

Consumer Attitudes towards Advertising on Reddit: Evidence from Finland

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Abstract:

Advertising has been part of marketing for a long time, but as media use changes, so does advertising. In recent years, companies have shifted more of their budgets to social media, since these platforms provide companies with an efficient way to reach and communicate with consumers. At the same time, consumers ultimately determine the effectiveness of advertisements, and research has increasingly started focusing on studying consumer attitudes towards social media advertising.

Even though earlier studies have looked at consumer attitudes towards advertising on other social media platforms, there has not yet been any research conducted specifically on Reddit. Since Reddit has openly communicated their increased strategic push into advertising on their platform, especially after their Initial Public Offering in 2024, this thesis analyzes consumers' attitudes towards advertising on Reddit, and which factors most strongly influence them.

The thesis is built on a qualitative analysis using semi-structured interviews with 12 Finnish Reddit users aged 18-34, to gain an understanding of the attitudes of the largest user group on the platform in Finland. The analysis and results in the thesis reveal that consumers have contradicting attitudes towards advertising on Reddit. Relevance, driven primarily by personalization, emerged as the most decisive factor in shaping these attitudes, and informants' attitudes were strongly influenced by whether advertisements aligned with subreddit-specific expectations.

The findings offer marketers and agencies insights into how personalization, relevance, and platform-specific expectations shape consumer attitudes toward advertising on Reddit. The findings provide Reddit with further insights into what their users think about advertising on the platform. Finally, this thesis contributes to social media advertising as well as consumer behavior research; by focusing on Reddit, a platform not earlier studied in the context of consumer attitudes towards advertising.

Keywords: Social Media Advertising, Social Media Platforms, Consumer attitudes, Reddit, Personalization-privacy paradox, Finnish consumers

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Finländska konsumenters attityder gentemot annonsering på Reddit

Sammandrag:

Annonser har länge varit en central del av marknadsföring, men i takt med att människors medievanor förändras, gör även annonserna det. Under de senaste åren har företag flyttat en större del av sina budgeter till sociala medier, eftersom sociala medieplattformar erbjuder ett effektivt sätt att nå ut till och kommunicera med konsumenter. Samtidigt är det i slutändan konsumenterna som avgör hur väl annonserna fungerar, och forskning fokuserar allt mera på konsumenters attityder till annonser på sociala medier.

Även om tidigare studier har undersökt konsumenters attityder till annonser på andra sociala medieplattformar, finns det ännu ingen forskning som specifikt behandlar annonser på Reddit. Med tanke på att Reddit tydligt kommunicerat en ökad strategisk satsning på annonsering, särskilt efter börsnoteringen 2024, är syftet med denna avhandling att förstå konsumenters attityder till annonser på Reddit och vilka faktorer som påverkar dessa attityder starkast.

Avhandlingen bygger på en kvalitativ analys genom semistrukturerade intervjuer med tolv finländska Reddit-användare i åldern 18–34 år, vilket är den största användargruppen på plattformen i Finland. Analysen visar att konsumenterna har motstridiga attityder till reklam på Reddit. Relevans, som främst drevs av personifiering, framträdde som den mest avgörande faktorn för att forma dessa attityder. Samtidigt påverkades intervjupersonernas inställning tydligt av i vilken utsträckning annonserna upplevdes vara i linje med subreddit-specifika förväntningar.

Avhandlingen bidrar till marknadsförare och byråer med värdefulla insikter i hur personifiering, relevans och plattformsspecifika förväntningar påverkar konsumenters attityder till annonser på Reddit. Resultaten ger även Reddit bättre insikt i hur deras användare ser på annonseringen på plattformen. Slutligen bidrar avhandlingen till forskningsfältet kring annonsering i sociala medier och konsumentbeteende genom att studera konsumentattityder gentemot annonsering på Reddit.

Nyckelord: Sociala medier, sociala medieplattformar, annonsering, konsumentattityder, Reddit, personifierings-integritetsparadoxen, finska konsumenter

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1 INTRODUCTION

Social media can be discussed from two distinct perspectives: first, the platforms, providers of the core technology, which build the industry and the surrounding ecosystem, and secondly, the use cases – for what purpose are organizations and consumers using these platforms. Social media platforms have been critical in shaping the medium itself, impacting consumer behaviour and the marketing practices in the space. Traditionally associated with television, radio and print, advertising has progressed towards several new platforms and media formats (Ford et al., 2023). As a result of increased digitalization, social media has evolved into one of the most important media for companies to communicate with customers - embedding engagement, participation, and knowledge-sharing into the user experience (Appel et al., 2019; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Historically, monetization through advertising has remained the primary business model for social media platforms (Appel et al., 2019).

Companies are allocating more budget to digital marketing, with social media competition intensifying; in 2024, digital advertising spend accounted for 73% of global advertising spend (Statista, 2024). Marketing budgets shift to social media platforms due to their ability to connect widespread reach with personalized messaging and generate strong engagement. This makes social media a crucial element in the current media mix, where consumers hold stronger power than before (Dwivedi et al., 2021). At the same time, social media advertising is increasingly data-driven, with AI enabling automated content creation and more advanced personalization (Saheb et al., 2024).

Unlike in traditional media, social media platforms offer businesses distinct opportunities to personalise messaging through strong targeting capabilities as well as two-way communication paths with consumers (Aichner et al., 2021). At the same time, these accelerations also create complexity, as loss of control and content personalization may lead to privacy concerns, impacting the way consumers view advertisements delivered to them (Saheb et al., 2024). Simultaneously, consumers are no longer passive recipients of communication, as they can now comment, react, create, and engage with content instantly. Through stronger interaction amongst consumers, social media advertisements are not only consumed but also negotiated and discussed. Given the heightened interaction between consumers and advertisers on social media, users have more opportunities to express opinions and reflect on content encountered. Consequently, consumer attitudes become an increasingly critical factor influencing the efficiency and relevance of advertisements on social media platforms (Sreejesh et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Although social media platforms have some set characteristics in common, each social media platform differs in terms of its user base, functionality, and mission. Therefore, it is important not to talk about social media platforms as a homogeneous category, as they differ significantly (Voorveld et al., 2018). While certain social media platforms are more identity-focused, Reddit distinguishes itself through its community focus. The platform is built on communities known as subreddits, which function as interest-based forums. Within these communities, governance, moderation, and community norms are established and enforced at a local level. Hence, platform participation occurs primarily at the subreddit level, rather than under management from the platform (Fiesler et al., 2018). Subreddit-specific characteristics define community structure, making subreddits the primary context for users' interaction with the platform (TeBlunthuis et al., 2022).

While marketing literature has examined consumer attitudes towards advertising on a range of different platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and TikTok (Logan et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2017; Gaber et al., 2019; Dwinanda et al., 2022), no earlier research has been conducted on Reddit, which is now accelerating its business model around advertising. Following its Initial Public Offering (IPO) in 2024, Reddit has made advertising a central growth strategy, with year-over-year (YoY) growth of 84 % in advertising revenue during Q2 2025 (eMarketer, 2025). This revenue increase comes from further emphasizing advertising solutions on the platform. As social media platforms differ in user expectations, structure, and purpose, it remains unclear whether established theories in consumer attitudes apply similarly across platforms. Bearing that in mind, this thesis seeks to understand how established factors in advertising literature influence consumer attitudes towards advertisements, specifically on Reddit.

1.1 Research Problem

The effectiveness of advertising relies strongly on consumers' perception and evaluations of advertising communication (MacKenzie et al., 1986; Ducoffe, 1996). Prior literature consistently shows that there are a few key factors shaping consumer attitudes towards advertising: informativeness, entertainment, irritation and credibility (Ducoffe, 1996; Brackett and Carr, 2001). More recently, with the rise of social media advertising, personalization, privacy concerns, and interactivity have also been identified as influential factors (Lütjens et al, 2022).

Research on consumer attitudes towards advertising have been extensively investigated in more traditional contexts, such as in print and tv advertisements, to web and online display advertising (Ducoffe, 1996; Brackett and Carr, 2001). More recently, advertisements on identity-based and visually rich platforms have been studied, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok (Logan et al., 2012; Gaber et al., 2019; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2022; Silaban et al., 2022). However, despite the growing academic interest in social media advertising, research on Reddit is missing in this context. Reddit differs fundamentally through its community-driven, information-seeking, and pseudonymous nature (Brown et al., 2018). This raises questions about how factors in social media advertising, largely studied in identity-based and visually oriented social media platforms, are perceived on Reddit and how the platform's identity shapes consumer attitudes towards advertising. The relative importance of these factors may differ in a pseudonymous and community-driven environment, forming the core research gap this study aims to address.

In the last two years, Reddit has made advertising a core growth priority, expanding offices and launching solutions across Europe, including the Nordic region (Reddit, 2025). This shift towards commercialization underscores the company's new strategic priority in advertising – unlocking the possibility to strengthen their advertising offerings for advertisers. The company is now investing strongly in Europe, with job postings signalling Account Management and Local Community Specialist functions created to serve both advertisers and consumers also specifically in the Nordic region (Reddit, 2025).

Simultaneously, AI-driven personalization and content creation amplify the privacy-personalization paradox on social media platforms. While consumers receive more personalized content, this often comes at the potential cost of privacy concerns and loss of control (Cloarec et al., 2024). As advertisers increasingly adopt AI-based targeting (Statista, 2025), this thesis

applies fundamental theories and factors proven to contribute to consumer attitudes, to the temporary landscape of an attention economy, where more advertising is personalized and AI-driven, and where it is increasingly difficult to understand when personal information is shared and or/utilized for advertising practices (Cloarec, 2020).

A significant amount of advertising research has focused on Ducoffe's perceived advertising value model (1996) presenting irritation, informativeness and entertainment as factors influencing consumer attitudes towards advertising, and the updated model by Brackett and Carr (2001), factoring credibility. However, as the landscape of online advertising changes, there is need for further exploration of factors influencing consumer attitudes towards advertising on social media platforms. By also examining interactivity, privacy concerns and personalization, in accordance with Lütjens et al (2022), this thesis looks at consumer attitudes towards advertising by examining multiple factors, with the objective of getting a deep understanding of key determinants driving those attitudes.

By conducting 12 semi-structured interviews with active Reddit users, this study examines factors influencing Finnish consumers' attitudes towards advertising on Reddit, a platform and market that remain unexplored in prior advertising research. The study examines Finnish consumers aged 18-34, who are digitally native and operate in a cultural environment characterized by relatively high uncertainty avoidance and scepticism towards international advertising (The Culture Group, n.d.; Valamis, 2024; Advertising Finland; 2021).

The thesis contributes to social media advertising literature as well as consumer behaviour research by offering insights into factors influencing Finnish consumers' attitudes towards advertising on Reddit. Specifically, it does so by focusing on a hitherto little researched community-centric, pseudonymous platform. Finally, the findings are expected to provide valuable insights for Reddit as well as both companies and marketing professionals engaged in exploring Reddit as an advertising platform within the Finnish and wider Nordic market.

1.2 Aim of the Thesis

This thesis aims to examine Finnish consumers‘ attitudes towards advertising on Reddit. The study builds upon Ducoffe's perceived advertising value model (1996) and the extension provided by Brackett and Carr (2001). Furthermore, to account for the current social media landscape, this thesis incorporates factors proposed by Lütjens et al. (2022). Accordingly, the factors examined in this thesis are: informativeness, irritation, entertainment, credibility,

privacy concerns, interactivity and personalization. To achieve the research aim, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the attitudes of Finnish consumers towards advertisements on Reddit?
RQ 2: Which factors most strongly influence Finnish consumers' attitudes towards advertisements on Reddit?

1.3 Delimitations of the Thesis

One of the core delimitations of the study is to solely focus on the platform Reddit and on consumers' attitudes towards advertisements within this specific context. The research is further delimited to focus only on informativeness, irritation, entertainment, credibility, privacy concerns, interactivity and personalization as potential factors influencing consumers' attitudes towards advertisements on Reddit. Additionally, this thesis will explicitly focus on consumer attitudes of Finnish citizens in the age group of 18-34 years old, the largest group of Reddit users globally and in Finland, as well as the most active social media users in Finland by percentage (Curry, 2025; Statista, 2024).

Given these delimitations, the findings are not intended to be generalized beyond this specific context, such as to other age groups, cultures or social media platforms. However, these boundaries allow for a stronger understanding of advertising attitudes within a clearly defined and relevant user group in Finland.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

In the first chapter, the context of the thesis is discussed through an introduction to the topic. After that follows the problem area, which highlights previous research, as well as gaps identified in literature, making this thesis particularly relevant. The aim, research questions and delimitations of the thesis give the thesis a stronger narrative, enabling the research to focus on a set number of things.

In the second chapter of the thesis, supporting theory is presented. The current landscape of social media and advertising is discussed, as well as previous research is presented. The Perceived Advertising Model is introduced as the primary theoretical framework guiding the study. Additionally, complementary theoretical perspectives are discussed to support the analysis, including insights related to privacy and personalization, user motivations and

consumers' awareness of persuasive intent. Based on these the conceptual model for the theory of the thesis is presented, supporting the development of the research methodology.

In the third chapter the methodology of the thesis is presented, followed by the sampling strategy, ensuring an efficient data collection process. The chapter presents the procedures for data analysis and explains how research quality and ethical standards are maintained throughout the study. The fourth chapter will present the data gathered and discuss the results obtained in the study. The fifth and concluding chapter will discuss the main takeaways of the study, both in relation to earlier research as well as the data collected. In addition, primary implications of the thesis for researchers and professionals working in the space of the researched topic will be presented. Finally, potential limitations of the thesis and ideas for further research on the topic will be discussed. Together, the structure of the thesis follows a logical progression from theory to analysis, enabling a rigid and iterative examination of Finnish consumers' attitudes towards advertising on Reddit.

2 THEORY

This section introduces the reader to social media platforms and their role as mediums used for advertising purposes. By introducing the reader to the competitive landscape of social media platforms, the purpose is to lay the foundation of where Reddit positions itself amongst other major players in the social media advertising industry. Later in the chapter, social media advertising as a concept and strategy will be discussed, followed by mechanisms influencing attitudes towards social media advertising. This will build a solid structure for the second part of the theory section, discussing advertising theory as well as earlier research conducted in the space of advertising and consumer attitudes.

By studying earlier research, adopting the perceived advertising model (Ducoffe, 1996), and exploring extensions of it, the study will develop a conceptual framework, working as a foundation for the methodology used for this thesis. The conceptual framework will be used to ensure that the study considers a wide set of key factors influencing consumers' attitudes towards advertising on Reddit. By going through social media advertising step-by-step and eventually acquiring knowledge about each relevant factor, this theory section builds a robust and logical basis for the study.

2.1 Social Media Platforms as Advertising Hubs

Generally, in marketing research, social media covers various online platforms, such as blogs, business networks, social networks, forums, photo sharing, product reviews, and video sharing. Social media addresses multiple different purposes and uses – which on the other hand results in distinct types of social media platforms (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Aichner et al., 2021; Voorveld et al., 2018; Appel et al., 2019). Social media dates to the mid 90's, when first versions of the media were created (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Over the course of the past 30 years, the number of active social media users as well as available social media platforms has rapidly increased, with over 5 billion users in 2024 (Statista, 2024). Companies have increasingly started including social media platforms as an integral part of their marketing mix. The unique two-way communication between consumers and companies has changed the way marketeers approach investments. Unlike previously, consumers now hold an active role in relationships with companies, and the attitudes and perceptions of consumers are gaining gradually more value in business decisions over time (Aichner et al., 2021).

The theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), introduced by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), discusses consumers decision-making processes by investigating perceived usefulness consumers experience whilst engaging in voluntary behaviors. According to the theory, individuals' attitudes towards behavior come from their own reflections about potential outcomes if engaged in the activity. Subjective ideas will be influenced by the social circle of an individual, affecting the opinion of acceptable actions (Alsaleh, et al., 2018). Applied to social media, users' inclination to participate in a social media platform does not only depend on the potential usefulness of participating, but also on how their wider social circle perceives the action taken. Earlier studies have shown that both attitudes towards a social network as well as approval from one's own social circle function as strong predictors of overall usage of them (Peslak et al., 2012). Given the current landscape of social media, each platform draws in different sorts of consumers. Hence, a similar dynamic is expected to play out also in the social media era, where different platforms appeal to specific audiences, based on individual attitudes and social influence (Voorveld et al., 2018).

Aichner et al. (2021) identify *Interacting with companies and brands* as an integral marketing-related use of social media platforms. In the paper, the researchers state that close to 100% of larger companies (As of 2021) are utilizing social media to a certain extent, communicating with their customers in a variety of settings. The unique two-way relationship that companies develop with consumers through social media, "social customer relationship management", creates a strong bond between the two parties. However, friction might occur if the expectations of the two parties collide (Aichner et al., 2021). And just as platforms and advertisers need to balance the trade-off between trust and information with consumers, platforms need to manage the level of moderation versus potential loss of audience on the platform. Madio and Quinn (2024) discuss content moderation as an assisting function in creating a brand-safety effect and removing consumers who are interested in consuming unsafe content. The research highlights that the level of content moderation is much based on the interests of its audience. By understanding how platform users' and advertisers' preferences align, managers will find it easier to understand which moderation policies are suitable.

In this study, focus will lie specifically on the interaction between companies and consumers within social media. Peculiar to these types of studies is that they examine platforms as intermediaries and explore the influence these have on consumer attitudes towards brands, and in particular, advertisements on the platform. For the research to have a solid foundation, it is

important to understand the differences amongst social media platforms, and how this may affect the attitudes towards advertising on them (Voorveld et al., 2018). Therefore, to give a more holistic understanding of social media platforms, the next section presents the most popular social media platforms in Finland both from a usage and advertising perspective. By introducing the reader to YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, the section will give the reader further insights into the mission and offerings of each respective platform. The objective is to give the reader an understanding of the size of each platform's audience as well as the core offerings of each platform to its users as well as advertisers in comparison with Reddit.

2.1.1 YouTube

As of November 2025, YouTube has 4.1 million users in Finland (Datareportal, 2025). YouTube is generally seen as a video-sharing site; however, it can more widely be viewed as a participatory social media platform with users having the possibility to share, consume, comment, and interact with others through consumption of video content (Burgess and Green, 2009).

YouTube was originally launched in 2005, before it was acquired by Google in 2006. According to YouTube's own official information, the platform allows consumers to share, upload and view video content. In addition, the platform enables users to engage with creators and other users through commenting and subscribing to channel interaction on the platform. (YouTube, n.d.).

During its existence, YouTube has managed to build one of the strongest and most diverse advertising infrastructures, offering its consumers not only video-content but also access to interact with companies across the globe. With over 10 billion dollars in advertising revenue in Q3 2025 only, it remains one of the biggest platforms to advertise on (Alphabet, Inc.) and has a reach of 72.9 percent of Finland's population 2025 (Datareportal, 2025). Like other social media platforms, advertisers can create a wide set of different campaigns, ranging from skippable in-stream ads, non-skippable in-stream ads to outside of the scope of video ads and in-feed ads. On top of this, for more premium placements, YouTube offers advertisers Masthead ads, giving them the chance to maximize reach with placements on top of the homepage (YouTube Advertising, 2025).

Recently, with the growth of short-form video content, YouTube shorts ads have become an increasingly important advertising option for advertisers, with a growing number of consumers

now consuming short-form video content. Out of all YouTube daily active users (DAU), 55 percent are reported to engage with Shorts (Ravina, 2025).

YouTube supports advertisers across a variety of campaign goals, from discovery to intention to purchase. To further clarify the different offerings of YouTube advertising, Table 1 discusses each advertisement format that is available for advertisers.

Table 1 Advertisement Solutions on YouTube (Google, 2025)

Ad format	Ad placement	Features
Non-Skippable In-Stream Ads	Prior to, during and after a video	Mandatory view for consumer – 15-20 seconds
Skippable In-Stream Ads	Prior to, during and after a video	Can be skipped after 5 seconds, cost for advertiser only as long as ad is viewed.
In-Feed Video Ads	On the platforms search or during "watch next"	Text description of ad as well as thumbnail – good for product discovery
Bumper Ads	Prior to videos	Discovering and considering products
Shorts Ads	In the Youtube Shorts feed	Short-form video advertisements, especially relevant for Gen Z
Masthead Ads	Homepage placement on desktop, mobile and TV	Exclusive 24-hour premium banner – mass reach ensured
Outstream Ads	On Youtube partner websites and/or apps	Let advertiser advertise beyond YouTube
Audio Ads	YouTube music	Ads delivered by voice, aimed for audio settings

2.1.2 Facebook

As of November 2025, Facebook has 2.4 million users in Finland. This on the other hand translates to an advertising reach of around 42,7 percent of the total population (DataReportal, 2025). The company, today part of the umbrella organization Meta Platforms Inc., positions itself as a social networking platform that allows users, organizations and businesses to engage, share and discover content. The company further describes the platform as the go-to medium to "connect with friends, family and communities of people who share your interests" (Meta, 2025).

Facebook offers its advertisers multiple options of placements and formats, with the emphasis to match its users' behaviors across all placements: stories, feeds as well as reels. On the platform, advertisers can use image ads, video ads as well as carousel ads, that allow consumers to explore various products within the same advertisement, simply by swiping. Furthermore, the advertiser has the chance to utilize multiple other options, such as stories and Reels Ads, Collection Ads,

Lead Ads as well as Dynamic Ads. (Meta, n.d.)

Table 2 offers a more in-depth discussion of Facebook's various advertising solutions available.

Table 2 Advertisement Solutions on Facebook (Meta for Business, 2025)

Ad format	Ad placement	Features
Feed Ads - Image/Video	Main user feed, right column (only desktop), marketplace.	Standard image or video posts appearing in user feeds
Reels Ads	In the specific Reels feed	Ads specifically designed in between reels videos and holding a vertical short from video nature
Lead Ads	Available on stories, and feed	Advertisement for generating leads
Messenger Ads	Chat	Enabling the advertisement to capture highly personalized conversations
Collection Ads	Stories and feed	Image and/or video displayed with grid of products
Carousel Ads	Stories and feed	Visuals combined with swipeable feature for products
Instant experiences	Full screen on mobile	Multi-media experience, storytelling and branding

2.1.3 Instagram

As of November 2025, Instagram has 2.4 million users in Finland, translating into an advertising reach of 42.7 percent of the total population (Datereportal, 2025). Instagram, today part of the umbrella organization Meta Platforms Inc., continues its growth trajectory as one of the most used social media platforms globally. Unlike YouTube and Facebook, Instagram is more heavily inclined towards expression in the form of photos. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) highlights that the visual-focused platform encourages platform users to seize the aspirational and inspirational content that is often connected to consumer and lifestyle culture.

The platform positions itself as medium, which inspires users daily, promoting an inclusive community simultaneously as giving consumers the chance to share their identities, connecting with like-minded people to eventually have the chance to convert personal interests into professional opportunities (Meta, n.d.).

Recently, Instagram has played an integral part in shaping what we know today as creator/influencer marketing. This function enables influencers to integrate branded advertising into personal experiences, making advertisement more native - blurring the lines between

business promotion and social engagement. This development has led to creators becoming non-negotiable elements in companies' ways of communicating through advertisement towards consumers (Abidin, 2016). As a result of this, Instagram has recently rolled out partnership ads, recognizing the power of influencers as brand ambassadors. Table 3 offers further introduction to the different advertising solutions available on the Instagram platform.

Table 3 Advertisement Solutions on Instagram (Meta for Business, 2025)

Ad format	Ad placement	Features
Feed Ads (Image/Video)	Main user feed	Standard image or video posts appearing in user feeds
Explore Ads	Explore page	Ads placed for consumers to explore products
Carousel Ads	Stories/Feeds	Swipeable posts with multiple images or videos
Stories Ads	Between stories of the consumers	Full-screen vertical ads between Stories
Reels Ads	In the specific Reels feed	Ads specifically designed in between reels videos and holding a vertical short from video nature
Collection Ads	User feed and story	Ability for consumers to swipe through different product visuals.
Partnership Ads	Post of creators	Ad in collaboration with creators, ad shows both creator and brand.

2.1.4 TikTok

As of November 2025, TikTok is one of the most consumed social media platforms in Finland, with 1.62 million users aged 18 or older and an advertising reach of 35.1 percent of the Finnish population aged 18 or above (DataReportal, 2025). Compared to the other platforms discussed in this thesis, TikTok is new to the world of social media. However, regardless of the later entry date to the industry of social media platforms, the platform is today considered one of most popular ones globally.

TikTok positions itself as the leader when it comes to short-form video content and creation of viral trends. The company emphasizes user participation, community building as well as creativity as core elements of the platform (TikTok, n.d.). Rather than following a traditional advertising technique, TikTok emphasizes elements such as hashtag challenges, community focused campaigns and the allowance of users to also participate in content creation, by remixing and sharing content across the platform. Underlying this is the platform's fundamental logic, highlighting the creation of trend-driven content, ensuring aspects of visuality and low

barriers to participate, as well as having a strong focus on shared creative appearance and viral moments (Kaye et al., 2021).

Table 4 offers a more detailed walkthrough of advertising solutions offered by TikTok to businesses on the platform.

Table 4 Advertisement Solutions on TikTok (TikTok for Business, 2025)

Ad format	Ad placement	Features
TopView Ads	Instantly when app launches	Non-skippable and massive reach
In-Feed Ads	On users for You feed	Skippable ads with strong call-to-action
Branded Hashtag Challenges	Discovery feed	Campaigns around hashtags – objective to encourage virality through user content
Branded Effects	Augmented reality placement and or/ camera filters	Strong interactivity aspect for advertisers engaged
Collection Ads	In user feed	Ability for consumers to swipe through different product visuals
Shopping Ads	Focus on product. Linked to the TikTok Shop	In-app product browsing available, dynamic product catalogue integration
Spark Ads	Existing content from creator – boost it.	To ensure native-like advertising, creator advertisement is boosted as paid advertisement

2.1.5 Reddit

In this study, the area of interest is in factors that influence consumers' attitudes towards advertisements on Reddit. Reddit as a platform differs to a certain extent compared to platforms that have been studied in the segment of advertising. While Gaber et al. (2019) and Logan et al. (2012) studied consumer attitudes towards advertising of Instagram and Facebook respectively, this study explores similar factors in a somewhat different setting. As studies in this area have traditionally been on platforms that are centrally regulated, Reddit holds a different position when it comes to content moderation.

Like other platforms, there are significant amounts of content produced daily on Reddit. What distinguishes Reddit from other platforms is the community aspect of the company. Whilst major competitors have a rather follower-based structure, Reddit's infrastructure relies more on topics of interest and communities. Subreddits encourage users to engage in discussions, where knowledge exchange as well as collective voting plays a big part in the interaction aspect of the platform. Fiesler et al. (2018) analyzed over 100,000 subreddits, with the aim of understanding

the system of content moderation on the platform. The researchers identified three specific governing elements setting the tone for moderation; platform-wide policies (content policy as well as user agreements), community norms, so called *Reddiquettes*, and subreddit rules, created by moderators on the platform.

In contrast to TikTok and Instagram, where visual aspects remain important, Reddit focuses heavier on peer-to-peer exchanges of information in user-generated communities – positioning Reddit more towards an online discussion forum rather than a social networking site (Medvedev et al., 2019).

Given the company's increasing strategic focus on advertising, as well as increased investments in advertising technology, Reddit is now offering advertisers a wider set of advertisements, placements and formats. Advertisements on Reddit can be targeted based on location, interests, Subreddits, Demographics, Keywords, and contextually relevant key words to identify the target audience (Reddit, 2025). Its Audiences framework enables advertisers to target users on the platforms based on their interests, behavior and participation in subreddits, instead of only relying on wider demographic datapoints. Reddit users are therefore organized based on their engagement patterns on the platform, where advertisers can align the advertisement with the interests of the audience with a stronger likelihood (Reddit, n.d.). As this study investigates which aspects of advertisements affect Reddit users most, recent investments in advertising infrastructure as well as broader advertising solutions available for advertisers translate into new attitudes amongst consumers, making the timing of this thesis highly relevant and interesting.

Table 5 provides a more detailed walk-through of advertising solutions offered by Reddit to businesses actively engaged in advertising on the platform.

Table 5 Advertisement Solutions on Reddit (Reddit for Business, 2025)

Ad format	Ad placement	Features
Free-Form Ads	Feed and subreddits, delivered as a native post	Native appearance, optional to enable commenting, sharing and voting - good for engagement and storytelling
Product Ads	User Feed	Advertiser product catalogue connected to Reddit. Products displayed based on user browsing history.
Lead-Generation Ads	User feed	For collecting user info (e.g., email signups) directly within Reddit – generating leads
Video Ads	On Feed, comment sections and/or videos promoted.	Sound-effects, storytelling and product description

Conversation Ads	Feed + comment thread	Advertisement ensuring interactivity through the creation of thread under advertising post
Carousel Ads	On users Feed	Multiple cards (images/videos) in one advertisement; swipeable format
Image Ads	Sidebar on desktop, as well as user feed	Image with clear Call-to-action
Takeover Ads	Homepage, Subreddit front page or landing page for specific Category	Guaranteed impressions with 24h 100 % share of voice

2.2 Social Media Advertising

There were more than 5.4 billion social media users across the globe in July 2025, equaling around 66 percent of the world's global population. With a 4.7 % annual growth rate, the spectrum of social media users is expected to continue to grow further over time. Amongst social media users, interactions are now considered the number one reason for people aged 16-34 to go online, making social media advertisements a great opportunity for advertisers. (DataReportal, 2025)

Dahlen and Rosengren (2016) discuss that while the form of advertising has changed, the definition of advertising has not evolved accordingly, creating a need to revisit and explore the concept. The researchers highlight three aspects of advertising in need of an update; 1) Paid, mediated communication, 2) Consumer behavior dynamics and 3) Persuasive intent. In their paper they discuss the rise of hybrid forms of advertising, with branded content as well as creator marketing gaining strong traction. In this context, the source is not always easy to identify, as the source of the advertisement gets blurrier over time (Kim and Kim, 2021). Secondly, the consumer is no longer a passive recipient of the message, but rather an active participant with the ability to react, discuss, share and even co-create advertisements. Finally, much, of what was considered accelerating immediate purchases as per older definitions, does not hold today, as advertisement works as a way of building long-term relationships with consumers – where the customer journey begins, but does not necessarily immediately lead to a purchase. Here, the researchers argue that the definitions "take action" and "persuade" should be replaced, as advertisement is more complex and broader today (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016).

Today, social media advertising can be discussed as a strategic way of using the media to target and deliver advertisements in an interactive way. Different to traditional media, it focuses mostly on social media platforms, where advertisements are targeted and delivered hyper-personally, based on users' engagement on the platform (Appel et al., 2019). Social media advertising is distinguished by being heavily steered by data engineering, personalization as well as engagement metrics with the aim of reaching the right consumer at the right point of time. Engagement metrics are being assessed through split testing, where creativity in execution will help the advertisers understand what resonates best with the consumers, leading to stronger engagement (Voorveld et al, 2018).

The stronger personalization and engagement seen is further driven by artificial intelligence (AI). AI can be understood as a system of technologies, which allows machines to calculate complex computations, solve problems and support human beings in making calculated decisions (Ford et al., 2023). AI is increasingly being used for proposing the right content to consumers. Not only does it shape the set of advertisements shown to the consumer, but also the features and appearance of those messages. Utilizing multiple different technical techniques, AI helps advertisers optimize advertisements, automate advertisement generation and further strengthen personalization of the advertisements (Ford et al., 2023). Huh and Malthouse (2020) highlight AI as an integral part of identifying ways to target advertising by automating advertisement schedules, placement strategies as well as decisions involving media planning and buying.

Amid the AI revolution, the channel through which marketing departments are choosing to advertise is also shifting. Social media personalities are becoming increasingly important intermediaries in the communication of companies' unique selling points (USP:s) and are especially challenging the non-personal part of the traditional definition of advertising, as the advertisement often carries a rather personal tone, making the advertisement more personal and relatable. So-called *native advertising* can make it less clear for the consumer to understand the original source of the advertisement (Kim and Kim, 2021).

Given all these changes in marketing, Kerr and Richards (2020) gathered advertising experts with leadership roles from advertising-, media-, or digital agencies to determine a suitable definition for the contemporary landscape of social media advertising. All participants engaged in research of older definitions to understand the limitations and potential areas of

improvement to build a new definition for the current landscape. Eventually, this led to the following definition:

> *"Advertising is paid, owned and earned mediated communication, activated by an identifiable brand and intent on persuading the consumer to make some cognitive, affective or behavioral change, now or in the future." (Kerr and Richards, 2020).*

2.2.1 The Role of Social Media Advertising in Marketing Strategies

Social media advertising is today seen as a strong way to engage with and reach consumers that businesses are targeting based on their objectives. For advertisers to build brand awareness and eventually increase purchase intent of their products/services, the objective is to build a portfolio of content that consumers are willing to share with their respective social networks (Jamil et al., 2022). To ensure businesses efficient targeting, social networks tend to enable platform users to share demographic, geographic and personal information. Given this information, performance marketing departments have a higher chance of reaching the right consumer with the right kind of messaging at the right time – emphasizing the power of social media platforms for advertising, when used correctly with tailored messaging specific to the target consumer (Vitalis et al., 2024).

Dwivedi et al. (2021) defines social media advertising as a strategic tool that enables customer engagement while also supporting brand-building and product/service promotion. The researcher builds on this by highlighting social media as an ever-changing ecosystem of media systems, where expanding scope and increasing complexity enables marketers' further touchpoints with consumers, simultaneously as it also requires marketers to stay adaptable.

Li and Leonidou (2020) explore social media advertising from a strategic marketing perspective, where social media interaction ensures not only exchange of information amongst companies, but also amongst consumers. Holding the resource-based view (RBV) as a foundation, the researchers discuss the integral role of network effects creating electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), where interactions trigger subsequent interactions, enabling resource integration– giving the firms datapoints and stronger insights about consumer behavior to establish competitive advantage. The researchers further split social media objectives four-fold. They discuss Social Media Marketing Strategies (SMMSs) through the lens of a taxonomy, represented by social commerce, social content, social monitoring and social CRM strategies. Within this framework, the researchers discuss advertising holding a vital role especially in the

social commerce strategy, where social media is used specifically for sales and promotion. With advertising comes potential for global reach and ability to influence purchase intent – however, if advertisement is not seen as interaction-rich, it poses a risk to stay transactional, reducing chances of longevity in customer relationships. Hence, from a marketing strategy point-of-view, social media advertising allows for strong customer engagement, if it is aligned with brand messaging and customer relationship management (CRM).

Social media advertising as a strategy also strongly depends on the target market and audience of the firm advertising. It is common for firms to use multiple platforms in their media-mix for advertising purposes, if seen as a way of maximizing brand awareness and reaching a set audience (Voorveld et al., 2018). However, the user base of different social media platforms differs significantly and so do the content consumed on these platforms. Whereas Facebook has been considered suitable for posts focused on entertainment and interaction, X (formerly Twitter), on the other hand, has been found to be more suitable for consumers seeking informative content (Kusumasondjaja 2018; Voorveld et al., 2018; Dwidedi, et al., 2021). For firms advertising on different platforms, consumer behavior-, as well platform-specific knowledge is essential, as users interact and consume content in different ways depending on the platform.

2.2.2 The Personalization-Privacy Paradox in Social Media

Privacy has been a steady concern for consumers of social media platforms. In 2022, only 22 % of consumers perceived social media as trustworthy, with even lower numbers in 2021. An Ipsos study indicated that most respondents think that governmental policies as well as control of sharing and producing online content would positively impact on general trust on internet. (d'Offay, 2023)

Given the increasingly complex relationship between personalization and privacy, the EU has agreed on and put in place two regulatory initiatives in recent years: The Digital Services as well as the AI Act – with the objective of restricting how advertising platforms collect and utilize personal information for the purpose of targeting advertisement, as well as requiring senders of messages to label content that is AI-generated, ensuring that the consumer is aware of when messages are produced synthetically. (European Union 2022, European Union 2024)

More recent analysis shows a reduced concern: DataReportal's analysis (2025) pointed out a relative decline of 7.1 % in privacy worry versus two years earlier. The report also highlighted

that privacy concerns tend to rise with age, however, 16-24 express more concern than 25-44-year-olds. Considering the sample of this research, certain aspects of this may be reflected in the interviews, as the informants will range from 18 to 34 years old individuals.

The privacy-personalization paradox lies at the intersection of these developments. The privacy calculus theory suggests that consumers conduct a risk-reward analysis in the process of sharing information with the provider of a signal (in this case advertiser or platform) (Wang et al., 2016; Cloarec et al., 2024). In personalized advertising this can become complex: Simultaneously as personalization can strengthen relevance of content, the consumer might also experience stronger concern around privacy. Depending on the procedure of data collection and communication, it can be challenging to determine the right balance. The researchers further highlight the importance of evaluating consumers across multiple angles: which channels, settings, types of advertising communications and maturity of the relationship, affect the perception of personalization from a privacy concern standpoint (Aguirre et al., 2016).

Cloarec (2020) adds an element of attention to the personalization-privacy paradox. In the current setting of multiple social media platforms competing for consumers attention, in a so-called attention economy – capacity to engage can play a significant role in how consumers approach the question of personalization. The researcher suggests that attention is required to make sound decisions about privacy-related issues. When attention spans are decreased, the receiver of the subject (consumers) will find it harder to process information from the agent (firms). Hence, with more limited capacity to receive social signals simultaneously as the consumer is exposed to a wider set of them, the consumer will find it increasingly difficult to take sound decisions about their privacy (Cloarec, 2020).

Cloarec (2021) introduces happiness with the Internet (HWI) as a key factor influencing consumers' willingness to share information to gain stronger personalization in return. The research finds that the effect gets even stronger in situations where consumers share own experiences, where they reciprocate with other users. This is further examined by Cloarec et al. (2024), introducing the concept of transformative privacy calculus, in which their research finds that the benefit of personalization increases further when consumers interact and share more because of positive attitudes towards the Internet, outweighing the potential loss of privacy and control.

Reddit is commonly characterized by pseudonymous participation. This enables users to be involved in discussions and communities, without informing peers about real-world identities. This version of anonymity is found to help individuals to participate in the platform, however, simultaneously shaping stronger perceptions of risk amongst users (Nagel and Frith, 2015). This does not, on the other hand, reduce tracking and data collection capabilities, as user activity will still be monitored in a comparable way to other social media platforms. Nevertheless, it can, according to the research, have a positive influence on how consumers perceive privacy concerns on the platform (Nagel and Frith, 2015).

It is important to understand these elements. Like other social media platforms, each piece of consumer information will be utilized in the delivery of personalized advertising on Reddit. Perceived control by users, once again, becomes a central underlying element determining consumers' attitudes towards advertising on the platform. The stronger the sense of control – the more receptive towards personalized advertising consumers are, and vice versa (Caudill and Murphy, 2000). Privacy concerns rise when users perceive violations of personal space. Consumers' attention is directed towards multiple signals simultaneously, and they may not always be aware of things they allow platform providers to track (Cloarec, 2020). Hence, the balance of transparency, control, trust and attention becomes a key determinant to understand how users assess not only Reddit as a social media platform, but also as a distributor of advertisements.

2.3 Consumers' Attitudes Towards Advertisements

This chapter introduces both traditional and more recent theoretical frameworks in advertising literature, examining consumer behavior and attitudes towards advertising. By first discussing the Uses and Gratifications Theory, Persuasion Knowledge Model, as well as the Perceived Advertising Value theory, this thesis examines earlier research on consumer attitudes towards advertising, especially investigating informativeness, entertainment, credibility, personalization, privacy concerns and interactivity. Studying earlier research as well as discussing fundamental theories supports the formation of a suitable research structure and methodology for the research questions in this thesis.

2.3.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

Consumers' attitudes towards advertising have for a long time been top-of-mind for marketers as well as researchers. Attitudes can be seen as a key predictor for consumers' behavior, making

it a significantly critical area to study both for practical as well as research implications (Ajzen and Cote, 2008). Consumers' motivation to use social media is built strongly on various incentives driving choices and decisions. In marketing literature, these incentives are strongly tied to psychological and social needs, specifically discussed in the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory. The theory builds on the idea that consumers actively seek media content that gratifies their needs. These can range from more hedonic values, such as entertainment or incentives, to stronger social values, such as sense of belonging or brand connection to finally depend on more utilitarian values, which can be represented, for instance, by the informativeness of media (Xiao et al., 2023).

In the early beginnings of gratification theory, the focus was primarily on consumer behavior – looking into the intrinsic needs of consumers and by that recognizing the key motivators making consumers feel a certain sense of gratification (Katz, 1959). The U&G theory was one of the first methods to discuss consumers as active participants, rather than passive recipients of media. According to Katz et al. (1974) the theory stipulates that consumers are determined and goal-oriented in their behavior, ensuring active participation in media. As they are aware of their own needs, they also have the chance of selecting relevant media to ensure gratification. Mitchell and Olson (1981) were early to study consumers' attitudes towards advertising, highlighting it as an element that should be accounted for in marketing literature. In their study, the researchers discuss attitude as the individual's own assessment of an object, for example a branded product, that is somewhat stable and has a significant impact on actions taken.

As social media ensures strong two-way communication between the communicator and recipient, fundamentals of U&G theory can be applied to the current context of social media (Gaber et al., 2019; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2022; Lütjens et al., 2022). Further down in the chapter, more recent applications of U&G theory will be discussed, in connection with consumer attitudes towards social media advertising on different platforms.

2.3.2 Persuasion Knowledge Model

While the U&G theory discusses why consumers appreciate or disfavor business communication, the Persuasion Knowledge Model explores how consumers' individual experiences and expectations form their portrayal of the main factors influencing their attitudes. Persuasion knowledge explores consumers' ideas and knowledge about firms' objectives and

attempts to persuade consumers. In addition, the terminology entails tactics used by marketeers as well as what the persuasion process looks like (Friestad and Wright, 1994).

Researchers have used multiple different definitions for conceptualizing persuasion knowledge. However, regardless of different suggestions, persuasion is understood as a deliberate attempt through communication, to influence the attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs of the recipients with a certain degree of freedom of choice (Eisend and Tarrahi, 2021). With more persuasion attempts, comes better understanding and ability to recognize and evaluate a firm's persuasion intentions. This can lead to consumers better comprehending not only their own benefits, but also, the benefits of firms' and how they pursue these benefits. Dehnert and Mongeau (2022) discuss AI-based persuasion as when AI-generated communication creates or revises the message to influence the experience of the consumer, where the primary difference to traditional persuasion sits in the sender of the message.

As this research focuses on understanding how factors influence consumers' attitudes towards advertising on Reddit, it is relevant to understand the persuasion knowledge of these users. On a platform like Reddit, intended and unintended communication can be identified in multiple ways – helping explain consumer attitudes towards advertising on the platform.

2.3.3 Perceived Advertising Value Model

The form of media emerges, and so do research on the topic. In 1995, Robert H. Ducoffe presented a new concept to the world of academia, discussing advertising value as a key factor in determining the success of firm's promotional activities. In his paper, the researcher defines advertising value as a "subjective evaluation of the relative worth of utility of advertising to consumers" (Ducoffe, 1995). Ducoffe (1996) further explored the expansion of the U&G theory by theorizing advertising value as a predecessor of the overall attitudes towards advertising amongst consumers, more specifically in the context of web advertising. In the paper, the researcher identifies informativeness, irritation as well as entertainment as central factors influencing value in advertising. The researcher showed that valuably perceived advertising would eventually lead to more positive attitudes towards advertising at large. The researcher suggested that business outcomes should not be the sole determinant of advertising effectiveness, as it should also be measured by the added value it brings to its audience – the consumers.

Brackett and Carr (2001) expanded Ducoffe's model, by adding credibility as a core factor helping to explain consumers' attitudes towards advertising. In the digital age, attitudes have been explored across multiple mediums and with certain predictive factors. Multiple studies have specifically focused on entertainment, informativeness, irritation and credibility. More recently, research have expanded beyond that of the original findings by Ducoffe (1996) and Bracket and Carr (2001), by introducing areas such as personalization, privacy concerns and interactivity as factors, with the aim of understanding reasons to consumers' attitudes towards advertising (Lütjens et al, 2022).

In Table 6, earlier research on consumer attitudes towards advertising and key factors examined in the studies are presented.

Table 6 Earlier Research on Consumer Attitudes Towards Advertising

Journal	Researchers	Studied factors	Context
Journal of Advertising Research	Ducoffe, R., H. (1996)	Informativeness, irritation, and entertainment	Web advertising
Journal of Advertising Research	Brackett and Carr (2001)	Informativeness, irritation, entertainment and credibility	Web/internet vs. other media
Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	Logan et al. (2012)	Informativeness, irritation, and entertainment	Facebook vs. TV
The international journal of cybernetics, systems, and management sciences	Yang et al. (2017)	Informativeness, irritation, entertainment, credibility	Youtube
Cogent Business and Management	Gaber et al. (2019)	Credibility, Lack of irritation, informativeness, entertainment, personalization	Instagram

Journal of Internet Commerce	Falcão and Isaías (2020)	Entertainment, Informativeness, irritation, credibility, interactivity,	Social Network Advertising and Search Engine Advertising
Cogent Business and Management	Nguyen and Nguyen (2022)	Informativeness, irritation, entertainment, personalization, interactivity, privacy concerns, credibility	Facebook
Journal of Business Research	Lütjens et al. (2022)	Informativeness, irritation, entertainment, personalization, interactivity, privacy concerns, credibility	Meta-analysis
Mediterranean Journal of Social and Behavioral Research	Dwinanda et al. (2022)	Entertainment, Informativeness, irritation, credibility, personalization, interactivity	TikTok Short video Ads
Telematics and Informatics Reports	Hanaysha and Alhyasat (2025)	Interactivity, perceived relevance (Personalization), informativeness, entertainment	Social Media Advertising in the Retail Industry

Given earlier research in the space of consumer attitudes as well as the growing role of social media, leading to new developed solutions and forms of interactions, this research proposes the following model to be used as a framework for consumer attitudes towards advertising on Reddit (Table 1). The model takes inspiration from Lütjens et al. (2022), who created an updated version of the perceived advertising model presented by 1) Ducoffe (1996) and 2) the extended version by Brackett and Carr (2001) – by complementing the original model with factors that can be seen as increasingly important in the social media age. This thesis will use the same foundations, narrowing the scope to focus on consumers' attitudes towards advertising, exclusively on Reddit.

In the conceptual model below (Figure 1), seven factors have been included as determinants of consumer attitudes towards advertising on Reddit. All factors examined are accompanied with

either a "+" or "- "sign, indicating the expected influence the factor has on consumers' attitudes towards advertising. Whereas stronger levels of informativeness, entertainment, credibility, personalization, and interactivity have been found to have a positive influence on consumer attitudes, more irritation and privacy concerns experienced have been found to have a negative influence. Further down in the chapter, each of these factors will be discussed more in detail, where the role of each factor will be explained as well as what earlier research has discovered will be presented.

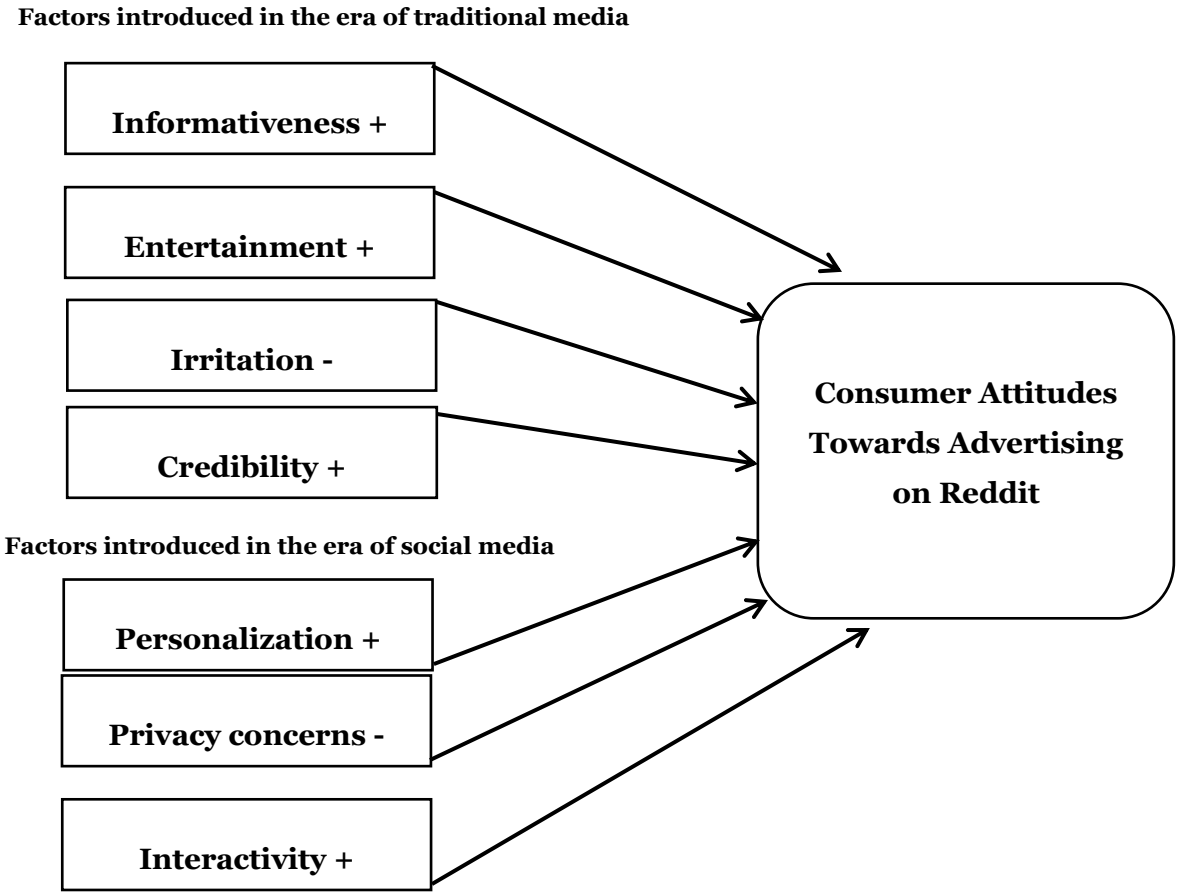


Figure 1 Conceptual Model: Factors Influencing Consumer Attitudes Towards Advertising on Reddit. Model adopted from Ducoffe (1996), Brackett and Carr (2001), and Lütjens et al. (2022).

2.3.3.1 Informativeness in the Advertisements

The word informativeness reflects the level of faith that is built amongst consumers whilst looking at an advertisement. Informativeness is discussed as informing consumers to the best of effort to provide understanding of product offerings, ensuring the possibility of strong satisfaction (Ducoffe, 1996). Lee and Hong (2016) further emphasize rationality as a crucial element of informativeness, as it helps consumers make calculated decisions around communication – distinguishing it from emotional messaging.

Like other factors contributing to the general attitudes towards advertisements, informativeness seems to be of considerable importance. Being identified as one of the key predictors and strong contributors of consumer attitudes by Ducoffe (1996), contemporary research has followed suit, as informativeness has been proved to have a significant impact (Lütjens et al, 2022).

However, informativeness is strongly tied to the expectations consumers have on the perceived usefulness of the advertisement. Research conducted by Yang et al. (2017) confirmed that informativeness of advertisement displayed on YouTube have an impact on consumer attitudes, however highlighting that consumers are eventually responsible for choosing media that creates satisfaction, in line with that represented in the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Gaber et al. (2019) obtained similar findings, where informativeness was found to be a strong predictor of consumer attitudes on Instagram advertisements in Egypt, accelerated by perceived timelessness, usefulness, and precision of the advertisement. Logan et al (2012) highlighted information as being one of the main motivators for users to be online. It was found that advertising, associated with informativeness, has a significant positive impact on consumers‘ attitudes.

2.3.3.2 Entertainment in the Advertisements

Marketing research defines entertainment broadly, highlighting pleasure, amusement, and enjoyment. Ducoffe (1996) proposed entertainment in advertising to be “pleasing or enjoyable”. The researcher found that advertisements that are more entertaining are more likely to result in positive reactions towards advertising amongst consumers. Entertainment is repeatedly considered among the most content-driven elements of advertising shaping consumer attitudes (Taylor et al., 2011). While entertainment can be seen as a broad umbrella term for multiple different things, Alalwan (2018) identified that consumers are most excited about social media advertisements that are visually appealing and creative in their nature.

It is important to rigidly explore hedonic angles when building social media initiatives. Silaban et al. (2022) suggests that the stronger feeling of engagement and enjoyment a consumer experiences, the heftier impact the advertisement will have on the overall attitude towards it. Logan et al. (2012) examined entertainment as a factor with potential influence on attitudes towards advertising on Facebook. Results indicated that entertainment plays a pivotal part, particularly enjoyment was highlighted as a positive contributor to positive perceptions on advertising.

More recently, Nguyen and Nguyen (2022) studied the mediating role that consumer attitudes have on advertising in Vietnam. Similarly to other research, they found a significant correlation especially between entertainment as well as intent to purchase and overall advertisement evaluation. Hanaysha and Alhyasat (2025) built their hypothesis on entertainment positively affecting perceived value of advertisement and brand love. Like earlier research, the finding supported earlier results – entertainment contributed significantly to consumers' attitudes.

Research confirms that across multiple different platforms, entertainment seems to be one of the strongest predictors of consumer attitudes towards advertising. When advertisements are enjoyable, amusing, fun and engaging, there is evidence that the consumer will react more positively towards it. (Logan et al., 2012; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2022; Hanaysha and Alhyasat, 2025)

2.3.3.3 Irritation in the Advertisements

Ducoffe (1996) defined irritation as "when advertising employs techniques that annoy, offend, insult or are overly manipulative, consumers are likely to perceive it as an unwanted and irritating influence." For a long time, irritation has been identified as one of the main contributors to negative perceptions towards advertising, dating it back to the research of Greyser (1973), where the researcher found that repetitive, manipulative, exaggerated as well as offensive advertisements contributed to irritation.

Irritation through advertisements can be triggered in multiple ways. Edwards et al. (2002) suggested that the following areas in advertisements may have a harmful impact on consumers' attitudes: advertised products, intrusiveness and loss over one's online control. The researchers also highlighted that manipulative messages, poor targeting, misplacements, excessive exposure as well as mandatory advertising exposure has a negative impact. Further along, in the age of

social media, Rejón-Guardia and Martínez-López (2013) found that advertising that has an impact on consumers' intended objectives on the platform can be assessed as irritating.

Marketing literature on mobile advertising also repeatedly reports a negative significant correlation between overall attitudes towards advertising and level of irritation experienced. Tsang et al. (2004) found that mobile advertisements perceived as intrusive or manipulative had a negative impact on consumer attitudes. Echoing this, Boateng et al. (2016) examined consumer attitudes in association with mobile advertising, where they like earlier research, found that higher levels of irritation had a significant negative association with advertisements on mobile devices.

Gaber et al. (2019) further expanded the research to social media advertising on Instagram. Similarly to previous studies, the researchers found that consumers who perceive a lack of irritation on Instagram advertisement had a more positive attitude towards advertisements on the platform.

These results strengthen the assumption that factors shaping advertising effectiveness in more traditional media remain relevant in the digital age, with more advertising taking place through social media platforms.

2.3.3.4 Credibility in the Advertisements

Credibility is considered a key determinant of consumers' attitudes towards advertising in market research. Mackenzie et al. (1989) were amongst early researchers to study the topic. The researchers define credibility as "the extent to which the consumers perceive the claims about the brand/product advertised in the advertisement to be truthful and believable." In their study, they introduce the Dual Mediation Hypothesis, which discusses the importance of how a source makes a consumer feel. The researchers' findings pointed out trustworthy and credible advertisements having a positive impact on consumer attitudes towards the brand. (Mackenzie et al., 1989)

Brackett and Carr (2001) expanded Ducoffe's attitudes towards advertising model from 1996, by adding credibility as an antecedent factor – finding credibility to have a positive influence on consumers' attitudes towards advertising. In more recent research on key components affecting the general attitudes towards social media advertising, multiple researchers have found a

positive relationship between perceived credibility of advertisement as well as attitude towards the advertisement (Logan et al., 2012; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2022; Gaber et al., 2019).

Shu-Chuan and Yoojung (2011) suggested that the availability of stream of comments from existing connections on social platforms further strengthens the association with credibility and therefore has a positive effect on general perceived trustworthiness towards social media platforms, aligning strongly with the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Boateng and Okoe (2015) highlight advertisements being perceived as transparent and honest as important in developing a sense of trust - especially in the field of product knowledge amongst consumers.

2.3.3.5 Personalization in the Advertisements

Especially during the past few years, personalization of advertising has become an increasingly important topic and so has it also been gaining traction in academia. Tam and Ho (2006) define personalization as delivering the correct message to the right individual to maximize value for the business. As advertisement is increasingly turned into social media, there are better opportunities for companies to track users on their platforms. Personalized advertising includes integrating information that is based on the recipient's characteristics and personal information, leading to more personalized messaging. As discussed in Morimoto's paper (2025) such personalization procedures may lead to more perceived relevance, while also increasing privacy concerns, as loss of information control occurs.

Bleier and Eisenbeiss (2015) found especially trust to be a key factor in the determination of consumers' attitudes towards personalization of advertisement offered by the retailer they studied. This was driven mainly by the consumer having a softer approach towards advertising. On the contrary, the opposite happened in situations with reduced trust in the brand. Silaban et al. (2022) followed the same research focus and investigated further the distinction between social relevance and personal relevance. In the study, both factors were shown to have a significant positive influence on attitudes towards advertisement and social media platforms in general. The researchers further found that consumers tend to have a stronger acceptance of platforms using personal data for targeting advertisements, provided that they find it to be relevant for them.

In the current social media landscape, the competition of data is getting more tense. Tracking allows advertisers to target audiences more efficiently, eventually leading to higher Return on

Ad Spend. On the contrary, this may have an impact on consumers' attitudes towards advertisements if perceived intrusive. Investigating how this balance of personalization and privacy affects Reddit users will ensure that the study builds a holistic understanding of key elements shaping these users' attitudes towards advertising on the platform.

2.3.3.6 Privacy Concerns in the Advertisements

Caudill and Murphy (2000) states consumer privacy reflections as being formed both by individual perceptions of the consumer as well as the surrounding context – building a sequence that differs across individuals. Consumers tend to give different degrees of attention to their personal information. Depending on the outcome of the action, individuals may jeopardize their privacy, as they are strongly incentivized to do so in exchange for more relevant advertising. This creates a situation for consumers where there is a continuous trade-off between control and restricted opportunities vs. risk of losing control for the chance of receiving full access in return. Hence, the ability to decide the amount of information that is shared, - *control* and the understanding of how this information is collected and utilized - *knowledge*, constitute the two fundamental elements of consumer privacy (Caudill and Murphy, 2000).

Morgan and Hunt (1994) describe consumer privacy as an exchange taking place every time consumers and firms engage. In the middle of this exchange sits trust. Not only do consumers expect firms to offer additional value, but also to ensure no harm is taking place, such as jeopardizing personal information of users. This exchange will usually involve personal information to a certain extent. Whilst scrolling through a platform, the user may engage in posts, comments, or directly share information in sign-ups and similar situations. In return the user might expect more tailored feeds, or other incentives put in place for the user to share information. And so, the balance between giving versus receiving highlights how consumers behave online and the attitudes they form towards not only social media platforms, but also advertisers and advertising. Here, control function as a key part of the exchange, where stronger control builds trust and less concerns around privacy issues – leading to lower barriers of sharing information (Mosteller and Poddar, 2017). This is further found in more recent research, where information control is found to be the strongest element shaping privacy concerns and responses to personalization in advertising. When users feel limited in their ability to control data that is used, privacy concerns increase (Morimoto, 2021).

Recent research has consistently identified privacy concerns to have a negative influence on consumers' attitudes towards advertising. Nguyen and Nguyen (2022) found privacy concerns to have a negative influence on consumers' attitudes towards advertising on Facebook. Similarly, Arora et al. (2020) found equivalent results, emphasizing that marketeers should bear in mind that individual's privacy should not be violated as it may cause negative experiences for the consumer.

2.3.3.7 Interactivity in the Advertisements

Liu and Shrum (2002) define interactivity as the level of communication that can be achieved by two or more parties: between each other, on the medium as well as through the messages while simultaneously examining how well this communication is synchronized. With the rise of web as well as further advancements in internet technology leading to the birth of social media, communication is now bidirectional (Laradi et al., 2023). Two-way communication ensures that senders can formulate messages to their audience simultaneously as receivers can provide feedback as well as share information to their network, leading to advertisements becoming more interactive (Dwinanda et al., 2022). In addition, Belanche et al. (2017) highlight interactive advertisements as beneficial as it allows users to independently decide whether to continue consuming content, pause or leave out parts of the advertisement – leaving more capacity for information processing.

In their research on TikTok video advertisements, Dwinanda et al. (2022) found that increased interaction has a positive effect on consumer attitudes towards advertising, leading to stronger perceived advertising value. Allowing stronger interactivity for users ensures that consumers feel like their opinions are heard. Similar results were found by Alalwan (2018), where level of interaction has a significant impact on the intention to purchase, and overall attitudes of consumers. The research found that consumers who perceive increased interaction in social media advertisements will enjoy higher levels of usefulness, entertainment, and sense of inclusion.

2.4 Summary of Theory

In the theory section, the objective has been to inform the reader about what social media platforms are, how they differ from each other and what role they play in marketing departments teams as a strategy to promote, inform and engage with consumers – aiming towards increased brand awareness and eventually intention to purchase products or services.

Using social media platforms as a messenger of advertisement gives businesses the possibility to engage with consumers, simultaneously as these platforms capitalize on the relationship in exchange – by providing massive audience reach through advertising space.

Each social media platform is different, and so are the attitudes towards advertisement, that are eventually developed on the platforms. There are continuous trade-offs taking place both from the supply- and demand-side around data. The more information you give out – the weaker sense of privacy you will encounter. Earlier research has aimed at finding common factors predicting how these consumer attitudes are formed and based on which factors. Commonly used factors: Irritation, Entertainment, Informativeness and Credibility have been covered in multiple studies on consumer attitudes on different platforms with significant results. Following advertising in social media, research has further included Privacy concerns, Personalization and Interactivity as key factors influencing consumer attitudes. (Lütjens et al, 2022) However, given different settings, the strongest determinants of consumer attitudes might shift depending on platform, culture, and age group - making it interesting to explore how these factors are reflected in the attitudes of Finnish 18–34-year-old Reddit users.

By introducing the current landscape of social media platforms and central themes influencing consumer behavior, such as the privacy-personalization paradox and underlying theories supporting the development of consumer attitudes towards social media advertising, the objective has been to create a robust basis for further exploration of the research topic, to better understand the research gaps and create value for social media advertising research with this thesis.

Frameworks introduced in this chapter have primarily been assessed on platforms, such as TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Reddit, however, operates through pseudonymity, less data disclosure, and community-driven interactions. As time is allocated strongly to information-search and participation in self-selected subreddits, perceived relevance and credibility of advertisements may differ from those assumed in earlier research (Medvedev et al., 2019). Therefore, in line with qualitative research, the theoretical frameworks applied in this thesis are treated as sensitive concepts instead of fixed models (Gioia et al., 2013). By incorporating this approach, the study can take support from earlier research, simultaneously as leaving room for platform-specific interpretation. Frameworks are therefore guiding the analysis of how factors are perceived on Reddit, while recognizing that these factors may operate

differently to that observed on more identity-based and visual social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Facebook.

This in turn has helped in creating a model, building on existing research (Ducoffe, 1996; Brackett and Carr; 2001; Lütjens et al, 2022), that takes into consideration multiple different angles relevant for consumers' when determining their attitudes towards advertising on social media platforms. By holding the conceptual model as a foundation, the next chapter will go through the methodology used for conducting semi-structured interviews. By conducting interviews and analyzing data, the aim is to compare the results with earlier research and gain a deeper understanding of how these factors influence consumer attitudes, specifically on Reddit.

In the next chapter, the methodology of this thesis will be presented, discussing the approach by which the researcher is aiming to, in a tangible way, gather information about Finnish consumers' attitudes towards advertisement on Reddit and eventually assess the discussed factors in a unique and unexplored setting.

3 METHODOLOGY

In this section of the thesis, the chosen research methodology as well as sampling strategy is discussed. Data collection as well as description of the informants are presented. The data collection process is presented in the form of a concise table, representing each interview, precise locations, dates as well as topics of discussion. This, on the other hand, will make it possible for clearer connection points in the results-, and analysis sections. Techniques for analysis of the data are presented, and the quality of the study is discussed, adopting the criteria discussed by Saunders et al. (2023). Finally, ethical considerations of the interviews are presented following the guidelines set by Hanken School of Economics.

3.1 Research Method

The methodology was chosen based on the purpose of the thesis, the research questions as well as previous research conducted on social media advertising. Patton (2015) points out the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods primarily touching the trade-off between depth and breadth. Whereas quantitative analysis involves quantifying information, qualitative analysis refers to any sort of data-analysis procedure or data collection approach that involves gathering non-numerical data.

Given the research questions as well as the aim of the thesis, the research was conducted using a qualitative technique. A quantitative research approach would need a very structured data collection procedure, increasing the chances of key details and nuances being overlooked, which are possible to identify through a more qualitative technique. As it was important for this thesis to collect specific knowledge about the experiences and perspectives of Reddit consumers, a qualitative research method was used to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic (Hammerberg et al., 2016). As a qualitative approach is not as strict and structured in its nature, compared to quantitative approaches, characteristics important to the research topic were easier to identify through the usage of a qualitative method (Hair et al., 2015).

Qualitative research studies can be divided according to their purpose, commonly into Exploratory, Descriptive, Explanatory, and Evaluative designs (Saunders et al., 2023). A research strategy may be designed in a way that multiple forms are covered, even though a single-method qualitative design is used (Creswell, 2014). In this thesis, the objective was not only to explore the attitudes of Finnish consumers, but also to describe and explain core factors

affecting consumers' attitudes towards advertising on Reddit. Following Saunders et al. (2023), qualitative research can parallelly build on both descriptive and exploratory objectives, where the aim is to further understand the informants' thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions within a specific context. Therefore, this thesis used a single-method research design, with multiple purposes – exploring, explaining, and describing consumers' attitudes towards advertising.

Finally, the interview process can be discussed largely using three different approaches: inductive, deductive, and abductive. Whereas inductive processes build studies without the use of any theoretical building blocks, the deductive process involves basing the research on available, established theories that take the researcher from a hypothesis to results. An abductive approach can be seen as a mixture of the two, where it is possible to develop an existing theory as new intelligence and insights are acquired (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). This approach can be especially beneficial in contexts with limited amounts of information (Kovács and Spens, 2005). Previous research has conducted studies on social media advertising; however, not in the setting of Reddit consumers in Finland, and hence, an abductive approach was seen as suitable to use, as this study utilized existing information and theory and applies it to a completely new territory.

3.1.1 Sampling Strategy

It is not possible to conduct interviews with the full population of interest, and hence, a sample, which represents a smaller subpopulation of the population, is chosen (Hair et al., 2015). There are multiple sampling strategies that have been used in marketing literature, which can broadly be divided into probability and non-probability sampling strategies. Whereas probability sampling describes techniques where the selection of the subpopulation is random, nonprobability sampling is more based on subjective methods. As this thesis examined a population with rather distinct characteristics, a nonprobability sampling technique was used (Saunders et al., 2023).

Purposive sampling is described as a non-probability sampling technique that trusts the researcher's judgment in the selection of the subpopulation. As this research studied consumers with substantial experience on Reddit and, thus frequent exposure to advertisements on the platform, a purposive sampling technique was employed. (Hair et al., 2015)

Patton (2015) further outlines various purposive sampling techniques designed to ensure that the sample aligns with the research objectives. In the development of a sampling design, Patton (2015) recommends the following steps:

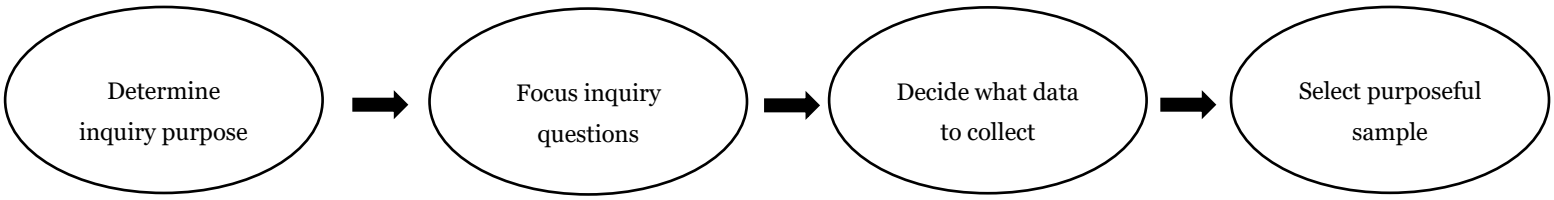


Figure 2 Steps for Developing Sampling Design (Patton, 2015)

Considering the identified research gap regarding the role of Reddit as an advertising platform in the Finnish context, two specific research questions were identified. These research questions guided data collection, as they laid out the required insights needed to fulfill the purpose of this thesis. As this research had pre-determined criteria that had to be met, a criterion purposive sampling strategy was chosen to ensure that participants were relevant to the topic of research (Patton, 2015).

The sample was represented explicitly by individuals who are active users of Reddit and hold an account on the platform. To ensure that the sample was applicable to the research topic, only Finnish citizens who have a Reddit account and have been active users of the platform for the past six months were considered in the sample. This ensured that the sample consisted of consumers who have been active on the platform during a period when the company significantly expanded and optimized its advertising infrastructure on the platform. Having these requirements in place allowed for tackling the research problem to its full potential by narrowing down the sample to only be represented by individuals relevant to this study.

The data collection of this thesis took the form of semi-structured interviews with a sample of 12 individuals in the 18-34 age group. According to recent data shared from M. Rasmussen, Senior Client Partner at Reddit, 40 % of Reddit users in the Nordic region consist of the Gen Z generation and 37 percent of Millennials (Appendix 5). Data from Swedish market (Reddit, Q2 2025) also reveals the following distribution:

Table 7 Breakdown of Reddit Users in Sweden (Q2, 2025)

Source: Reddit, European Headquarters, EMEA

Age group	**Percentage (%)**
18–24 yrs old	**28%**
25–34 yrs old	**30%**
35–44 yrs old	19%
45–54 yrs old	10%
55–64 yrs old	7%

Therefore, interviews were conducted with individuals in the age group of 18-34 year old individuals, as up-to-date statistic from the wider Nordic region propose that this is the most active user base on the platform, simultaneously as the age group of 18-34 years old is the most active group of Reddit users globally as well as the most active social media users in Finland by percentage (Curry, 2025; Statista, 2024). Finally, most interviews consisted of discussions with individuals identifying themselves as male, as according to recent data shared by M. Rasmussen, Senior Client Partner at Reddit, 67 percentage of Reddit users in the Nordic region are male users (Appendix 5). To get as accurate of a subpopulation as possible, this was also reflected in the chosen informants.

3.2 Data Collection

The thesis used interviews as the source for data collection. In research, multiple versions of interviews are available; however, the distinction between different sorts of interview approaches arises in the level of structure. Research literature divides interviews into structured, unstructured as well as semi-structured interview approaches. The structure of the interview represents the level of standardization present in the interview setup (Leavy, 2014). For this study, the researcher chose a semi-structured technique for the data collection. Arsel (2017) discusses semi-structured interviews as an approach that allows a discussion to maintain focus on pre-planned themes and objectives, while simultaneously giving flexibility in the discussion to explore angles that will give access to in-depth data collection. Keeping the discussion to the planned topics and enabling discussion above the exact objectives of the interview supported the researcher in getting a more holistic understanding of the consumers' attitudes.

The researcher recruited informants through LinkedIn (Appendix 4), through a post briefly discussing the purpose of the study and invited 18–34-year-old Finnish students to participate voluntarily. Individuals interested in participating contacted the researcher directly on private message on LinkedIn and/or through e-mail. After this, the interviews were scheduled, and the informants received more detailed information about the interview process.

The decision to conduct 12 interviews follows Saunders et al. (2023), who argue that in qualitative interview-based research, the appropriate number of interviews is determined by data saturation rather than by a predefined sample size. The researcher emphasizes that when interviews meet a certain stage where they provide little to no additional information, data saturation is reached. In this thesis, this stage was reached at 12 interviews, and therefore, data collection concluded here, as sufficient amounts of data had been gathered to address the purpose of the thesis.

The data collection was conducted using an interview guide (Appendix 1), ensuring reliable and comparable results amongst interviews (Patton, 2015). Prior to the actual interviews, a pilot interview was conducted to ensure that the interview guide was suitable for the interviews, including questions that opened discussions about themes relevant to the research questions. The pilot interview was conducted on 25.10.2025 and took around 48 minutes. Saunders et al. (2015) discusses that pilot interviews work as a good checking mechanism where the interviewer gains insight about whether the questions in the interview guide works well for the purpose of

the study. The informant was like the actual informants, an active Reddit user, who had been on the platform for 6 years. The answers were not included in the data collection, as the aim of the pilot interview was to assess the questions. As a result, there were a couple of refinements to the questions, to ensure that the official informants were approached with as relevant interview questions as possible.

The pilot had, like the actual interview guide, 32 questions. The pilot interview ensured that questions that lacked the ability to lead to more in-depth answers were further developed. As an example, the question "*Do you find Reddit ads entertaining?*" led to a yes/no answer, and therefore a development of the question, including "why in that case," gave the informant the chance to further build on the reasons why an advertisement has been perceived as entertaining or not, ensuring the possibility to explore the question more in-depth.

The interviews took place in the weeks of 44-47, 2025, and had a duration of approximately 45-60 minutes. The chosen location of the interviews was much determined based on convenience, making virtual meetings the most suitable way to hold the interviews – ensuring a smooth experience for the informants by having the interview on Microsoft Teams. However, if possible, interviews were held live, in a face-to-face setting.

Prior to the interview, informants were contacted with a reminder of the purpose of the study as well as clarification about their anonymity in the interview process. Keeping informants up-to-date and informed about the upcoming interview ensured that they fully understood each part of the interview process, leading to a more natural and smoother interview without any additional surprises. During the interviews, the meetings were recorded and transcribed with the consent of the informants, ensuring that no key details from the interview were missing. Finally, by writing notes for the full duration of the interview, not only consistency between transcription and the interview was ensured, but also non-verbal communication was analyzed and identified, leading to a more holistic analysis of the research phenomena. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and Swedish, and answers included in the result analysis were translated to English. Translations maintained the original intent of the informants' responses.

In Table 7, more detailed information about each interview is presented, to ensure that the reader is aware of the profile of each informant.

Table 7 Information about informants and interviews

Informants	Age	Gender	Occupation	Place	Time	Date
Informant 1	25	Male	Student	Microsoft Teams	51 min	27.10.2025
Informant 2	27	Male	Entrepreneur	Microsoft Teams	60 min	27.10.2025
Informant 3	26	Male	Student	Microsoft Teams	46 min	28.10.2025
Informant 4	25	Male	Student	Microsoft Teams	52 min	29.10.2025
Informant 5	25	Female	Student	Hanken School of Economics	64 min	4.11.2025
Informant 6	24	Male	Student	Microsoft Teams	54 min	5.11.2025
Informant 7	28	Male	Full-time Employee	Microsoft Teams	40 min	7.11.2025
Informant 8	25	Male	Full-time Employee	Microsoft Teams	57 min	10.11.2025
Informant 9	25	Male	Full-time Employee	Microsoft Teams	43 min	11.11.2025
Informant 10	25	Male	Full-time Employee	Microsoft Teams	53 min	12.11.2025
Informant 11	26	Male	Student	Microsoft Teams	56 min	18.11.2025
Informant 12	32	Female	Full-time Employee	Microsoft Teams	39 min	20.11.2025

3.3 Analyzing Qualitative Data

In this thesis data coding was used to ensure that data with similar meanings were categorized into different sections. Saunders et al. (2023) discuss data coding as the function of categorizing units of data in interview transcriptions with codes, that highlight similarities across interviews and ensure that thematic analysis can be conducted. After each interview, the transcription was read and analyzed multiple times, to ensure familiarity with key dimensions of the discussion.

After this, data was coded systematically, making it easier to find ideas and concepts that were relevant to the research questions as well as the purpose of the study. The coding took place by using distinct colors and titles to highlight various aspects of the interviews, making it easier to interpret data and build established conclusions. Braun and Clarke (2023) highlight the importance of ensuring a dual process when coding. By establishing a way of working, where codes and themes are generated from both in-depth analysis as well as reflection from a distance, insight and intelligence will be acquired. By employing this technique, the researcher identified datapoints through the codes: Attitudes towards "x" (x representing one of the factors), and the nature of the attitude highlighted with color: green (positive attitude), red (negative attitude) and grey (neutral attitude). This ensured that the researcher could clearly distinguish between the attitudes of the informants for each factor.

Once these initial codes had been structured and compared across each interview, they were then grouped into bigger categories. Following Gioia (2020), using the first order and second-order methodology, the researcher ensured not to restrict the data analysis to only a limited set of themes, but rather started by identifying themes as broadly as possible. After the first analysis of the data was established (first order thinking), the researcher then continued by aggregating dimensions and identifying core themes in the data set leading to the development of categories. Building these categories made it easier to understand important themes across interviews - laying the foundation for identifying recurring patterns. By using this color- and title coding mechanism and identifying core patterns, the analysis then continuously involved constant iteration, ensuring that categories and patterns represented the attitudes towards advertising on Reddit amongst the informants accurately.

Throughout the analysis of the data, the researcher also ensured to recognize the importance of distancing frequency from quality. As 12 interviews were conducted, several hours of discussions were recorded and transcribed. In this set of data, there were multiple areas that were not relevant for this study, and therefore, the researcher made sure to rigidly examine which parts of the interviews helped answer the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2023).

Finally, in accordance with Braun and Clarke (2023), the analysis was conducted through three stated themes. For analyzing the collected data with rigor, the findings were analyzed using the same logic as the interview guide (Appendix 2). First, the introductory questions around Reddit usage and relationship to social media were analyzed. The second theme analyzed consisted of

the factors explaining informants' attitudes towards advertising on Reddit and the final theme of analysis was dedicated to findings around informants' overall attitudes towards Reddit advertising in the bigger picture. Braun and Clarke (2023) highlight that each theme should be rich with data, tackle complexity as well as consist of multiple analytical observations, and by analyzing the data through these three core themes, integrating the seven core factors at the center of this study, the researcher was able to analyze the data with little overlap.

3.4 Quality of Study

The quality of the study took inspiration from Saunders et al. (2023) paper about data quality issues and interview practices. The study is based on *Dependability, Transferability, Credibility, and confirmability*. These areas of interview practice determine the quality of the study. By walking through each sub-area, the objective was to assess the quality of this study and the methods used by the researcher to ensure high-quality research practices.

Dependability discusses the potential limitations of standardization of results in a study. In this study, interviewer bias was tackled by using an interview guide, developed from Saunders framework (2023) on semi-structured interviews - ensuring that each informant was asked similar core questions. Questions were also asked from a neutral point of view, ensuring that each informant had the chance, without any influence from the interviewer, to answer the questions through the lens of their own experiences, thoughts, and beliefs. Discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed with the objective of maintaining accuracy. Finally, a reflective journal was used to capture things on the spot, including non-verbal communication from the informant.

Transferability discusses the potential limitations of the study to be transferred to other settings (Saunders et al., 2023). To maximize transferability of this study, detailed contextual information was provided. By ensuring a rigorous walk-through of characteristics of the studied area as well as informants, the reader had a better understanding of whether it was similar enough to transfer to their research. By clearly stating the sampling strategy and discussing the procedure of choosing informants, the reader got a holistic understanding of the relevance of the study's population of interest. Furthermore, by connecting findings in the study to earlier research conducted in the same domain, the researcher aimed at ensuring conceptual transferability. Finally, by providing robust and clear documentation on steps taken in data

collection and analysis of results, the objective was to ensure that other researchers have the chance to adopt the chosen approach to a similar study in the future.

Credibility refers to the extent to which a researcher's findings correctly represent the thoughts, ideas, and beliefs of the informant. To ensure credibility of the study, all interviews were recorded and transcribed, ensuring that the discussions and text represent the words of the informants. Analysis was built on words stated by the informants, and quotations from the discussions were used in the results section, guaranteeing that analysis remained objective, by using informants' own words as the foundation of interpretation. Triangulation was used by cross-checking findings from the interview with earlier research conducted in advertising literature. Finally, the researcher ensured that informants understood their anonymity in the interview, and were, to the best of effort, reminded that they can share their experiences freely.

Confirmability refers to how strongly the findings of the study are shaped by the informants' ideas, thoughts, and experiences, not reflecting any sort of researcher bias. The researcher further highlights that confirmability includes showcasing the extent to which analytical reasoning is transparent and based on the data collected (Saunders et al., 2023). Confirmability was ensured in this thesis by making sure that each interview was fully transcribed simultaneously as data from interviews was cited directly from the source, the informant. Themes were in this way gathered from the words of each informant and not based on interpretation made by the interviewer. Furthermore, coding was done throughout the process – where identified themes and patterns were continuously cross-checked with the raw data from the interviews. To ensure that the researcher minimized own interpretation, systematic revisits to the coding decisions and pattern development processes were conducted, ensuring objective and close analysis of the collected data.

Finally, the researcher had never used Reddit prior to conducting the interviews. As the researcher had no previous experience of the platform, this ensured that the analysis did not risk being based on individual experiences or assumptions drawn by the researcher, and researcher bias was hence reduced.

3.5 Research Ethics

This thesis followed Hanken School of Economics guidelines to ensure transparent data collection and interview practices. Before starting the data collection process, the researcher filled in a privacy notice survey, ensuring that the study followed EU guidelines and maintained its integrity and transparency. By providing information such as what the data collection procedure looks like, information that will be obtained through interviews, and how the study ensures the anonymity of the informants, the identity of everyone in the sample was secured.

After the privacy notice was filled, each respondent was asked to read it through, ensuring that they understood the nature of the research and agreed to the data collection process. This was then followed by a consent form, that was sent digitally to each informant prior to the interviews, where they were informed about the research topic and agreed to being interviewed. Anonymity of responses was also clearly stated in the consent form. Saunders et al. (2023) highlights the importance of informing interview participants about the aim of the thesis in advance, ensuring that they are fully informed, and accordingly, in the study, informants were informed in advance and during the interview about the purpose of the thesis. Finally, the data collection process was communicated clearly as well as how the resulting findings would be used in the thesis.

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results from semi-structured interviews with Finnish Reddit users aged 18–34. The interview consisted of three sections. First, informants' general social media use and attitude were discussed. Second, the seven key factors: Informativeness, Entertainment, Irritation, Credibility, Personalization, Interactivity and Privacy concerns. Finally, the informants reflected on their overall attitudes towards advertising on Reddit in a bigger picture. In the results discussion, however, the answers from the first and third section are discussed first, after which consumer attitudes towards advertising are discussed through examining answers related to each factor studied in this thesis. All informant quotes discussed in this section have been translated from Swedish or Finnish to English.

4.1 Consumer Attitudes Towards Advertising on Social Media

The interviews started with discussions about informants' relationships with social media platforms and advertising on them, as well as more specifically around their behavior on Reddit and how they view the platform and advertising taking place. Overall, informants had contradicting attitudes towards advertising on social media platforms. Where some saw advertising as an irritating element in social media platforms, others had a rather neutral idea about advertising, as it is such an integrated part of social media platforms today. Some informants even saw value in advertising, especially if and when it was correctly targeted based on their interests.

> "In some situations, of course, advertising can be a bit irritation – but generally speaking, I`m so used to it that I´d say I have a pretty neutral or positive attitude towards social media ads." (Informant 1)

> "I`d say, first of all, that I personally am a big fan of targeted advertising. I think it has its point – for example, on TikTok I´d rather get ads based on the algorithm than some completely random advertisement that has no relevance to me.
> Another thing that reduces the negative stigma of ads for me is that there are as few of them as possible. I don´t like it when whatever I´m doing gets interrupted – that I have to exit something, click X, scroll away or swipe something away. If the ad is there in a way that the user experience stays good and it doesn't cover the content I'm browsing, then I think it's totally fine." (Informant 12)

Informants described several aspects of social media advertising that shape how they feel about the advertisements they encounter. Multiple informants mentioned the pace at which advertisements appear in their feeds - if they show up too often or too suddenly, they become

more noticeable and, in turn, more irritating. The quality of the advertisements also mattered: visuals that felt rushed, text that seemed unclear, or formats that looked copied from other platforms tended to weaken users' experiences. Personalization played a role as well, with participants explaining that advertisements connected to their interests were far easier to accept than those that seemed random. Across interviews, users expressed that they respond more positively when an advertisement gives them something useful - new information, a concrete detail, or an apparent reason to care. At the same time, multiple informants felt that social media advertisements often disrupt the flow of browsing. This interruption was not always due to the advertisement format itself but rather to the sense that the advertisement did not match what they were doing or looking for at that moment in time. It was described that when an advertisement fails to add value or does not fit the context, the experience becomes more distracting instead of helpful.

4.2 Consumer Attitudes Towards Advertising on Reddit

All informants have been active users (weekly or daily) of Reddit for multiple years. For each informant, there were a few aligned reasons to consume content on Reddit. Hobbies and interesting subreddits were consistently reported as elements drawing users to the platform. As an example, one informant mentioned that he likes to follow discussions about his favorite football team, and this is something he usually goes to subreddits on Reddit to discover. It was also frequently mentioned that users go to Reddit to find information about a product or something other than the user is interested in, as well as finding answers about a current challenge that the user is facing in his/her life. Finally, niche discussions about current events happening were described as a common reason to consume content on Reddit. As an example, an informant discussed it as fun to follow what people, watching the same reality show, think about events happening real time.

Based on the interviews, Reddit was seen as a discussion and information-driven platform with a powerful sense of community. Informants also consistently reported going to the platform for intellectual reasons, where Reddit was repeatedly brought up as the platform where informants go most frequently to learn new things and discover new information.

In the platform, advertising was mainly experienced through promoted posts in the feed, as well as occasionally as inserted in the comment section. Compared to other platforms, Reddit was consistently described as the platform where advertising was seen the least. Especially the

ability to effortlessly scroll past advertising was discussed as a key reason for advertising slipping by for the user. Regarding the fit of advertising on the platform, users felt like it is natural for Reddit to host advertising on the platform; however, the lack of personalization confused users. Not one single informant reported seeing advertising that was tailored to their subreddits, and therefore, the lack of personalization was one of the strongest themes that each informant addressed as distinctive to the platform. Finally, the lack of Nordic/familiar companies advertising was frequently discussed, as multiple informants noted that they hardly recognize advertisers on the platform.

Informants were also presented with questions regarding their general idea about advertising on Reddit – the fit into the overall experience on the platform, how they perceive advertising on Reddit as opposed to other social media platforms that they use and what things they would change if they could regarding current advertising practices on the platform. The discussions revealed that informants have contradicting attitudes towards advertising on Reddit.

Informants emphasized the need for greater personalization, particularly based on subreddits they follow. Given the anonymous nature of the platform, a common sentiment in most of the discussions was to purely base personalization on subreddit activity, apart from a couple of informants, who wanted to have full-scale personalization present on the platform, and a few, who were happy with the level of personalization currently experienced. The major difference in responses reflected differences in informants when looking at social media advertising and personalization holistically. Those informants who had a positive attitude towards personalization at large also wanted to experience personalization accordingly on the Reddit platform. Some informants, however, had a slightly different attitude towards personalization on Reddit as opposed to other platforms. Amongst these users, Reddit's unique anonymous platform had an impact on the sought-out level of personalization, where they preferred subreddits as the right source for targeting advertisements.

Finally, informants described Reddit as a platform that is dedicated to the community and discussion amongst users. Some of these informants enjoyed its current form, where advertisements reflect the general idea of Reddit – getting exposed to new things and where there is a bit of everything – highlighting that it is fair that advertisements also follow the same structure.

> "But I´d say I have a generally positive attitude - as long as the ads are relevant and well made. If done right, Reddit has real potential for effective advertising -people might actually buy something or at least become interested." (Informant 1)

> "Introduce more curated advertising within subreddits. Even without detailed personal data, the platform knows if I´m looking at, say, tennis, - so it could show me relevant tennis-related ads (for example, finding a coach)." (Informant 3)

> "Chaotic. Reddit advertising is messy. There´s everything, everywhere, and it doesn´t feel as thoughtfully designed as Instagram´s advertising, which is very polished." (Informant 6)

> "You naturally compare it to other social media platforms you use. And compared to the ones I use myself, I would absolutely say that Reddit is the platform that captures my attention the least when it comes to advertising. But as a Reddit user, I don´t necessarily see that as something negative – rather the opposite. Since the ads don´t take up much attention, you can focus better on the actual content of the app." (Informant 7)

4.3 Factors Influencing Consumer Attitudes Towards Advertising on Reddit

In the interviews, most of the time was devoted to in-depth discussions of the seven core factors examined in the thesis, which previous research has identified as significantly influencing consumer attitudes towards advertising. The following section presents the results of these discussions, addressing each factor individually.

4.3.1 Informativeness

Across the interviews, Reddit advertisements were consistently seen as less informative than on other platforms. Informants described Reddit advertisements as low-quality and oftentimes difficult to notice. It was frequently mentioned that advertisements on the platform are easy to avoid because it is something people often scroll past. Additionally, as information was described as strongly associated with the level of personalization of the advertisement, it was hard to find advertising on Reddit to be informative, as informants rarely identified advertising as being tied to their interests. Additionally, the quality of the advertisements had an impact on the general perceived informativeness. Criteria that informants associated with informativeness on social media platforms were associated with factual information presented on the advertisement, as well as strong visuals and attractive pricing. Also, when an advertisement identified a problem that it solves for the user, it was described as informative.

> "I like when an ad asks a direct question tied to a relevant problem… then comes the solution." (Informant 11)

> "The thing that catches my attention most is if it´s a product I just looked at. And if the price is clearly better than what I saw before. Like if you´ve been looking at a new phone, and the ad shows that same phone is cheaper – then that´s valuable. You scroll, see it immediately, and think: "oh, that´s exactly the thing I was thinking about." (Informant 6)

As mentioned, informativeness was reported to be an outcome of relevance. Informants described that the more the advertisement is tied to personal interests of the user, the better the chances are that the user will find advertising relevant and informative. Also, multiple informants described advertisements being relevant to the community that the user is a part of as being important. Users go to Reddit to find new information and partake in communities with similar interests, and therefore, the lack of alignment between the advertisements and subreddits was discussed in multiple interviews.

> "I think it often comes down to relevance. The ads don't feel relevant - they show up in the wrong place or at the wrong time." (Informant 1)

> "Before, I thought Reddit didn't have ads at all. Then I started noticing things in my feed that looked like subreddits I follow, but that weren´t relevant to me at all. Often mobile games or things I´m not interested in. (Informant 5)

Furthermore, format and features of the visual presentation had a clear impact on how users view the aspect of informativeness in advertisements. As opposed to other platforms like TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, frequently mentioned in the interviews, advertising on Reddit was described as holding a lower visual quality and less or no video advertisements. The static nature combined with the lack of relevance seemed to be a combination making it easy for consumers not to react to the advertisements and scroll past them, and as a result, experience less information value. All informants mentioned that more informativeness would lead to stronger positive associations with advertising on Reddit.

> "Often it´s just longer blocks of text – not effective at all. Or very basic images with a black background, like the ad format is pre-set and no one spent time on it." (Informant 7)

> "It´s usually a picture, some text and a link. Almost like a newspaper ad" (Informant 11)

4.3.2 Entertainment

Across each interview, strong entertainment value was described as having a significant positive impact on how consumers perceive both the advertiser as well as the advertisement. Entertaining ads were discussed as being more enjoyable and memorable and having a stronger

chance of holding the user's attention. Throughout the interviews, especially storytelling, visual aspects, humor, as well as emotional engagement was discussed as having an impact on informants perceived entertainment of the advertisements. However, these aspects were more strongly tied to other social media platforms, such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram, where video formats and creator-driven content enable more dynamic and visually engaging advertising experiences. Advertising on Reddit was, on the other hand, described as static, boring, and visually basic. Descriptive of the situation was that multiple informants mentioned that they had never encountered an advertisement on Reddit that had been entertaining. The few that were described as entertaining were instead only so due to the level of absurdness experienced.

> "Not really. On Instagram, ads are often livelier and well thought out. They try to appeal to me as a customer -usually with short videos, a bit of humor, and they feel more relevant. On Reddit, most ads are just static images. I know there are videos too, but I honestly can´t recall seeing any. So, it feels more static and less engaging overall." (Informant 9)

> "Sometimes I come across completely absurd, humor-based ads – those "absolutely random" brand films that start in such a ridiculous way that they stick in your memory. It´s that "what even is this?" reaction that makes the entertaining." (Informant 2)

Throughout the interviews, humor was mentioned frequently as one of the key aspects of making an advertisement entertaining. This aspect was close to being absent from Reddit, based on the findings from the interviews. Informants appreciated surprise elements, visual quality, creative product showcase, as well as emotional engagement – something rarely found on the Reddit platform. Currently, advertisers seem to not utilize the extensive information and knowledge available about consumers, and informants see this as a strong area of potential. As the audience of Reddit is quite niche and based on a strong sense of community and shared interests, it is something that could be utilized to find the right way of making entertaining advertisements. However, as it is now, data indicated a clear gap between what informants identified as entertaining and what advertisements on Reddit currently provide.

> "I´d say humor is the key. If an ad has some humor or self-awareness, I´m more likely to stop and maybe click on it. For example, my friend runs a company called Kalori, and I think their ads are pretty funny – sometimes even a bit weird. It´s often someone writing something witty or unexplored, and that really catches my attention." (Informant 9)

> "For example, ads you see on Reels or TikTok, where there's humor or creative little sketches connected to the product. You can tell there´s creative thinking behind it – that makes it

> entertaining. But I don´t find them entertaining on Reddit. And yes, I think part of that is that most Reddit ads are just images. That contributes to them feeling empty." (Informant 3)

Another aspect of entertainment that was consistently brought up in discussions was the format used for advertising. Informants described video format, and in particular short-video format to be significantly more engaging and stimulating than still-image advertisements, both visually and emotionally. This on the other hand was seen as something rarely encountered on Reddit. With the lack of integrated video-formatted advertisements, most of the informants saw a reduced level of entertainment due to the format used amongst advertisers.

> "When I think of Reddit ads, I don´t think of videos at all. I think of banners – images or simple graphics. I don´t really know why there isn´t more video advertising there, but as it is now, it feels quite dry – not particularly entertaining" (Informant 3)

> "On Reddit, most ads are just static images. I know there are videos too, but I honestly can´t recall seeing any. So, it feels more static and less engaging overall." (Informant 9)

However, some informants did mention that their expectations on Reddit are completely different to those of other platforms such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram. As consumption on Reddit is more about information-collection and learning as opposed to activity on Instagram, YouTube and TikTok being more about entertainment itself, some informants mentioned that they do not want to have video format advertisements on Reddit. As informants go to different platforms for different purposes, there seems to be distinct expectations on the advertisements, depending on the platform consumed.

> "Yeah, sure. Video isn't a requirement. It's maybe easier if the ad is in video format, but at the same time I'm extremely grateful that on Reddit it isn't. There's also the fact that it would affect how and where I use the platform, and how often. If I'm on a platform that isn't otherwise video-based and it suddenly starts throwing videos at me, it easily feels like I can't use that platform anymore in certain situations – like when I'm walking down the street or on public transport without headphones." (Informant 12)

Emotional engagement was also related to the entertainment value created by an advertisement. Advertisements that sparked any form of emotional reaction – excitement, curiosity, surprise, relatability, resulted in more entertaining as well as enjoyable experiences. These elements were throughout the interviews, however, close to always tied to advertisements on TikTok, YouTube and Instagram. Dynamic and personality-driven advertisements that informants encountered

on other platforms were not present on Reddit, where advertisements tended to display minimal visual expression and overall flat appearance.

> "Yes, because it´s a picture. It's not emotionally engaging. It's very rarely a very expressive image. And when we talk about entertainment value, entertainment is often tied to emotions" (Informant 11)

> "Reddit ads are not entertaining. Instagram´s ads come in a much smoother flow. Reddit ads feel more like: Here. This is an ad." (Interviewee 6)

4.3.3 Irritation

Like other themes discussed in the interviews, irritation was tackled both from a holistic point of view, looking into the informant's general idea of irritation in social media advertisements, as well as more specifically on Reddit. Informants agreed that stronger elements of irritation experienced have a negative impact on consumers' attitudes towards advertising. Across the interviews, forced-view formats, lack of relevance, and bad placements of overly aggressive advertisements were consistently discussed as core factors leading to irritation amongst users. Forced-view irritation was mainly attributed to time spent on YouTube, Snapchat, and Instagram Stories, where multiple informants mentioned their irritation when they did not have the chance to skip an advertisement. This, on the other hand, was something not experienced on Reddit, where advertisements were discussed as easy to scroll past and ignore.

> "Yeah, I just can't stand watching the ads. And then on Instagram -that's a pretty new thing -but when you're watching your friends' stories, suddenly you get four ads in a row, and you have to tap "next" four times. You can skip them, but they still pop up in between. It's kind of annoying" (Informant 4)

> "Advertisement on YouTube bothers me a lot. Especially when it's an ad you can skip but it doesn't skip automatically. If you're cooking and can't click, it just sits there. It doesn't feel user-friendly. Sometimes it feels like platforms have forgotten that users should be the focus. Instead, we just become their resource." (Informant 5)

However, several informants indicated that the main source of irritation specific to Reddit was the presence of advertising within the comment section. Irritation stemmed from the multiple interruptions the users experienced when they were reading comments on a subreddit that interested them. Informants highlighted that it is important that you get the feeling that you are in active dialogue with other people on Reddit, and especially in the comment section. Described as an "uncanny valley," multiple informants stressed that the comment section should be dedicated to people and conversations, not advertisements.

> "Remove ads from the comment sections. Comments should be for people, not for ads." (Informant 3)
>
> "Mainly when I quickly enter a post to read the comments. You scroll through them, and suddenly an ad appears that's completely irrelevant to the topic or to me as a consumer. That can cause irritation - that it shows up in the "wrong" place." (Informant 7)
>
> "On Reddit, you want to feel like you're talking to other people. When sponsored posts look like regular posts but are actually made by brands, it feels wrong - it creates an "uncanny valley" effect. That's why I especially think ads should be removed from the comment sections." (Informant 3)

Another factor influencing consumers negatively was advertising, which was completely irrelevant to the user. Advertising that had nothing to do with the interests of the users was frequently mentioned as a source of irritation on the platform, Furthermore, some informants discussed a couple of advertisements as purely sketchy, causing irritation as it is something they'd rather not see on the platform. Simultaneously as this impacted on the level of perceived credibility, it also was reported to cause irritation, as it is something informants rather not get exposed to at all. Finally, specific to advertising happening in the comment section, advertisement disguised as comments in the comment section created frustration amongst some users.

> "Instagram and YouTube are much better at showing the right kind of advertisement to the right type of user - you notice that clearly. But on Reddit you might get completely random ads, sometimes totally irrelevant to me." (Informant 7)
>
> "Nothing specific comes to mind right now, but repetition is probably the most annoying part. And the fact that ads are sometimes masked as real posts -they look like ordinary Reddit posts. (Informant 4)
>
> Right now, it's mostly those "self-improvement" or "life-hack" type ads -like "revolutionize your workflow" or "100% guaranteed success." That kind of nonsense. I'm not interested in it at all. It feels like shady business" (Informant 10)

Taken together, however, irritation amongst users seemed to be mostly created by things that does not happen that much on Reddit – forced viewing. On Reddit, informants agreed that the ease of skipping advertisements on the platform had a significant impact on the perceived irritation experienced on the platform. Compared to other platforms discussed in the interviews, (TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram) Reddit advertising seemed to be the least irritating and the lack of it had a positive impact on the overall experience towards advertising on the platform.

> "I have a much more positive view of advertising on Reddit than on many other platforms. I would say, mostly because…it's not irritating. It appears very naturally and seamlessly in some way - it doesn't feel like an extra interruption. The standard experience on social media today is that advertising is frustrating. But on Reddit, it's not a problem for me – which becomes something positive." (Informant 11)

> "Reddit ads are so easy to scroll past that they don't even have time to be annoying." (Informant 2)

4.3.4 Credibility

Credibility of advertisements was mainly discussed through brand familiarity and reputation of the advertiser, and the overall quality of the advertisement from a visual- and production perspective. In addition, the better understanding the advertiser had of the ecosystem that the advertising takes place in, the stronger sense of credibility the user experienced. Finally, community feedback and interaction were experienced at certain occasions as elements contributing to the level of perceived credibility.

Informants underlined the importance of professional, correct, and high-quality standards to maintain credibility in the advertisement. Across the discussions, informants emphasized that the look and feel of the advertisement – its clarity, structure, graphic quality, and overall production should hold a strong level to increase perceived credibility. Minor errors, such as clumsy phrasing, low-resolution visuals, or sloppy layouts triggered some level of skepticism. These kinds of cues were frequently discussed as making an advertisement feel cheap, shady, or unserious – reducing the interest to click on the advertisement and explore the brand further. Furthermore, multiple informants discussed that Reddit has a lower "barrier to enter" for advertisers to advertise on the platform – where there seemed to be little to no screening of advertisers. This was discussed as impacting perceived credibility negatively multiple times.

> "In general, if it looks high-quality, it gives the impression that the brand is high-quality - and through that, that the product is too." (Informant 12)

> "Quality." That the ad is made carefully – the image is sharp, the sound is clear, everything fits together. If it's visually good and professional, it gives me confidence in the brand." (Informant 4)

> "They seem less polished and less thoughtfully made than ads on bigger platforms". (Informant 8)

> "Reddit just has everything, from one extreme to the other. There isn't a strong filter like on some

> other platforms. There are some moderation and regulations, but not nearly as much. So, credibility is lower. (Informant 6)

Another key determinant in the development of credibility was discussed to be brand familiarity and the reputation of the advertiser. In general, on Reddit, informants frequently mentioned that they do not find familiar companies advertising on the platform. It is a rare occasion that Finnish, let alone Nordic brands, are identified as advertisers on the Reddit platform. With the absence of familiar brands advertising, informants consistently discussed that the level of credibility experienced in the advertisements dropped. Recognizing a brand instantly creates interest and credibility, as the interviewer is aware of the brand and by having earlier experience with the advertiser, it is easier to build some kind of relationship with them.

> "And of course, well-known brands feel more credible right away. If it's from an established brand, that definitely affects the credibility." (Informant 7)

> "The platform has fewer Finnish advertisers and lots of international brands that aren't familiar here. When the brand isn't familiar to me, my trust level is automatically lower." (Informant 2)

> "it feels like Reddit has a much lower bar for who can advertise. It's like anyone is welcome to post an ad there, whereas platforms like YouTube or Instagram probably have more filters and approval processes." (Informant 10)

Informants frequently mentioned that it is important for advertisers to understand the Reddit specific environment, as it signals the underlying understanding and knowledge present amongst advertisers, which is needed for the advertisement to resonate with Reddit users. Informants also discussed that the Reddit audience consists of quite a niche community of users, making it even more important to understand the needs and interests of the users. Therefore, understanding how to tailor advertising specifically to the Reddit platform, instead of copying it straight from a campaign on another platform, was identified to have an impact on the level of credibility experienced by users.

> "Because Reddit is a community, and if you feel a strong sense of belonging there, you also feel a bit more trust. I could imagine that ads on Reddit feel more credible than on Snapchat or Instagram." (Informant 11)

> "ads on Jodel -even though it's a completely anonymous platform, even more anonymous than Reddit - often feel more credible. Advertisers there seem to understand the platform's role better than they do on Reddit. On Reddit, you often see the exact same ad that's also on Instagram, even though the environments are completely different." (Informant 2)

Finally, informants found interactivity on the platform to have an impact on the perceived credibility of the advertisements. When discussed on a more general social media platform level, informants identified interaction with advertisements validating the message, especially if connections in one's network and/or multiple people interact with the advertisement. In contrast, though, there were conflicting reports about this around Reddit, where some informants also described interactivity having no influence at all on perceived credibility of an advertisement. However, for multiple informants it was an area where they would experience increased credibility if it were a more integrated part of the advertising infrastructure on the platform. As the absence of interaction leads to stronger feelings of isolation and invalidation, Reddit advertisements as it stands now, were seen as less credible than advertisements on other platforms (e.g., TikTok, YouTube, Instagram) by most informants. Finally, informants agreed that increased levels of credibility would have a positive impact on their attitudes towards advertising on the platform.

> "Yeah, it does. But I find it strange that I've never really seen any interaction or community feedback on Reddit ads. There is the option to comment and react, but there never seems to be anything there." (Informant 12)

> "I've actually noticed that there's almost none of that around ads. On Instagram or TikTok, people can comment under ads, but on Reddit I almost never see anyone comment on an ad." (Informant 10)

> "Yes. The same applies to any post: if two identical posts exist and one has 10 likes and the other has 100,000, I'll probably laugh more at the latter and share it more easily. The reactions of others validate the content. I see the same with ads: if an ad gets a lot of attention, I perceive it as validated by others as "a good ad." (Informant 8)

4.3.5 Personalization

Throughout the interviews, personalization was a theme that had an impact on almost every discussion in each interview. It also functioned as one of the key factors influencing informants' perceived usefulness and relevance of advertisements on the platform. Personalization features were mainly compared to social media platforms Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube and Instagram – where informants experienced significantly stronger personalization of advertisements and therefore also relevance in advertisements presented to them. Reddit, on the other hand, was consistently described as having almost non-existing personalization of advertisements, where

informants were surprised about how disconnected from the subreddits and irrelevant the advertisements were.

> "Yeah, that's how it feels. I actually meant to say this -you'd think that if there's, say, a computer-related subreddit and you go there, you'd expect that at least there you'd see relevant ads." (Informant 4)

> "They know more about my interests than my wife does, kind of jokingly-but also a bit true. So, it's strange that they don't manage to make it better. The ads often feel irrelevant to me." (Informant 10)

Informants felt like the advertisements on the platform are not at all personalized, however, multiple informants frequently mentioned that it would make their overall experience of advertising on the platform better. Most informants had a rather positive attitude towards personalization if it increases relevance of the advertisements, describing it as helpful and useful. In the interviews, the current form of the advertisement functioned as the reference point, where advertisements were experienced as completely random and not at all personalized to the user of the platform. Furthermore, stronger personalization was described in multiple interviews to have a positive impact on how users perceive the company advertising as well. Finally, several informants mentioned that we live in a world where personal data has already been acquired and given that the users get access to the platform for free, this is a trade-off one accepts. Bearing that in mind, several informants mentioned that stronger personalization is an outcome of this.

> "No. Personalization is totally fine. I'd much rather have personalization than random ads for something like an outdoor equipment store that has nothing to do with me." (Informant 12)

> "Yes. If the ads were better matched to my interests and genuinely engaging, it would improve both the user experience and my impression of the companies. I think personalized advertising makes sense for everyone. It's wasteful for companies to spend money on ads that don't reach the right audience, and it's annoying for people to see irrelevant ads. The amount of data collected on us is probably something I'd rather not think too deeply about. But overall, I see this as "fair game" when using free platforms." (Informant 8)

On multiple occasions, informants discussed that it would be a relevant idea for Reddit to personalize advertisements according to the subreddits that users follow rather than doing extensive individual behavior tracking. As consumers visit the platform stemming from a need or place of personal interests, informants agreed that personalizing advertisements based on followed subreddits would give added value to the users. It was frequently described that this is

information that the platform and the advertisers already have. Also, since it would purely build on self-selected interests, targeting would feel more relevant and not as invasive.

> "The potential lies in connecting to ongoing discussions and the context of the subreddit. There's definitely potential, especially when ads are connected to what you actually follow -like camera accessories in my case." (Informant 1)

> "But I can imagine it being very beneficial if the company targets the right subreddits. That could be a win-win. If you like cars and an ad appears in a car subreddit – then it can feel natural and even fun." (Informant 11)

4.3.6 Interactivity

Interactivity was described in each interview to be rare, not expected, as well as something that is not a natural part of Reddit's advertising culture. In almost all interviews conducted, informants reported that they have never interacted with advertisements on Reddit. It was described as something that is almost non-existent on the platform as well as something that happens only by accident. When the interviewer asked about whether the informants have interacted with advertisements on the platform, the answers were:

> "No, not really. I've accidentally clicked a few times, but never intentionally engaged with one." (Informant 10)

> "No, actually not. I haven't even thought about doing that." (Informant 1)

> "No, not that I can remember. Maybe once or twice, but it was probably more "organic" posts -like regular users sharing a product in a thread, not paid ads." (Informant 9)

When discussing potential elements of interactivity on the platform, informants discussed that some aspects could add value to the overall experience on the platform and attitude towards advertising on the platform. Informants frequently described interaction on the platform to have to consider the community-aspect of the platform, and especially themes as *meaningful, value-adding and community-driven* interaction were seen as areas where interactivity would have a positive impact on the user's experience. There were, however, conflicting responses on the expected level of forced interaction by brands. Where some informants saw proactive and brand-led interaction as a good element, others felt that it is important that interaction happens naturally, without active push from the advertiser. If too forced, it could be perceived as irritating, and therefore authenticity would need to be ensured for the interactivity element to create value for the user.

> For example, if an ad says something like: "Hey, this is a promoted post -tell us your favorite pizza topping and we might make that version," I can appreciate that. It feels like they're trying to take part in the community culture -you know, dialogue and discussion. But at the same time, it feels a bit manipulative, because they're trying to appear like they are "one of us." But I do appreciate that they understand the culture of the platform" (Informant 5)

> "My view is that interactivity should emerge naturally from the ad being genuinely good. Simply asking people to comment doesn't make an ad interesting-anyone can do that. The ad itself needs to be well-made and compelling enough to spark reactions. Then the interaction feels authentic." (Informant 8)

When looking into what type of interaction informants like, the answers were rather dispersed. It seemed like interactivity amongst advertisements is highly dependent on the individual. However, something that was identified in the interviews, was that users define Reddit as a platform with a strong community, where commenting, discussing and collectively evaluating discussions shape how content eventually is perceived. By interacting with users, informants felt like there would be potential for advertisers to build stronger credibility amongst users, though, emphasizing that it must be something voluntary and not too forced.

> "Yes, as long as it's the right kind of interaction. Not something forced like "click X times" -that would just be annoying. It needs to be something inviting and voluntary -a positive initiative, not an obligation." (Informant 3)

> "That appeal to me more, because they feel natural and authentic -not like paid promotion." (Informant 9)

4.3.7 Privacy Concerns

Privacy concerns emerged as a topic that was discussed through the interviews as an aspect relevant to the platform of Reddit. Informants' attitudes towards privacy concerns were not really unified, and they had differing views on what would be deemed okay or not on the platform. In general, informants discussed privacy concerns on a more general level, where concerns were more strongly raised in association with other social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. Here, some informants were particularly concerned about data collection and highly targeted advertising, that occasionally gave them a feeling that they were being strongly monitored. These informants stated that Reddit feels comparatively safer, as the advertisements feel more general, as long as the pseudonymous nature of the platform remains intact.

> "If it feels targeted in a way that becomes too personal, then I get uncomfortable. Like when you talk about something with a friend and then the exact same ad shows up on Facebook or Instagram -then you start wondering if they're listening. I don't want that feeling on Reddit." (Informant 5)

> "But sometimes it gets uncomfortable when it's clearly very targeted. Like when you've talked about something and then see ads for exactly that-it feels a bit creepy. It happens quite often, and I do react to it, even if I don't do anything about it. Overall, though, I don't care that much. I mostly just think, "okay, that's how it works." But sometimes you react when it gets too obvious." (Informant 1)

However, there was another school of thought that did not feel uncomfortable with personalization - on the contrary, they felt that it is something that positively influences their overall experience on Reddit. Though, in its current format, it did not resonate with the expectations of these users. Informants described it as confusing, as they would expect Reddit to tailor advertising in similar ways as other social media platforms. Therefore, they would see potential in utilizing the information available through user's platform activity to reduce the number of irrelevant advertisements and instead create an experience that more closely aligns with the expectations of the users. In most cases, these experiences were tied to advertising content that aligns with the subreddit's that users follow and are involved in.

> "Reddit surely has data on which subreddits I visit and what kind of content I read. That kind of data could be used more effectively than just demographics like age or gender. The potential is there. That's why it feels strange that ads often miss the mark." (Informant 8)

> "Generally -if people actively participate in some subreddit, that already shows interest. You don't need to go so far as to look at the exact context of a comment." (Informant 4)

Finally, the findings reflect some tension between valuing anonymity and desiring relevance. A couple of informants found it important to preserve low levels of personalization to maintain their safety and sense of anonymity, simultaneously as others experienced that carefully thought-out, limited targeting based on subreddit activity on the platform would improve their overall experience of advertisements on the platform. Furthermore, some informants really saw the potential in Reddit implementing strong personalization, as it is something they look for with advertisements in general. Finally, a consistent theme throughout the discussions was to ensure that Reddit's identity as an anonymous and less intrusive space is not jeopardized in the process.

> "I think that's part of Reddit's "magic" -that it's so anonymous. And that's maybe where the challenge is with advertising -it gets hard for Reddit to balance anonymity with relevant ads. You want to feel anonymous but still feel that ads aren't completely useless." (Informant 4)

> "Really interesting question. I had to think about that. But yes - if the platform feels anonymous and then suddenly you get very personal ads, that will definitely affect the sense of anonymity. I don't know exactly how it would affect me, but it would probably have some kind of impact." (Informant 7)

4.4 Summary of the Results

The findings of the study reveal that consumers' attitudes towards advertising on Reddit are shaped, similarly to earlier research, by multiple factors. The more traditional factors (Ducoffe, 1996; Brackett and Carr, 2001) are consistently shaping consumer attitudes together with more social media platform specific factors. Interestingly, these factors seem to behave quite differently on Reddit, as opposed to other social media platforms discussed, such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Facebook.

Informativeness was seen as limited on Reddit, as users experienced a strong sense of irrelevance in the advertisements, to which they are exposed. It seldom aligned with their interests or subreddits that they follow, and therefore it became easy to scroll past them and never even catch the information in the advertisements. Entertainment, similarly, was described as almost nonexistent, where the static, non-creative and visually basic advertisements made it hard for users to remember even one advertisement that would have been entertaining. Again, even though entertainment and information value remained low, users did not experience a lot of irritation towards advertisements on the platform. Users felt that advertisements were easy to identify and avoid on the platform, making it more effortless to consume content. In situations where irritation arose, it was in few cases where advertisements interrupted the users' experience when reading comments and at times when advertisements were disguised as comments. Informants consistently reported more positive evaluations of advertisements that included informative or entertaining elements, such as subreddit-relevant content or messaging aligned with the platform's communicative style - provided that these elements did not increase perceived irritation.

What immediately stood out across the interviews was that credibility arose from a combination of brand familiarity, level of quality and professionalism of the advertisements as well as the contextual understanding the advertiser had when advertising on Reddit. Credibility was described as having a positive impact on informants' attitudes towards advertising. Brand familiarity created a baseline for trust amongst many informants, where Nordic companies created a sense of credibility immediately. On the contrary, this was something rarely witnessed

on Reddit, with “random” international brands usually present on Reddit - having an immediate negative impact on perceived trust amongst users. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that advertisers that understood the unique audience of Reddit users and knew how to distinguish advertising so that it is suitable for the context, had a positive impact on perceived credibility. Finally, users highlighted that Reddit advertisements lack any sort of engagement. The fact that consumers did not experience any likelihood of reviewing and evaluating advertisements based on other users’ interaction seemed to have a negative effect on perceived credibility, when compared to other platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, where discussions about advertisements were more present.

Interactivity played a relatively small role in users’ experiences in Reddit advertising. This was largely since informants seldom felt that they had interacted with advertisements on Reddit. Advertising on Reddit was described as something that users usually scroll past automatically, and few had ever interacted with advertisement through clicking, commenting, or reacting. Now, even though it was a topic not very present in their current experience, more interactivity was described as having a positive impact on the consumers’ attitudes. However, informants underpinned the importance of ensuring that interactive elements of advertising would only work if it guaranteed voluntary, authentic, and light-touch interaction - relevant to the surrounding context. Authentic brand participation in relevant subreddits was described as having potential to influence consumer attitudes positively, simultaneously as forced or overly attention-seeking advertisement was seen as being too much for many informants.

Personalization and privacy concerns were strongly linked throughout the interviews; however, attitudes towards these factors varied considerably between informants. All informants recognized almost a complete lack of personalization of advertisements, but ideas about the level of personalization varied. Most informants raised frustration around the lack of personalization, describing advertising happening on the platform as completely random and irrelevant, making it surprisingly disconnected from the subreddit they follow. For these users, stronger personalization of advertisements would not only influence their attitudes towards advertisements on Reddit positively but also enhance their overall experience on the platform. A small group of informants was on the other hand more cautious, where these informants felt that personalized advertising on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube felt overly monitored at times and therefore, they appreciated less intrusive advertising, which contributed to a more anonymous experience. The privacy–personalization paradox was therefore clearly

present. Informants described a tension in which increased personalization of advertising was viewed positively, but only as long as it did not influence the sense of anonymity associated with the Reddit experience. More personalization was clearly needed, but simultaneously, a feeling of being monitored by the platform was something that informants wanted to avoid.

When discussing consumer attitudes towards advertising on Reddit versus other platforms, informants had somewhat conflicting ideas. Whereas some really appreciated the lack of irritation experienced on the platform, as well as the diversity of advertisements that they encountered, other informants saw the lack of personalization as a major drawback – leading to more negative attitudes towards advertising happening on the platform. In the 12 interviews conducted, it was clear that whilst there is less experienced irritation on Reddit compared to other social media platforms, there is also much less relevance in the advertisements presented.

Informants consistently reported that they have encountered low levels of informativeness, credibility, and entertainment, which was largely due to the lack of personalization in the advertisements, making it less engaging and easier to scroll past for users and naturally leading to less interaction with Reddit advertisements. As a result, the general attitudes towards advertising on Reddit were strongly influenced by the users' reason to spend time on the platform, general ideas about personalization across social media platforms as well as individual opinions about which elements make an advertisement enjoyable and relevant.

The findings from the interviews indicate that Finnish consumers' attitudes towards advertising on Reddit are strongly shaped by expectations on the platform and not by advertising features alone. Informants go to the platform to discuss, seek information, and partake in community-driven interaction with authentic content. Advertising that aligns with these expectations, by offering informatively and contextually relevant content is confirmed to be more accepted. On the contrary, advertising that interrupts discussions or takes after advertising from other social media platforms is perceived as irritating. Attitudes towards Reddit advertising are, therefore, formed much by how well they fit the platform's usage context. It is essential that the advertisements align with the specific expectations and needs of the users to be perceived positively.

In Figure 3, the key findings from the interviews are illustrated through an updated version of the conceptual model (Figure 1) introduced in the theory section. As in the original model, the

“+” and “-” symbols indicate whether a factor’s potential influence on consumer attitudes is positive or negative. In other words, the meaning of these symbols follow the original model introduced and is therefore not adjusted by interview data.

Instead, the contribution of the updated model lies in how these factors are currently experienced by the informants and how important they are experienced by the informants, specifically on Reddit. Hence, the model visualizes the current attitudes towards advertising on Reddit and illustrates how users’ attitudes are expected to shift when those factors change.

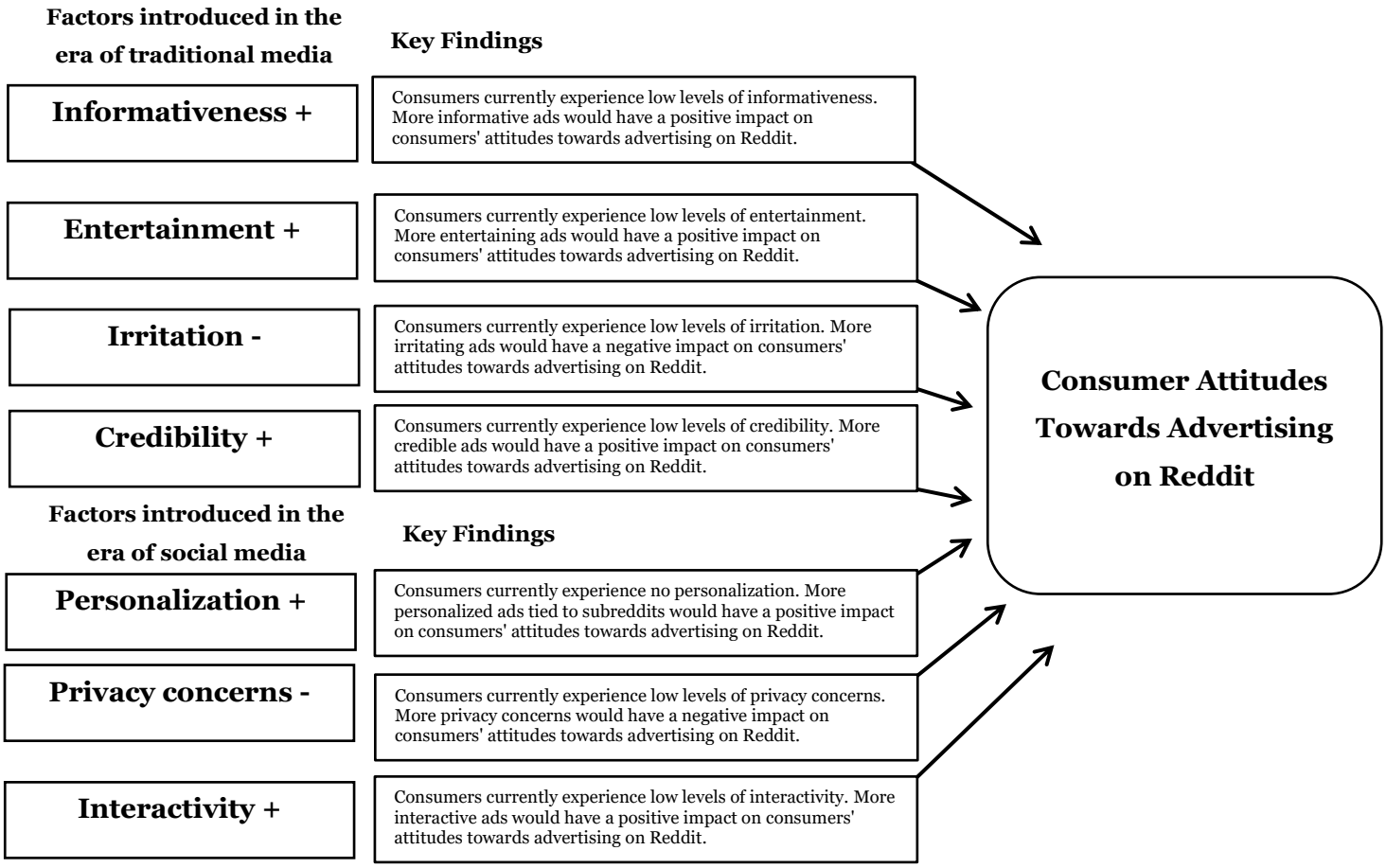


Figure 3 Updated Conceptual Model: Factors Influencing Consumer Attitudes Towards Advertising on Reddit
Model adopted from Ducoffe (1996), Brackett and Carr (2001), and Lütjens et al. (2022).

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter discusses the findings from the semi-structured interviews in connection with the underlying theory as well as earlier research presented. While chapter four presented the results of the qualitative analysis, this chapter provides a more in-depth interpretation of the results. The discussion first highlights theoretical and managerial implications of the study. After this, the limitations and recommendations for future research on consumer attitudes towards advertising are presented. This further highlight potential challenges with this thesis and emphasizes areas that need further research.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This thesis builds on the perceived advertising value model introduced by Ducoffe (1996), the extensions proposed by Brackett and Carr (2001), as well as the more recent meta-analysis conducted by Lütjens et al. (2022). Seven factors - informativeness, entertainment, irritation, credibility, personalization, privacy concerns, and interactivity - identified in earlier research (Ducoffe, R., H.,1996; Brackett and Carr, 2001; Logan et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2017; Gaber et al., 2019; Falcão and Isaías, 2020; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2022; Lütjens et al., 2022) as significant determinants of consumer attitudes towards advertising, worked as the foundation for examining advertising on Reddit. This thesis has examined how these established factors function and how they influence consumers' attitudes towards advertising on Reddit, a platform that differs significantly from other social media environments, through its pseudonymous and community-driven nature. While the same factors were relevant in this study, their influence appeared to work in a unique way compared to platforms such as Instagram (Gaber et al., 2019) , YouTube (Yang et al., 2017), TikTok (Dwinanda et al., 2012) and Facebook (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2022). A key theoretical contribution of this thesis therefore lies not only in confirming the relevance of these factors, but in showing how their impact changes depending on platform identity, user motivations, and levels of anonymity.

A central finding concerns the relationship between relevance and the factors shaping attitudes towards advertising. Informants repeatedly emphasized that informative, entertaining, and credible advertisements would positively shape their attitudes towards advertising on Reddit, but only if the advertisements were relevant to them. As advertisements on Reddit were often perceived as uninformative, static, and visually unengaging, the underlying issue appeared to be the absence of relevance rather than any limitation of the advertisements themselves. This

aligns closely with Ducoffe's (1996) argument that informativeness and entertainment only generate positive value when they are meaningful to the user. The findings of this thesis strengthen the theoretical understanding by identifying that relevance functions as a precondition for informativeness, entertainment and credibility. If the advertisement does not connect to the user's interests - most naturally through subreddit-level targeting - these factors fail to take shape, regardless of the advertisement's specific features. Therefore, in this thesis, a more conditional view of the perceived advertising value model is presented, where relevance is discussed as foundational rather than complementary.

The results further contribute to the Uses & Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974). Informants evaluated advertisements largely based on whether they supported the goals they had when using Reddit, which were strongly related to information-seeking, problem-solving and engaging with self-selected subreddits. Advertisements that did not align with these objectives, informants described as irrelevant and unhelpful, even if they met the criteria for informativeness, entertainment or credibility from a content standpoint. This confirms the core logic of the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974): where advertising is judged not in isolation, but in relation to the motivations that guide platform use. In Reddit's case, gratifications are strongly functional and community driven as informants described that their main reason to go to the platform is to find information about things they are interested in, where they place a lot of trust in the discussions provided by the community they participate in. Advertisements that do not fit this expectation struggle to create value.

Another theoretical implication relates to irritation. Earlier research describes irritation as a dominant negative predictor of advertising attitudes (Ducoffe 1996; Brackett & Carr 2001), frequently tied to intrusive formats or forced exposure. The findings in this study refine that understanding. Informants rarely described Reddit advertisements as irritating, but instead irritation became apparent mostly when advertisements conflicted with the platform's norm or felt poorly adapted to the subreddit context. This suggests that irritation on Reddit is contextual rather than feature based. Through the lens of the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad and Wright, 1994), this shows that persuasion knowledge is activated not because advertisements themselves are intrusive, but because they signal a lack of relevance or platform understanding. As a result, even advertisements that would not normally be considered irritative can generate negative attitudes if the platform fit is weak. While prior research has identified intrusiveness and user expectations as core factors leading to irritation (Edwards et al., 2002, Logan et al.,

2012), this study contributes to research by demonstrating that on Reddit, irritation is primarily driven by perceived interference with platform specific expectations users have. Furthermore, in accordance with Brackett and Carr (2001), the relative importance of factors shifts depending on platform context and user norms. Informative content and platform-specific knowledge is identified as very important amongst users specifically on Reddit.

Finally, the study offers an important contribution to research on the personalization–privacy paradox. Informants did not reject personalization directly. In contrast, many expressed a need for more relevant advertising. However, their acceptance of personalization was closely tied to Reddit's pseudonymous identity. Personalization that relied on behavioral tracking or identity-based signals was perceived as potentially intrusive, while personalization based on subreddit activity was generally perceived as acceptable. This distinction aligns with the personalization-privacy paradox, where the perceived interference of personalization is highly dependent on datapoints used and the medium, through which it is delivered (Aguirre et al., 2016). Furthermore, it is found that privacy concerns arises when personalization violates expectations of anonymity. The thesis therefore adds a layer to existing personalization research (e.g., Gaber et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2017), which focuses largely on identity-based platforms, by showing that personalization is interpreted differently in pseudonymous environments. In this context, platform identity becomes an important factor shaping how consumers weigh privacy risks. Finally, the results confirm, in line with Morimoto (2021), that perceived information control shapes how consumers respond to personalized advertising. Users' subreddit activity is generally more accepted as a source for targeting advertisements, rather than tracking based on the users' identity.

Taken together, these insights suggest that social media advertising theories require adaptation when applied to pseudonymous, community-centred platforms. The perceived advertising value model (Ducoffe, 1996), the personalization-privacy paradox and the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright, 1994) are all adopted differently on Reddit compared to more identity-oriented social media platforms. This thesis therefore contributes to social media advertising literature by showing that platform identity, user motivations and expectations of anonymity all play a role in how consumers evaluate advertising and respond to it. By focusing on a pseudonymous, discussion-oriented platform, this study extends existing models of advertising attitudes by illustrating the need to account for platform context more rigorously in future research.

5.2 Managerial Implications

For agencies, marketers and advertisers working with Reddit, this thesis identifies several managerial implications to consider when planning advertising solutions on the platform. Through in-depth analysis of 12 interviews conducted on Finnish Reddit consumers, this thesis offers insights especially related to personalization, irritation, and platform fit of advertisements.

The interviews showed that advertising on Reddit needs to meet the discussion-driven, information-oriented nature of the platform. Research identified that users quickly spot advertisements that are experienced as out-of-place, and as a result, it becomes important for advertisers to understand the fit of the advertisement, meeting the needs of the users active on the platform, while avoiding transferring advertisements from more visually oriented platforms directly to Reddit. Instead, focus should be on meeting the objectives and gratifications that users have, mirroring the ways that Reddit users consume content on the platform. By framing advertisements through the lens of problem-solving, concise explanations and community relevant references, advertisements on the platform are expected to be perceived as more credible and relevant for the audience. As credibility on the platform is as much built on contextual alignment as it is by production quality, it is expected that credibility arises from advertisers understanding the platform fit.

This suggests that Reddit should focus on further developing subreddit messaging guidelines, to ensure that advertisers understand the value of focusing on subreddits as segments. Even though Reddit offers interest-, community-, and keyword targeting (Reddit, n.d.), it is not currently mirrored in how Finnish consumers experience advertisement on the platform. Informants consistently reported advertisements as broadly targeted, detached from subreddit activity and as a result, highly irrelevant. For advertisers and agencies, this emphasizes the need of applying subreddit-level insights more strictly, ensuring that advertisement reflect the motivations and interests that steer user activity on the platform. By shedding light on the current gap between audience expectations and advertising output, this thesis helps Reddit, advertisers and agencies understand how Reddit users behave on the platform, what expectations they have on advertisement and which contextual aspects needs to be considered to determine the appropriateness of the advertisement. Advertisers and Reddit would consequently benefit from creating more relevance for the audience, while staying within the boundaries of what users perceive as appropriate from a privacy angle. For agencies, this

translates to segmenting audiences based on subreddit memberships, and designing advertising that directly speaks to the interests of those segments more thoroughly.

The interviews also identified a dominance amongst unfamiliar, international advertisers on Reddit in the Finnish market. The discussions revealed that an absence of familiar Nordic and Finnish advertisers had an impact on the perceived credibility experienced when interacting with advertisements on the platform. Finnish consumers are known to be uncertainty avoidant, which makes it important for Reddit to ensure that Nordic and Finnish companies investing in advertising on the platform remain visible to Finnish users. While the volume of such advertisers may currently be limited to some degree, Reddit can help advertisers by providing onboarding support, highlighting Nordic/Finnish advertiser success stories as well as improving guidance for local small and medium-sized businesses in the region.

Finally, this thesis offers insights of practical value both for Reddit and advertisers by identifying that consumers experience the advertisements on Reddit as comparatively low in irritation, simultaneously as it identifies an area where perceived irritation could be reduced. As Reddit is primarily used for engaging in discussions and seeking information, advertisements that interfere with these expectations can be experienced as intrusive. The findings of the study therefore indicate that Reddit and advertisers may benefit from reconsidering advertisement placements on the platform. As users are particularly sensitive to disruptions within the comment section, advertisements placed there appear to have a negative effect on users' overall experience on the platform. Therefore, strategies that minimize experienced interruptions in the comment section is recommended, to ensure a smooth and frictionless experience for users on the platform.

5.3 Limitations of the Thesis

This study builds on 12 interviews with Finnish Reddit users aged 18-34, working as the source of data collection. Meanwhile it is fully appropriate for qualitative research, it comes with its limitations. The findings are not statistically representative of all Finnish Reddit users' attitudes towards advertising on the platform. Furthermore, this study does not reflect any other culture or region, making it challenging to apply these results to other cultural and geographical settings. Older users and culturally different audiences may view the factors explored in this study quite differently. It is challenging to transfer findings to other mainstream social media platforms, due to the pseudonymous, text-focused, and community-centred nature of the platform. Furthermore, informants report what they think they do, not necessarily what they do. Therefore, the findings of this thesis are limited by the informants' experiences. Informants may remember exposure to advertisements incorrectly and as a result, the findings only reflect perceived attitudes, and not actual outcomes.

As some informants mentioned rarely noticing advertisements on Reddit, some evaluations may be based on fragmented experiences, and therefore, informants may generalize findings from a small set of advertisements they do remember. Also, since Reddit is currently in a transition-phase – accelerating its strategic initiatives in advertising business, the research is time-bound, where a similar study in two years' time can look significantly different. As the userbase gets more used to Reddit advertising, simultaneously as Reddit develops and introduces new advertising features, similar discussions in a couple of years' time may yield in significantly different empirical insights compared to those of this study.

5.4 Future Research

The findings of this thesis open several interesting opportunities for further research on consumer attitudes towards advertising in more community-driven platforms, like Reddit. As this thesis only focused on a small sample consisting of Finnish Reddit users, future research could expand demographically and geographically. Similar research could be conducted on the entire Nordic market, given Reddit's growing focus in the region. Comparative research with countries and regions with cultural variations, such as low-context-, versus high-context communication cultures or more-, versus less uncertainty avoidant cultures could further strengthen the understanding on how cultural aspects influence consumer attitudes towards advertising on social media platforms.

Methodologically, future research could go beyond qualitative research and incorporate quantitative or mixed-method approaches. By conducting survey-based research and clickstream analysis, it would be possible for the researcher to identify more granular datapoints, making it easier to analyze how Reddit users behave. Since Reddit has recently gone through an Initial Public Offering, followed by a strong strategic push into advertising, a longitudinal study could offer deeper insight into how attitudes change, as Reddit's targeting capabilities and advertising offerings are expected to develop significantly over time.

Findings from the thesis suggest that Reddit as an advertising platform may work primarily as a mid-funnel channel for advertisers, where users inquire, compare and discuss with communities. In the context of this, it would be interesting for future research to investigate more specifically consumer journeys. By conducting an analysis on consumer behavior, it would be interesting to see which kinds of advertisements would be most appropriate to emphasize on Reddit for maximum return on investment.

To expand on the topic of relevant advertising on the platform, future research could further expand research on the privacy-personalization paradox. As this thesis found that subreddit-based personalization is the most suitable type of targeting, it would be interesting to gain more insights about how the boundary between acceptable and intrusive personalization might shift depending on different subreddits or levels of engagement amongst users. By taking inspiration from Aguirre et al. (2016), future research could more rigidly examine factors in the consumer journey that have an impact on how consumers react to personalized advertisements, specifically on Reddit.

Finally, the findings of this thesis open the door to further research in platforms with similar characteristics to that of Reddit, such as Twitch. As pseudonymous and community-driven platforms place strong emphasis on context-fit and relevance, future research could apply the research conducted in this thesis to another platform.

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Appendix 1 Consent Form

Consent to the processing of personal data in the study.
[Consumer attitudes towards advertising on Reddit: Evidence from Finland]

I have been requested to participate in the study identified above.

I have received sufficient information about the study and processing of my personal data, I understand the information and have had the possibility to have my questions answered.
Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that the participation in the study is voluntary, and that I have the right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawal from the study will not result in any negative consequences to me. The anonymous information collected from or about me up to the point of my withdrawal may still be used in the study.
Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree that the interview with me will be recorded for the study's purpose. The recordings will be processed in such a way that I cannot be identified in them.
Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that the information I have provided during the study can be used as anonymized statements in the thesis. My identity as an individual respondent will not be disclosed in the thesis or any other research results to be published.
Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree that I can be contacted at a later stage for a further study or follow-up study.
Yes ☐ No ☐

I hereby give my consent to the participation in the study and processing of my personal data in the manner described in the privacy notice I have received in writing (in print or electronical form).
Yes ☐ No ☐

_____
The respondent's signature and name in block letters
(Consent can also be given electronically, for example, by email.)

_____
Place and date

Anton Vest
Studying at Hanken School of Economics, major in Marketing.

Appendix 2 Interview Guide

A. Introductory questions - Reddit Usage and Relationship to social media

1. Could you tell me a little bit about your Reddit usage – For how long have you been a user, how frequently do you use it, and which are some subreddits that you follow?
2. What do you consider as different on Reddit as opposed to other social media platforms?
3. How would you describe your general feelings towardsadvertising on social media?

Introductory questions - Perceptions of Reddit Advertising Compared to Other platforms

1. In what ways do you usually notice advertising on Reddit? (feed, "promoted posts," comment sections, etc.)
2. How do Reddit ads differ to ads on other platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok in your opinion?
3. Do you think ads naturally fits in within the Reddit platform, or do you think they stand out in certain ways? Why in that case?
4. Does Reddit's community-driven nature (upvotes, comments, discussions) influence the way you see advertising on the platform and in that case – why ?

B. Probing questions Consumer attitudes towards advertising on Reddit

Informativeness of the advertisements

1. What type of information captures your attention and feels valuable?
2. Have you found ads on Reddit to be informative? What made it informative?
3. Compared to other social media platforms, do you find ads on Reddit to be more or less informative?

Credibility of the advertisements

1. Which factors (tone, design, user comments, brand, information) influence your idea of credibility of an ad?
2. How credible do you find ads on Reddit compared to other platforms?
3. Does other user's interaction with the ad as well as community feedback on the platform affect the perceived credibility you experience?

Entertainment of the advertisements

1. What kind of ads do you find entertaining?
2. Do you find Reddit ads entertaining? Why in that case?

3. Can you recall an ad on Reddit that caught your attention by being pleasing, funny, enjoyable?

Irritation of the advertisements

1. Have you ever felt irritated or frustrated by Ads on Reddit? In what situations?
2. What is usually the main source of irritation? (frequency of ads, intrusive formats, lack of relevance of the ad)
3. Does irritation towards the ad affect your overall Reddit experience? How?

Personalization of the advertisements

1. How do you feel about Reddit using your activity or behaviour on the platform?
2. Does it overall feel like ads you see on Reddit are tailored specifically to your interests?
3. What would good personalization look like on Reddit – or is that something you would rather avoid entirely?

Interactivity of the advertisements

1. Have you ever interacted with an ad on Reddit (clicked, commented, joined a campaign etc.)
2. How does the ability to interact – or to see other's interactions on the platform – influence your perception of the advertisement?
3. Do you find interactivity enhancing authenticity or make ads seem more intrusive?

Privacy Concerns of the advertisements

1. What makes you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with an ad on Reddit?
2. Have you ever changed your settings or behaviour due to concerns about your privacy?
3. How do you make sure to balance so to say "relevant" advertising with the protection of your personal privacy? Or do you think about it at all?

C. Concluding questions: Reddit Advertising in the Bigger Picture

1. Do ads fit into your overall experience of Reddit as a platform? Why or why not?
2. If you could design Reddit advertising yourself, what would you change?
3. What is your overall attitude towards advertisements on Reddit, compared to other social media platforms?
4. Is there anything else you would like to add about your thoughts and experiences around advertising on Reddit?

Appendix 3 Use of AI

Section	Student responses
1. Purpose	In this thesis, AI has been used for brainstorming ideas and supporting the structure of the text. The LLM-model ChatGPT has been used to help the author brainstorm the structure of the thesis as well as in finding suitable articles from academic journals. Furthermore, ChatGPT has helped the author to find cohesion in the text, by generating ideas about how to tie parts of the text together and building a text that follows a logical order.
2. Extent	AI-tools have been used for finding articles and helping the author better tie parts of the text together, ensuring a smoother structure. Furthermore, it has been used in organizing the reference list in alphabetical order, also ensuring that the list is using the right style – following Hanken guidelines. All suggestions that were produced by ChatGPT were afterwards revised by the author. Example Prompts: - Based on research area X, what kind of Academic articles could be relevant to understand the research topic better? - Do you have suggestions on how to make this chapter more coherent? - Can you help me write the reference list in APA 7 – style?
3. Impact	AI has helped support my writing, making the process more straight-forward and efficient. AI has especially helped me with generating ideas, making it easier for me to focus on deeper

	analysis of the research topic and letting me explore it from multiple angles more efficiently. I do understand that for brainstorming, AI outputs can be inaccurate as well as irrelevant to the context of my work, and hence, I have made sure to double-check continuously, so that the brainstorming does not point me in the wrong direction. In the writing process ChatGPT/Grammarly have been used to help the author improve the language of the text.
4. Personal contribution	AI has solely been used as a tool to strengthen the flow, ideas and structure of the thesis. Each part of the thesis has been produced by the author himself, as AI has only functioned as a supporting tool, ensuring that the text meets its best potential. Each suggested article as well as suggestion of improvement has been revised by the author. For example, the structure of the theory section as well as the topics have solely been chosen by the author. To ensure that the right decisions have been taken, the author then discussed the content and structure of chapters with ChatGPT, checking that the text follows a logical and clear structure with relevant content. Whenever ChatGPT suggested potential improvements, the author independently examined these areas and implemented changes only when there was sufficient evidence supporting the suggested revisions.
5. Ethical considerations and Data privacy	I have followed Hanken's guidelines and ensured that no confidential or personally identifiable information has been shared on any of the AI-tools used in this thesis.

Appendix 4 LinkedIn message to recruit interview participants



Anton Vest • Du
Hanken | UW-Madison
3 v • Redigerad •

Hey, Reddit users in Finland! I'd love to hear your thoughts. FI👏

I'm currently writing my Master's thesis at Hanken School of Economics, and I'm looking for participants to interview! 😀

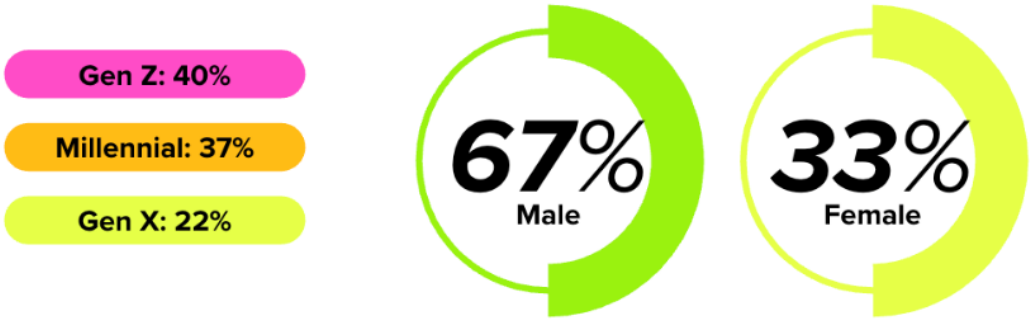
My research focuses on how Finnish young adults (ages 18–34) perceive advertising on Reddit, Inc. I'm especially interested in understanding attitudes towards different aspects of ads on the platform. If that sounds like something you have thoughts on, I'd love to chat!

The goal is to better understand consumer perspectives on a platform that's increasingly pushing into the advertising space, but still remains relatively underexplored in academic research.

👉 If you're 18-34, a Finnish citizen, have a Reddit account, and have been using the platform frequently over the past six months, I'd be super grateful if you'd take part in a 45–60 min interview. Everything is confidential and your answers will only be used for research purposes.

If you're interested, please drop me a message here on LinkedIn. Thank you so much for helping me with my research!💡

Appendix 5 Breakdown of active Reddit users in the Nordic region



Source: Rasmussen, M., Senior Client Partner at Reddit. (Q2,2025)