought only occur, if I see an ad and realize I now could have bought something a lot cheaper." Person E

"Well I can’t think of anything else that if I see an ad a week later and notice I could have bought the same product with a cheaper price, that’s maybe the only thing. Or if the same online store advertises something to me, not the same product but something that could also be good for me, it could be then easier to make a new purchase.” Person G

"It could affect… If you want to have up-to-date style, online stores are good at offering new styles that are worth trying. And clearly these stores offer you similar products after the purchase that you could buy something else. I don’t buy stuff again right after seeing next ad – I think that the ad could plant the idea and then I might end up buying something in the future.” Person D

5.4 Empirical results

The aim of empirical analysis is to understand how targeted social media advertisements are affecting the different stages of online buying process. Both theoretical and empirical findings support the progress of the buying decision process model in online buying behavior. Even if the consumer’s buying behavior might occasionally deviate from the process, all the stages can be identified in online buying process. The reasons, why consumers may make exceptions are usually in external factors that affect the process. Purchases made on routine basis, influence of social media advertisements and social impact, for example, can affect the consumer in a manner that some of the stages are ignored or repeated.
Technology acceptance and attitudes towards online shopping are important, when consumers are making the initial decision to buy something online. Capability and eagerness to use new technology are affecting positively to the attitudes towards online shopping. Different motivational factors also affect, when the decision is made between online and offline channels. Utilitarian motives are greatly affecting the channel preference: online shopping is fast, convenient, online stores are full of different opportunities, and the product is usually cheaper online. Traits are affecting buying behavior too, since all the consumers participating research had their own opinions and thoughts about their behavior online. Even if there were clear uniformities in the ways consumers behave, they all have their individual manner of doing things and proceeding in the buying process.

Reactions to targeted social media advertisements help in understanding the possible influence of social media advertising. The attitudes are quite clear: targeted advertisements should meet the needs of consumers in order to be interesting or clickable. When advertisements succeed to meet this requirement, consumers have more positive attitudes towards the advertisements. Empirical findings also suggest that positive attitudes towards targeted advertising lower the threshold to click interesting advertisements. The consumers, who react more negatively to the advertisements, are also the ones, who tend to click different advertisements rarely and who might easily be irritated poorly targeted advertisements.

Targeted social media advertisements can influence online buying behavior at any stage of the buying process. Nevertheless the advertisements’ impact is not the same during the different stages. When perceiving the buying process, there are also certain differences between individual consumers.

Consumers usually enter an online store at a time, when there already is an existing need to buy a product. The most active online shoppers are also browsing online stores in order to find something – this might be corresponding behavior to window shopping that usually takes place offline. These consumers don’t necessarily need anything, but they want to browse through the novelties and assortment and might eventually end up finding something they want to purchase. When it comes to the targeted social media advertising, consumers are affected by the content they see in
advertisements. Among consumers, targeted social media advertisements are arousing need or desire to purchase something. In some situations the need may result as an obsession, when consumer has seen a product in an advertisement. However, advertisements have to be effectively targeted to consumers before they bring about any positive reactions.

Consumers utilize websites, online stores, blogs, peer-reviews, social media and online forums, when they are searching for information. Consumers might also compare the available product information between few online stores, if they happen to find the same products from them. When purchasing takes place online, consumers not only search for information about the products, but they also search information about the different online stores, when they are making the decision, from which online store they will make the purchase. This is rather important, since information search related to the possible online stores comprises a relevant part of the whole search process. Website usability impacts the information search in both situations. If the online store is difficult to use and the information about products is hard to find, consumers usually leave the online store. Also, if the store fails to provide sufficient product information, consumer leaves and tries to find the information elsewhere – in these situations the purchase is also often made from another online store. Targeted social media advertisements are affecting the information search, when the advertisements are interesting enough and meet the existing need of a consumer. However, it is quite common that targeted advertisements generate impulse for information search. This happens especially in the situations, where a consumer already has a need, but need can also be caused by targeted advertisement and strengthen by the information consumer finds after taking a closer look at the advertised product.

As in information search, consumers tend to evaluate the products as well as the different online stores. Different attributes that affect the evaluation are price, special sales, rebates and coupons, brand and the way the product looks. Reliability of the online store and the possible risks related to the purchase also affect the evaluation. In general, targeted social media advertisements affect the evaluation of alternatives depending on the consumer. In this research, there was a clear dichotomy, when half of the consumers acknowledged social media advertising could affect the evaluation
– even if they would have had few existing options in mind, effectively targeted social media advertisements could make them to consider new products they didn’t thought at the first place. This might also make the evaluation last longer, since new products have to be evaluated against the existing alternatives before the actual purchase decision. The other half of the consumers in this research aren’t easily affected by targeted social media advertisements at this stage of the buying process. They think they have already made the evaluation and are not willing to take new products under consideration. They feel that the decision making is well on the way and these kinds of distractions aren’t given a much of attention.

Reliability and the possible risks of an online store affect the actual purchase decision online. Loss of personal information and the fear of not receiving the purchased product can result in withdrawal from the purchase. Not all the consumers have the same opinions about the possible risks and reliability – some consumers trust that utilizing correct payment methods will help, if something goes not the way they plan. The opinions of friends and family can make the purchase decisions easier. Also, if a consumer is already familiar with the online store, purchase decisions are made faster, since consumers trust the online store and are familiar with the available payment methods, quality and speed of customer service and the ways order is processed and shipped. According to empirical findings, website usability is affecting consumers’ purchase decisions in some situations – some consumers feel that websites usability has a great effect on their behavior while others don’t emphasize its meaning. Website usability is strongly affecting the information search and the online stores that aren’t user-friendly are often ignored during this stage. Targeted social media advertisements both reinforce and speed up the purchase decisions. If advertisement includes information about different campaigns or discounts, it may move consumers closer to the purchase decision. Even if few interviewees were a bit skeptical about the possible influence of social media advertisements, they admitted that there is a great possibility that targeted social media advertisements affect the purchase decisions unconsciously.

The whole process of how the purchase succeeds affects the postpurchase behavior. If the online store is easy to use, products can be relatively easily purchased from the store, and the shipment of the products is fast, the tendency to purchase again will be
If negative situations are solved in exemplary manner, repurchase intention may be higher because of the good customer service and reliability in error handling. Otherwise negative experiences diminish the repurchase intention. According to this research, consumers are not actively giving feedback, when they buy online. Feedback or reviews are given in situations, when consumers want help others to make decisions or receive an email that encourages reviewing purchased products. Targeted social media advertisements are influencing postpurchase behavior. If consumers are content with their purchase and they see targeted advertisements on social media they are more interested in repurchasing. Positive experiences reinforce the repurchase intention, but negative experiences have an opposite effect. If consumers see targeted social media advertisements after the purchase is made, they may feel satisfied, since they have succeeded in making a good purchase. Targeted social media advertisements can also cause negative attitudes, if consumers see that the product they bought earlier is now on sale. The completed theoretical framework illustrates the main effects of targeted advertising and the intensity, in which the targeted social media advertisements are influencing online buying behavior.

Figure 3. Targeted social media advertising influencing online buying process, completed with empirical findings
6 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research is to understand how targeted social media advertisements are affecting online buying behavior.

In this research the researcher approach the subject with the main research question that aims to understand how targeted social media advertising is influencing consumer’s decision making process in online buying behavior. This main research question is supported by two sub-questions. The first sub-question strives to gain wider understanding about the different stages of online buying process. To be able to understand the influence of targeted social media advertisements, the second sub-question concentrates in gaining information about how consumers are reacting to targeted social media advertisements.

The research conclusions are presented in this chapter. First, the result results and answers to the research questions are being analyzed. Then the theoretical contribution of the research is presented as well as the managerial implications. Lastly, the chapter concentrates on research reliability and possible research limitations. Implications for future research are also presented in this chapter.

6.1 Research results and answers to the research questions

In this research, the research subject is interpreted through two sub-questions that help answering the main research question. The first sub-question answers the question of what are the stages in consumer’s online buying process. Theoretical and empirical findings indicate that the online buying process follows the model of buying process offline with some online specific variables. The stages of the process usually follow each other in linear order, but few exceptions may occur, when the consumers are influenced by external factors. There are few variables that might affect the online buying behavior before the actual buying process begins. Technology acceptance and attitudes towards online shopping are explaining the channel preference and the reasons, why consumers are gladly making purchases online. If consumers are eager to utilize new technology, their attitudes towards online shopping are more likely positive. Consumers are also motivated to shop
online, if there is a wider selection of options and the prices are lower. Price is the most important motivator for the channel choice in online shopping.

The purpose of the second sub question is to complement the current knowledge by identifying how consumers are reacting to targeted social media advertising. According to this research, consumer reactions depend on the advertisements they see. This research implies that consumers pass most of the advertisements they see in social media. Even though consumers normally tend to scroll pass the social media advertisements, they react positively to the advertisements that meet their needs. Interesting advertisements may include information about subjects that consumers are interested in – these could be products that consumer needs or further information about the subjects’ consumer had previous browsed on the internet. Targeted advertisements can trigger a need or desire to buy something or at least make consumers to search more information about the advertised item after seeing an advertisement. If consumers are seeing advertisements that are irrelevant to them or don’t match the interests consumers have, the reactions to the advertisements are likely to be negative. Few of the consumers tolerate also these poorly targeted advertisements and don’t pay any attention to them. Even if consumer finds an advertisement interesting, he or she might not click the advertisement. Additionally, compared to the time spent on social media, the tendency to click advertisements is relatively low. For advertisement to be clickable, it needs, first of all, to meet the consumers’ needs. Effectively targeted advertisements are the ones consumers click, since they are interested in the advertised content and want to know more.

The main research question aims to understand how targeted social media advertising is influencing consumer’s decision making process in online buying behavior. In this research several findings are made that indicate the possible influences during the different stages. The influence of targeted social media advertisements is most effective during the first two stages of the online buying process. Targeted social media advertisements are creating consumer needs or reinforcing the existing ones. When consumers see targeted social media advertisements, they often come across products they might like – this causes a strong desire or need to purchase something, but in most cases consumers consider carefully, if the product is actually useful or needed. The effect of targeted social
media advertising is clear, when it comes to the second stage of the process. Targeted social media advertisements affect the information search in two different ways: advertisements may affect the ongoing information search or advertisements could trigger the actual information search, if the advertisement is interesting enough.

The third stage of the online buying process is evaluation. When consumers face targeted advertising during the evaluation process, the influence of the advertisements depends on the consumer. According to the research, some consumers are eagerly evaluating different options before the purchase decision. These consumers are also the ones, whose evaluation process might be affected by targeted advertising. Some consumers are not affected by targeted advertising to this extent. These consumers feel that they have found the possible alternatives through their own information search and they are not eagerly influenced by advertisements, which might offer them new alternatives.

When it comes to the actual purchase decision, targeted social media advertisements can speed up the decision making. Targeted advertising is especially effective when consumers already have a specific product in mind, but they haven’t made the actual purchase decision. Advertising is most effective in the situations, where consumers might gain advantages, such as discounts, if they accept the offer. According to the research, consumers are also aware that the targeted advertisements could affect their behavior unconsciously.

The previous stages of the buying process indicate the postpurchase behavior of a consumer. If the purchase is successful and consumers are pleased with the product, targeted social media advertisements have a positive influence on future buying behavior and the tendency to repurchase. The research findings also imply that consumers are usually reacting positively to the advertisements that offer them products compatible with the initial purchase. However, if consumers face difficulties related to the purchase, advertisements in social media can also cause negative attitudes. If an advertisement includes a product a consumer already purchased, the advertisement might have a negative impact on the attitudes if the initial product consumer purchased at full price would now be on sale.
Even if the purchase doesn’t take place right away, targeted social media advertisements make sure that consumers don’t forget the product. Repeatedly faced advertisements are irritating for some consumers, but repetition confirms that consumers remember the online store and the advertised items. According to the research, continuous advertising might eventually pay off, since consumers might click the advertisements, when they have seen them multiple times.

It is also good to acknowledge that online purchase decisions are not made at one sitting. Consumers usually evaluate the alternatives for a while before making the actual purchase decision. According to the research, consumers may add products to carts in an online store without making the purchase. They might return to the store later and finalize the process or leave the purchase unfinished.

### 6.2 Theoretical contribution

As Koskinen et al. (2005) state, the aim of a research is to lead to a clear contribution that can be compared to previous research findings. In this research, several findings are made that comprehend the current research on targeted social media advertising and online buying behavior.

According to this research, eagerness to use new technology and positive attitudes towards online shopping are positively affecting the tendency to buy online. Positive attitude doesn’t necessarily correlate with the online buying frequency, but explains why consumers are gladly shopping online. This finding supports the idea that technology acceptance and attitudes to online shopping have an effect on the purchase intention (Vazquez & Xu 2009, Faqih 2013, Ashraf et al. 2014, Pascual-Miguel et al. 2015, Wann-Yih & Ching-Ching 2015). Consumers are motivated to make purchases online, since they want to find the product at a cheaper price, browse the wider assortment that is available online and shop easily whenever they want. This could imply that motivations are clearly affecting the channel choice such as Vazquez and Xu (2009) imply.

In this research, all the consumers are active social media users, but their attitudes towards social media advertising differ. This is not fully supporting the ideas of
Kumar et al. (2016) who state the consumers, who are familiar with the company, good in using new technologies, and active users of social media are most receptive for social media marketing content. According to this research, the most active online shoppers are actually the ones, who are the most easily irritated by social media advertising. However, the attitudes towards targeted social media advertising are a lot more positive, when consumers are already familiar with the company that advertises.

When targeted advertisements succeed in meeting the needs of consumers, the advertisements are more likely to be described interesting in the eyes of social media users. This is in line with the ideas of Doorn and Hoekstra (2013) and Schumann et al. (2014), who state that advertisements should meet the consumers’ needs to be effective. Effective targeting isn’t possible, if advertisements don’t match consumers’ demographical and psychographic information. This is in line with prior research (Enders, Hungenberg, Denker & Mauch 2008, Kelly, Kerr & Drennan 2010, Taylor et al. 2011, Gironda & Korgaonkar 2014, Schumann, Wangenheim & Groene 2014). If consumers are reacting negatively to the advertisements in general, their attitudes are a lot positive, if the advertised content is relevant to them. This supports the idea of Kelly et al. (2010). Even though repeatedly displayed advertisements are causing irritation, they are also effective when it comes to the ad clicks. In this research, there were few consumers, who had eventually utilized the offer of social media advertisement after seeing the same advert couple times. This finding is similar with the finding of Lee & Labroo (2004), who state the products consumers see often are positioned more favorably than others. Even though Doorn and Hoekstra (2013) state personal identification or information about consumers’ transactions are intrusive if they are included in advertisements, the findings of this research provide a little different explanation. Consumers are actually well aware of the means behind targeting and understand how marketers in social media target their advertisements. For this reason, they don’t generally feel so intimidated by personal information on advertisements. The irrelevant advertisements are usually the ones that cause negative feelings or conscious avoidance as Kelly et al. (2010) and Doorn and Hoekstra (2013) imply.
When it comes to the online buying process, this research supports the five stage buying process model by Kotler & Keller (2012: 166). Consumers usually follow the different stages of the buying process model, when they are purchasing online, but these stages and consumer behavior can be affected by external factors. If the purchased product is something consumers buy regularly, the buying process changes, since there is no need for thorough information search or evaluation. As stated by Comegys et al. (2006) browsing is the most common search method online. This research indicates that consumers utilize different search methods: search engines, websites, blogs, product information in online stores, online forums and reviews by friends and family. According to this research, information search online is affected by the website usability, search efficiency and prior knowledge that consumers possess. Website usability has a great effect on the information search – if an online store isn’t easy to use, consumers tend to leave the store. This finding goes along with the opinions of Stibel (2005), Asraf et al. (2014) and Sunil (2015). When it comes to the evaluation of the different alternatives, the attributes found in this research are in line with the previous findings: price, ease in processing the brand information, reliability (Comegys et al. 2006), special sales, rebates and coupons (Sunil 2015), and limitations to evaluate the desired product or service (San Martin and Camarero 2009) are all relevant in online buying behavior. Price is one key attribute in evaluation process. This finding is the opposite as the argument of Comegys et al. (2006), but supports the theoretical findings of Vazquez and Xu (2009), Sunil (2015), and Guzzo et al. (2016). The possible risks are also affecting evaluation and consumers often leave the online store, if they feel it’s not reliable or purchasing seems risky. Shim et al. (2001) and Ranaweera et al. (2008) agree this and imply risks and trust are highly important in online buying behavior. If consumer already trusts the online store, the purchase decisions will be made faster. Additionally, when the purchase is made online, the different online stores are also evaluated thoroughly before the actual purchase is made.

When consumers proceed to the purchase decision online, there are some things that affect the decision making. If consumers’ friends and family have rated the item to be purchased, the final purchase decision is easier to make. Prior research by Sunil (2015) supports this viewpoint, but opinions of a former research by Comegys et al. (2006) are quite the opposite. According to the empirical findings, website usability
affects the final purchase decision of some consumers, and therefore the findings of Guzzo et al. (2016) and Wann-Yih and Ching-Ching (2015) are supported. Website usability is strongly affecting the information search – the online stores that are difficult to use are usually ignored in this stage, since consumers might not consider buying anything from the stores that are difficult to use. Postpurchase behavior is affected by the whole online buying process after the order is placed online. Even though Berthon et al. (2012) pinpoint the importance of digital environment as a channel for public feedback, the results of this research imply that consumers are not actively giving feedback online. When the purchased product is pleasing the consumer and the whole process from the order to the delivery has went well, consumers are more eager to make repurchases from the same online store. This supports the research of Guzzo et al. (2016) and Khalifa and Liu (2007). Consumers do evaluate products and share their experiences, but this usually takes place offline, when consumers are interacting with friends and family.

Prior research acknowledges that social media advertising is influencing consumer buying behavior (Powers et al. 2016), but doesn’t provide information about the influence on each stage of the buying process. This research presents the effects of targeted social media advertising on consumer online buying behavior. The relevance of targeted social media advertisements is emphasized in the beginning of the buying process, since effectively targeted social media advertisements result in creating a strong need or desire to the advertised products. When consumers are searching for information about alternative options, they are influenced by targeted advertising – especially if they see advertisements that meet their existing needs or desires. When the buying process continues to the stage of evaluation, the influence of targeted advertising depends on the consumer. Some consumers are easily influenced by external factors, such as targeted advertisements, but others tend to rely on the alternatives they have already chosen. The process of evaluation might last longer, if consumers find new alternatives during the evaluation. The research findings also reveal that effectively targeted social media advertisements push consumers to make purchase decisions online. Consumers feel that they might be unconsciously affected by the advertisements, even if they refuse to believe that they make purchase decisions straight after seeing advertisements. When consumers face targeted advertisements after an online purchase, they are more willing to shop products that
are compatible with their previous purchases. This positive behavior, however, requires that the initial purchase has been successful.

6.3 Managerial implications

This research offers new important insights on how social media advertising could affect consumer online buying behavior. This research also contributes significantly to the current social media research in the area of targeted social media advertising. Research findings indicate that multiple conclusions can be made that support companies’ advertising strategies in social media as well as their performance online. Theoretical framework of the research identifies the stages in consumer buying decision process, when consumers are the most effectively affected by the targeted social media advertisements. This research emphasize the meaning of effective social media advertising – when advertising is done correctly, it can have positive effects on the company’s revenue online.

As Taylor et al. (2011) imply, social media marketing will increase and be more important in the future. The research findings reinforce the importance of social media marketing. The findings are relevant also from the managerial perspective, since targeted social media advertising is gaining positive responses from consumers and affecting positively to consumers’ tendency to shop online. From managerial point of view the findings of this study support the acknowledgements of Hudson and Thal (2013), who state that companies who succeed engaging their customers on social media are gaining a strong return on investment for their social media investments. Having a positive effect on the purchase intention, targeted social media advertising can increase company’s revenue as Schumann et al. (2014) signify.

Companies should invest in effective targeted social media advertising, since that is the only way to affect consumers in a positive manner. Even if some consumers are having negative thoughts about social media advertising, they still react positively to the advertisements they find interesting and relevant to them. For this reason, companies should understand the consumer needs and to strive to meet these needs, when they are advertising on social media. They should also find the right balance when it comes to the repetition; repeatedly faced advertisements are causing irritation
but may also result in stronger interest towards the advertised products. The research findings also indicate that consumers, who are already company’s customers and familiar with the company, are reacting more positively to the advertising compared to the adverts that are from completely new and unfamiliar advertiser.

This research indicates that consumers might not purchase the products they see in social media advertisements right away, but they may purchase the advertised products somewhere in the future. Targeted advertising confirms that a consumer remembers the company and the assortment it has to offer. From managerial perspective this means that the investments in social media advertising can have far-reaching consequences – not all the profits are gathered during a single social media campaign. Continuity is therefore important in social media advertising.

Few important findings will help companies to implement their targeted advertising. First of all, advertisements have to interesting, provide relevant information or meet the needs of consumers. In a best possible scenario an advertisement fulfills all these aspects. According to the research, most consumers pay attention to the visual layout of advertisements: colors, contrasts, background color and the text on advertisements all affect the perceptions consumers have. The appearance of advertisements is one of the most crucial things to catch consumers’ attention. If advertisements include text that informs consumers about sale, discounts, coupons or campaigns, advertisements will be even more attempting.

Understanding consumer behavior in online context is important, since consumers are merely utilizing different online stores. The findings of this research illustrate that website usability, reliability and perceived risks are also strongly affecting the online buying behavior of consumers. This research indicates that online stores that provide a poor user experience are likely to drop out from the evaluation. If a consumer feels that an online store is risky or lacks reliability, the purchase is in all probability made elsewhere.
6.4 Research reliability and limitations

A reliability of a research can be reviewed through multiple different aspects. Research quality, reliability and validity are commonly used, when interpreting the research implementation and findings (Hirsjärvi & Hurme: 184-190).

The predominant requirement for both quantitative and qualitative research is that the research should be implemented to be repeatable and the research conclusions should be justified (Koskinen et al. 2005: 30). According to Koskinen et al. (2005: 244) the reliability of a qualitative research and the data analysis depend on the sensitiveness of the analysis – a researcher needs to be open to interpret the material in the light of new findings. A qualitative research that is conducted with semi-structured interviews will not provide information for statistical generalizations (Saunders & Thornhill 2009: 327). This is well acknowledged and the aim of this research is to understand the chosen phenomenon more comprehensively.

The quality of a research is often measured by research reliability and validity (Eskola & Suoranta 1998: 214, Hirsjärvi et al. 2004: 216). These aspects are utilized in a qualitative research, when the aim is to evaluate the trustworthiness of a research (Koskinen et al. 2005: 253). The feasibility of these concepts has been under conversation and some difficulties may occur in the context, where the aim is to make objective generalizations of the reality and truth (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 185, Koskinen et al. 2005: 255). Reliability of a research refers to the research repeatability, while validity examines whether the research encompasses the subjects that it should (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 186–187, Hirsjärvi et al. 2004: 216–217). In this research, reliability is secured by implementing multiple interviews that are recorded and analyzed by documenting information accordingly. Interviewing a larger group of participants would have increased the research reliability. Research validity can be divided to internal and external validity. Internal validity estimates the inner logic and the uniformity of the research and external validity examines the generalizability of the research (Koskinen et al. 2005: 254). In this research, the inner validity is increased by utilizing the same concepts, creating understandable questions for the interviews, completing the interviews by explaining the difficult terms and by searching for deviations of the empirical data. However, validity could
be compromised if the interviewees have understood the questions in a different manner than the interviewer. External validity is secured by using respective, reliable and quite current publications. Prior research is often conducted abroad, and therefore there might be regional factors that affect the research reliability.

According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000: 184) the interview framework creates a basis for high-quality interviews. In this research, the framework for the interviews was created accordingly to address the theoretical findings and possible supplementary questions were pondered before the interviews took place. During the interviews, the quality was confirmed by using reliable technical appliances (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 184). To improve the quality of data, it is also important that interviews are transcribed as soon as possible after the interviews are over (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000: 185). In this research, the interviews were transcribed right after the interviews. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000: 185) also emphasize the meaning of research reliability during the interview preparations and transcription. Reliability of the interviews and the data was verified by recording every interview and utilizing the same instructions during the transcription process. However, it has to be understood that in an interview, the way the interviewer interacts with the interviewees will affect the results of each interview as well as the empirical data (Saunders & Thornhill 2009: 324).

One way to evaluate the empirical material is to estimate the research saturation (Eskola & Suoranta 1998: 216, Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 88). Saturation of the empirical material means that the answers of the respondents are repeatedly a like – no new information is acquired through additional interviews (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 88). If the findings of the interviews begin to saturate, research reliability increases. In this research the same answers started to appear, when the researcher had implemented five of the eight interviews. The interview reliability was secured by choosing interviewees with different occupations and choosing almost as many female and male participants. The researcher made a conscious decision to interview a group of people within a certain age group to gain a better understanding of the online buying behavior of young adults. However, this affects the generalizability of the results.
Lastly, the credibility of the research is in line with the ethical decisions of the researcher (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 129). A good scientific discipline is obeyed in this research by citing the authors of prior research accordingly and reporting the utilized research methods in a best possible manner. The results of this research cannot be generalized to international context or to the interpretation of consumer behavior of the entire population.

6.5 Future research

This research focuses on targeted social media advertising and how it affects the consumers’ online buying process. This research has deepened the understanding of consumer behavior, when it comes to the online buying process and the different consumer reactions to targeted social media advertising. The findings of this research indicate that even though some consumers might respond rather negatively to advertising on social media, effectively targeted advertisements can be interesting and generate positive response. However, this research doesn’t concentrate on targeted advertising on some specific social media channel – future research could focus on the differences between social media channels. Even though it is acknowledged in this research that consumers don’t utilize all the social media channels as actively as others, this research doesn’t focus on the differences in social media usage. By acknowledging this, future research could focus on the time spent on specific social media channels and the possible effects of advertising in these channels.

Targeted advertising is the most effective, when it is meeting the needs of consumers. According to this research, consumers aren’t very eager to click the advertisements or if they click, they might consider the different options for a long while. Further research could gain a better understanding of how companies can create and target advertisements effectively on social media and how they can effectively diminish the time consumers spent after their initial ad click and the purchase. Additionally, this research doesn’t focus on any specific product or product category, since the aim of this research is to understand the totality of targeted social media advertising. The relevance of product categories would also be a rather interesting topic for future research.
The attitudes towards online shopping as well as the behavior in online context are both topics that will keep evolving. According to this research, some consumers prefer different online stores over traditional physical shops. This revolution of online era is a rather important subject in itself; what companies should understand in the light of consumer behavior, when they provide online services to their customers. It would also be valuable to better understand how consumers are making decisions, when they decide whether they purchase something from a physical shop or an online store. Website usability, reliability and possible risks are identified in this research to be the factors that have a great impact on the buying behavior online. When it comes to the revenues of an online store, it would be important to understand through which means marketers can improve these aspects and to boost the performance of their online stores.

Lastly, this research focuses on the consumer behavior of young adults, since all the participants, who are interviewed in this research, are 23–27 years old. For this reason, the research findings are relevant, when interpreting the possible behavior and attitudes of people around their mid-twenties. People in this age group are generally having rather positives attitudes towards online shopping, and therefore, it would be interesting to understand the online buying behavior of people younger or older than the interviewees in this research.
REFERENCES


Appendix 1

THEME INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK IN ENGLISH

- Background information
  - Sex
  - Age
  - Occupation
  - Technology usage (technology acceptance)
    - Attitudes towards new technology

- Advertising on social media
  - Social media usage
    - Different social media channels
    - Time spent on social media
  - Describe the advertisements you have come across on social media?
  - What is your opinion of social media advertisements?
  - Do you feel that advertisements are interesting or relevant to you?
  - What reactions different advertisements evoke?
    - Positive and negative

- Online buying behavior
  - Tendency to shop online
    - How often do you buy something online?
    - What products you purchase online?
  - Describe attitudes towards online shopping and how you typically shop online.
  - How the website usability affects your behavior in an online shop?
  - How purchase you make in routine and the ones you consider a lot differentiate from each other?
  - What kind risks there are in online shopping?
  - How website reliability affects your buying behavior?
    - How do you evaluate the reliability of an online store?
  - What motives you to shop online?
Targeted social media advertisements and online buying behavior

- In which social media channels have you seen advertisements?
- How do you think different advertisements are targeted to you?
- What kinds of advertisements have caught your attention?
  - What are the factors in an ad that catch attention?
- Have you clicked an advertisement that you have seen on social media? Why?
  - How often?
  - What happened after the click?
- Have you seen social media advertisements that have made you want or need something?
  - What kind of advertisements have these been?
- Describe how you search information about offering.
- Have you searched for information after seeing a social media advertisement? Why and how?
  - What affected the information search?
- How do you compare or evaluate the products before the purchase?
- How do social media advertisements affect the way you evaluate different alternatives?
  - Have you found alternative products or services, when you have seen social media advertisements?
- What aspects affect the final purchase decision?
- How do social media advertisements have affected your decision to purchase something online?
- What happens after the purchase is made?
- Have social media advertisements affected your behavior after you have purchased something? How?
- Have you purchased something online after seeing a social media advertisement?
- Other comments
THEME INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK IN FINNISH

- Taustatiedot
  - Sukupuoli
  - Ikä
  - Ammatti
  - Teknologian käyttö
    - Suhtautuminen uuteen teknologiaan

- Sosiaalisen median mainonta
  - Sosiaalisen median käyttö
    - Erilaiset sosiaalisen median palvelut
    - Ajankäyttö sosiaalisessa mediassa
  - Millaisia mainoksia olet nähnyt sosiaalisessa mediassa?
  - Mitä ajattelet sosiaalisen media mainoksista?
  - Koetko, että mainokset ovat kiinnostavia?
  - Millaisia ajatuksia mainokset sinussa herättävät?
    - Positiiviset ja negatiiviset

- Ostokäyttäytyminen verkossa
  - Taipumus verkkoshoppailuun
    - Kuinka usein ostat verkossa?
    - Millaisia tuotteita ostat verkossa?
  - Kuvaile asenteitasi verkkoshoppailua kohtaan sekä tyyppillistä käyttäytymistä verkkokaupoissa.
  - Miten verkkosivujen käytettävyys vaikuttaa ostamiseen?
  - Vaikuttavatko ostamiseen rutiiinit tai pidempi pohdinta?
  - Millaisia riskejä mielestäsi liittyvät verkkoo-ostamiseen?
  - Miten luotettavuus vaikuttaa omaan ostokäyttäytymiseesi?
    - Miten arvioit luotettavuutta?
  - Mitkä asiat motivoivat sinua tekemään ostoksia verkossa?
Kohdennutut sosiaalisen median mainokset ja ostokäyttäytymisen verkossa

- Missä kanavissa?
- Millä perusteellisesti lukeutu erilaisten mainosten kohdentuvan juuri sinulle?
- Millaiset mainokset ovat kiinnittäneet huomioni?
  - Millaiset tekijät mainoksessa kiinnittivät huomion?
- Millaisia mainoksia olet klikannut sosiaalisessa mediassa? Miksi?
  - Kuinka usein?
  - Mitä klikkauksen jälkeen tapahtui?
- Oletko huomannut, että tarvisit tai haluaisit jotakin sen jälkeen, kun olet nähnyt mainoksen sosiaalisessa mediassa?
  - Millaiset mainokset ovat herättäneet sinussa tällaisia tuntemuksia?
- Miten etsit tietoa erilaisista vaihtoehdoista tai tarjonnasta?
- Oletko etsinyt tietoa tuotteesta tai palvelusta nähtyäsi mainoksen sosiaalisessa mediassa? Miksi ja miten?
  - Mitkä asiat vaikuttivat tiedon etsintään?
- Miten vertailet tuotteita ennen ostopäätöstä?
- Miten sosiaalisessa mediassa näkemäsi mainokset ovat vaikuttaneet eri vaihtoehtojen vertailuun?
  - Oletko löytänyt vaihtoehtoisia tuotteita tai palveluita, kun olet nähnyt mainoksen sosiaalisessa mediassa?
- Millaiset asiat vaikuttavat ostopäätöksiisi?
  - Hintta, sosiaaliset tekijät, merkki, määrä, ostotapa
- Miten sosiaalisessa mediassa näkemäsi mainokset ovat vaikuttaneet päätökseesi tehdä ostoksia verkossa?
- Mitä tapahtuu sen jälkeen, kun ostos on tehty?
  - Uudelleen ostaminen, palautteen antaminen
- Miten sosiaalisessa mediassa näkemäsi mainokset ovat vaikuttaneet käytökseesi sen jälkeen, kun olet ostanut jotain verkossa?
- Oletko tehnyt ostoksia verkossa sen jälkeen, kun olet nähnyt mainoksen sosiaalisessa mediassa?
- Muut kommentit