

Targeted Perceptions: Experiences and responses to social media advertising by Digital Natives

Your phone when you say you want to buy something



Student Name: Elisabeth Maria Stam
Student Number: 427484

Supervisor: Dr. Jason Pridmore

Master Media Studies – Media & Business
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master's Thesis
June 25th 2020

Targeted Perceptions: Experiences and responses to social media advertising by Digital Natives

Abstract

Over the years, mobile marketing has grown rapidly. With the existing knowledge that mobile marketing yields a high revenue, marketers want to master this art. A crucial way to approach this is effectively targeting the group that is most relevant on the platforms this group is the most active on. For many companies, targeting a group often referred to as Digital Natives is key, as this generation is said to have grown up with smartphones and other digital communications and technologies that enable marketers to use collected consumer data to reach them in the online environment. Using this consumer data, businesses can now reach users by targeting them based on what they know about these users, showing them ads that are more relevant to their interests and preferences. This practice results in different consumer reactions and perceptions, including perceived privacy risks that have not yet been studied in-depth. By conducting in-depth interviews and carrying out a qualitative analysis on the collected data, this thesis provides meaningful insights in the perceptions and experiences of Digital Natives that are exposed to targeted advertisements on social media, answering the following research question: *How do Digital Natives perceive targeted advertising on social media?* The interviews focus on the social medium Instagram, as this is the platform the studied cohort is the most active on. The grounded theory approach to data analysis, including three coding stages, yielded four overarching themes that help grasping the perceptions and experiences of the studied Digital Natives: *Accepting targeting & valuing convenience*, in which positive attitudes towards targeting and data collection are expressed; *Instagram as a mysterious, powerful consumer influencer*, in which Instagram is seen as an entity that knows things about participants, influences them and confuses them about the way in which it gets to know them; *Attempting to hold onto consumer power and agency*, in which participants show awareness of data collection and targeting, actively engage in protecting data, believe that Instagram does not and cannot know them as a person, feel resistant to ads and express criticism and negativity towards advertising and targeting; *Low trust in Instagram, data collection & targeting*, containing expressed general informational privacy concerns, skepticism towards data collection and protection efforts and uncertainty expressed by the studied Digital Natives regarding their own actions. The four themes encompass different observed patterns that, during the interviews, often offset each other; these themes and their respective nuances help comprehending the different, contradictory perceptions and experiences reported by the studied Digital Natives.

KEYWORDS: Digital Natives, social media marketing, targeted advertising, Instagram, privacy

Table of contents

1. Introduction	5
1.1. Research focus	5
1.2. Relevance	6
2. Theoretical framework	9
2.1. Digital Natives	9
2.1.1. Young Digital Natives	10
2.2. Digital advertising	13
2.3. Social media marketing	13
2.3.1. Instagram	15
2.3.2. Targeted mobile marketing and native advertising	16
2.3.3. Privacy concerns	18
3. Methodology	22
3.1. Research sample & units of analysis	22
3.2. Data collection	23
3.3. Constructivist Grounded Theory approach to data analysis	24
3.3.1. Coding	25
4. Results & Discussion	27
4.1. First theme – “If they use my data to provide me with relevant content that matches my preferences and interests, win-win, right?”	27
4.1.1. Perceiving data collection and targeting as convenient & No concerns about data collection and targeting	27
4.1.2. Positive attitude towards targeted ads	29
4.2. Second theme – “Instagram knows my interests and what I prefer to see. Does that mean they know me?”	31
4.2.1. Feeling like Instagram knows them & Feelings of uncertainty about data collection and targeting	32
4.2.2. Perceiving oneself as influenceable by Instagram ads	34
4.3. Third theme – “I figured them out, but I think they will never figure me out completely.”	36
4.3.1. Awareness of data collection and targeting	36
4.3.2. Active data protection	38
4.3.3. Feeling like Instagram does not or cannot know them	40
4.3.4. Perceiving oneself as resistant to Instagram ads	43
4.3.5. Negative attitude towards targeted advertisements	45
4.3.6. Critical Instagram advertisements value indicators	48
4.4. Fourth theme – “There’s not much you can do about it. Or maybe I should accept cookies less often. Whatever, they listen in anyway.”	51
4.4.1. Informational access concerns	51
4.4.2. Skepticism towards data protection efforts	54
4.4.3. Questioning their own behavior	57
5. Conclusion	60
5.1. Possible limitations and suggestions for future research	63

References 65
Appendix A – Coding tree..... 70

1. Introduction

While traditional marketing is still omnipresent in our daily lives, another type of marketing has been steadily growing in the last decade. Digital marketing is gaining more attention and marketing funds, coinciding with the growing use and commercialization of social media platforms (Smith, 2017).

Digital marketing is often associated with online or internet advertising, and is defined by Lee and Cho (2019, p. 4) as “a message of persuasion that interacts with consumers through digital media.”

Within the umbrella of digital marketing, there is one particular form that is growing the fastest: mobile advertising, which accounts for nearly half of all global digital marketing revenue. With the knowledge that mobile marketing yields a high revenue, marketers want to master this art (Grewal et al., 2016, as cited in Smith, 2017). A crucial way to approach this is effectively targeting the group that is most relevant on the platforms this group is the most active on.

For many companies, targeting a group often referred to as Digital Natives (Smith, 2017) is key, as these persons are said to have grown up with smartphones and other digital communications and technologies. They are usually defined not by their year of birth, like the concept of ‘Millennials’, but rather by their behavior in the digital space. That is, they are highly active within digital spaces, as the time spent on mobile devices is higher than the time spent on desktop computers. The majority of Digital Natives, next to socializing and seeking entertainment, uses smartphones to gain product information and receive product suggestions. Smith (2017) points out that 95% of Digital Natives base in-store purchase decisions on ads they were exposed to on their mobile device. This implies that advertisements targeted at Digital Natives are likely to be of influence.

Digital Natives are constantly connected and are said to feel less comfortable when they are disconnected (Prensky, 2001). It is often thought that they live online and are drawn to online communities on which they create and share content, connect with others and look for products and product information (Smith, 2017). Although this is not always the case, they have a significant tendency to use social media, which is why marketers are more likely to effectively reach them through these platforms than anywhere else.

1.1. Research focus

New technologies that are embedded in social media platforms enable marketers to use collected consumer data to reach them in the online environment. Data such as socio-demographics, preferences and interests are collected and used by corporations such as Facebook to spend their advertising budget as efficiently as possible (Zarouali et al., 2019). Using this consumer data, businesses can now reach users by targeting them based on what they know about these users,

showing them ads that are more relevant to their interests and preferences. However, while mobile targeting in advertisements appears to be popular and effective, it has two sides to it (Zarouali, 2019). Targeting on the one hand evokes favorable consumer responses, as advertisements become more personally relevant to consumers. However, this personalizing aspect can also result in a feeling of privacy invasion among consumers due to its targeted nature. Consequently, consumers react to targeted advertisements in different ways when scrolling through social media timelines on their mobile phones. By conducting in-depth interviews and carrying out a qualitative analysis on the collected data, this thesis will provide meaningful insights in the perceptions and experiences of Digital Natives that are exposed to targeted advertisements on social media. In order to understand this phenomenon more fully, this research focuses on answering the following research question: *How do Digital Natives perceive targeted advertising on social media?*

This research focuses on the second-most popular social media marketing platform with the fastest growth: Instagram (Clement, 2019; Guttman, 2019). In 2015, after having acquired Instagram in 2012 and allowing only limited advertising since 2013, Facebook stated that Instagram Ads were now available around the globe, offering paid ad space to businesses (Goel & Ember, 2015; Instagram Ads: Now Available Around the World, 2015). Instagram's advertising revenue in 2017 was 3.64 billion US dollars, grew to 6.84 billion in 2018 and in 2019 counted to an estimated 14 billion dollars (Clement, 2019). This makes Instagram the fastest growing social medium that is used by marketers; from 69.2% of marketers using it in 2018 to 73.2% in 2019, with an expected 75.3% in 2020 (Guttman, 2019). This increase occurred only in the last few years, which implies that researchers have not yet looked into the practice to a great extent. Another argument for studying Instagram is the large proportion of Digital Natives that are represented on Instagram in relation to Facebook (Clement, 2019). As for commercial use by consumers, over 90% of Instagram users follow a minimum of one brand, 200 million users visit at least one business profile on a daily basis and 62% say they became more interested in a brand or product after coming across it in Instagram Stories (Zote, 2020; Newberry, 2019). This implies extensive commercial use of Instagram by both marketers and consumers that is interesting for in-depth study, of which findings would be relevant to both the academic and the marketing field.

1.2. Relevance

While a lot has been written about Instagram usage and marketing separately, existing academic literature hints at a major research gap regarding the two phenomena: little in-depth information has been found as to consumers' perceptions and receptivity of social media marketing, especially not with Digital Natives, who just like mobile marketing are relatively new to the market (Chen, 2017;

Smith, 2017; Zarouali et al., 2019). Smith (2017) researched the preferences of Digital Natives with regards to mobile advertising using quantitative questionnaires, which leaves a gap for in-depth perceptions and experiences of this phenomenon. Moreover, Zarouali et al. (2019) state that targeted advertisements appeal to consumers' own interests while also being interpreted as inappropriate and privacy-violating; more extensive research about attitudes towards targeted advertising is therefore needed to better grasp the phenomenon. Chen (2017) argues that while businesses have been adopting Instagram in their marketing for a longer period, academic literature about Instagram marketing lags behind. Especially consumers' perceptions need a closer look, as existing literature has mainly focused on the business end of Instagram marketing. By adopting a qualitative, in-depth approach, the perceptions of young consumers, who as stated above are new to the marketplace, will yield insights in how they make meanings from the way in which businesses sketch their personas on Instagram by means of ad targeting.

In addition to expanding academic literature about developing and changing phenomena, it is important to study a phenomenon that has been growing and will not stop growing in usage and as a part of people's lives. Social media as a marketing platform has changed the way in which we consume products and services, retrieve and process information, communicate with each other and with organizations and how we identify ourselves. Social media itself began to evolve somewhere in between the end of the 1990's and the beginning of the 00's and has in recent times become an integral part of our daily lives (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Initially, the internet was a place where consumers consumed content and informed themselves to facilitate buying decisions. Now, social media have structurally altered the way in which social groups communicate, including consumers and businesses (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Due to the development of the interactive nature of social media platforms, consumers now create, alter, share and discuss content themselves. In addition, businesses can now reach consumers on these platforms with both organic content and advertising, structurally changing the content users are exposed to on a daily basis. Instagram has recently increased the number of ads shown in users' feeds; currently one in every four or five posts takes on a form of advertising, meaning that social media users are exposed to an increasing amount of commercial content (Gesenhues, 2019). This leads to a crucial point, being that targeted advertising may influence the way in which consumers see themselves, based on a persona that is shaped by algorithms and marketers based on their own data (Montgomery, 2015). This research will make an attempt to grasp this social process by studying the way in which young consumers perceive this type of advertising.

This research thus focuses on the way in which consumers that grew up with the same technologies that are now used for marketing make meaning of the commercial content that brands and

marketers deem fitting for them. This introductory chapter will be followed by a theoretical framework that functions as a guideline for data collection, analysis and interpretation, a methodology section in which the data collection and analysis process will be further explained, a results section in which the patterns that were found are concisely reported, a discussion section in which these patterns are interpreted and discussed in relation to the defined theoretical framework, and finally an conclusion with possible limitations and suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical framework

To begin to answer the research question, this thesis relies on several theoretical concepts and theoretical foundations. First, the social group under study, Digital Natives, will be defined. Second, digital advertising will be discussed, after which the practice of social media marketing will be explained. The platform Instagram will be described, as well as the practices of mobile marketing, targeting, native advertising and privacy concerns regarding consumer data collection. The theoretical concepts and theories highlighted in this framework will set a guideline for data collection and analysis, as well as facilitate explaining the observed behavior afterwards.

2.1. Digital Natives

There are many different perspectives in academic literature as to the definition of the Millennial generation, as birth years vary per source (Smith, 2017). Usually, Millennials are reported to be born between the 1980's and the mid 1990's. The same blurred boundaries apply to the generation under study in this thesis: The Digital Natives, also often referred to as Generation Z, the Net Generation or Generation C, in which C stands for Content (Smith, 2017). This generation, first talked about twenty years ago (Prensky, 2001), is said to be characterized by its technological savviness and experience, which is why academics rather agree on the generation's behavior than its age. Whether they were born after 1980 (Prensky, 2001), after 1990 (Friedrich et al., 2010) or between 1995 and 2010 (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Smith, 2017), these young people's use of information and communication technologies distinguishes them from prior generations as a result of ICTs being an integral part of their lives (Bennett et al., 2008). There are a number of different perspectives on the concept of Digital Natives (Judd, 2018). While Prensky (2001) introduced the concept and argued for the positive effects of the technological savviness of the generation, other academics question these positive effects and even the existence of the overall technological savviness within the generation. In an extensive review, Judd (2018) argues that the concept of Digital Natives does resonate with a lot of academics in the sense that the group that is being discussed owns a smartphone and other personal digital devices that directly influence their skills and behaviors, however that this group has differing technological preferences and skills.

Clearly, not all Digital Natives are equally savvy with technology and not all Digital Natives are as active on social media. However, what characterizes this group and what makes them important for this thesis is the fact that overall, they seem to be more comfortable with technology than previous generations due to the time in which they grew up, as well as their overall online presence and the ease with which they retrieve and spread information online (Smith, 2017). This is the lens

through which this thesis will look at these young people, acknowledging differences within this group but focusing on what they do have in common. They grew up together with the rise of smart technologies such as the internet and later smartphones, which is why being connected or online comes more natural to them than to people that knew the world before these innovations (Smith, 2017). Hence the name Digital Natives, originally invented by Prensky (2001): digital culture is said to be their native language.

2.1.1. Young Digital Natives

More recently, Digital Natives born between 1995 and 2010 have been described as having a tendency to live in the extended, connected world of their smartphones, using it as their personal secretary, their means of communication with the outside world and as a source of entertainment and information (Smith, 2017). This group of Digital Natives closely overlaps with Generation Z in terms of birth years and cohort characteristics, and marketing professionals argue that the people in this age group are “the first to be fluent in information gathering” (Fromm, 2019). Young Digital Natives are the largest group represented on Instagram, which is why this particular group is relevant to be studied with regards to their perceptions of targeted Instagram advertisements: they are exposed to the highest volume of targeted advertisements on Instagram (Clement, 2019). Young Digital Natives is seen as a recognition that in terms of demographics and studied behavior, these Digital Natives greatly overlap with Generation Z.

Young Digital Natives constitute an important demographic for advertisers, since these adolescents spend 70% of their time on mobile messaging and social apps, gathering and consuming information about products and services they might like, resulting in a high susceptibility to mobile ads (Smith, 2017). Moreover, while their disposable income is lower than the Baby Boomers and Millennials, the young people in the group of Digital Natives under study are said to make more purchasing transactions than the two other generations (Who’s spending their money? Some surprising answers, 2019). The spend per transaction is lower than the two generations with a higher disposable income, but the high volume of transactions makes this group attractive to mobile marketers. In addition to their own transactions, young Digital Natives also tend to influence family and household purchases (Fromm, 2018). Thus, if marketers are able to reach this group, they instantly reach two different groups with two disposable incomes. Marketing research predicts that this group will become a large, influential generation of consumers, since in addition to advertising, their buying decisions are also apt to be influenced by peers, especially through social media.

In turn, another phenomenon young Digital Natives are influenced by, in addition to their peers and the omnipresence of technology, is social media. Due to their activity on social media

platforms, their transition into adulthood and the shaping of their identity is fairly public and they tend to lean on brands in this process (Fromm, 2019). Media have always had an influence on the identity development processes of adolescents, and social media is no exception (Montgomery, 2015). Sharing pieces of personal information with one's peers, also referred to as identity performance, is facilitated by social media. Facebook, the owner of Instagram, is suspected of having purposefully positioned itself as an indispensable part of young people's daily lives where they can constantly engage in social interactions. The business models of Facebook and daughter company Instagram are said to be designed around capitalizing the need for identity creation in the online arena of social interaction, affording different tools that encourage users to share personal information. The use of Instagram is being carried around by young Digital Natives on a mobile device on a habitual basis, sending out notifications that invite them to constantly return to the platform. In a way, social media is thus able to shape the behavior of Digital Natives, influencing their quality of attention and shaping it into a continuous flow of glancing, stopping and tapping a "like" button on a habitual basis. This stimulates these young people to continually be exposed to the constant flow of organic and advertising content, as well as invites them to keep sharing content themselves (Carah & Shaul, 2016).

By stimulating young Digital Natives to intertwine social media platforms into their daily routines, these platforms are seemingly able to foster and reward the sharing of personal data and simultaneously use this data for marketing purposes, targeting users with what the algorithm deems a good fit for them. "The process of self discovery is inextricably woven into the system of data collection and surveillance, which sweeps up every expression of that identity exploration, combining it with ongoing analysis of each individual's behaviors and relationships" (Montgomery, 2015, p775). In other words, the affordances of social media platforms have a part in the identity shaping process of young Digital Natives and collect their data in the process. An example of this is the "like" button that users click on numerous times a day, which indicates an individual's preferences. Social media platforms and businesses can, in this way, commodify personal data by presenting these individuals with personalized information that in turn facilitates the shaping of their own identity. The fact that this data collection- and identity shaping process is intertwined with one of the daily practices of Digital Natives, engaging in social media, raises the question whether or not these Digital Natives have some level of awareness regarding this process, which is therefore an important part of the research question.

It is apparent that social media and its affordances are able to partly influence or shape Digital Natives' identity and behavior. The way in which this young group of people in turn interacts with these social media platforms results in a mutual shaping process as described by Boczkowski (1999). Technological innovation does not stop when it is developed and implemented; it continues

during its use (Boczkowski, 1999; Boczkowski et al., 2016). Technological changes are said to influence social processes on the one hand, while on the other hand these resulting social processes affect new technological changes. In other words, technology shapes users, while simultaneously users shape technology. The above-mentioned like button on Facebook and Instagram is an example of a technological feature that shapes a social process, as clicking on this button has become a symbol for indicating one's preferences, which is in turn used for marketing purposes (Montgomery, 2015). Moreover, clicking this button has become absorbed in the continuous flow of swiping, tapping and glancing Instagram users engage in, shaping their habitual behaviors (Carah & Shaul, 2016). On the other hand, companies providing tools or applications such as Facebook and Instagram have historically adapted their affordances to the way in which they were used, with new affordances such as Instagram Stories as a result (Boczkowski et al., 2016). Computer mediated communication (CMC) phenomena are thus a result from an interactive relationship between innovative technological features and the actions and preferences of its users. In turn, these communication technologies facilitate and constrain certain types of social action. Sometimes, users adapt to the affordances of a technology they are using, while at other times they attempt to alter or influence it. The latter can be seen in Instagram users, both consumers and businesses, wanting to "break" or "outsmart" the algorithm (Barnhart, 2020; Warren, 2020): while the Instagram algorithm directly influences the success of Instagram marketing for businesses, some regular users try to influence the algorithm by "playing with it" by promoting random content of their peers in their Instagram stories. As a result, the algorithm is likely to place the peer-promoted content over other content as a result of user agency (Sturgiz, 2020). Additionally, the mutual shaping process discussed above is also apparent in the relationship between young Digital Natives and the technology and innovation behind the social media platforms they use. While the communication technology of social media shapes their identity construction process and usage behavior by stimulating them to continuously click the like button and share personal information, Digital Natives shape social media by interacting with its affordances and attempting to alter them to their preferences (Boczkowski, 1999; Boczkowski et al., 2016; Barnhart, 2020; Warren, 2020; Sturgiz, 2020). This thesis will look into how the mutual shaping theory influences the behaviors and experiences of Digital Natives on social media, as well as the ways in which they link these platforms to their identity. Moreover, the different ways in which the studied Digital Natives interact with the affordances of Instagram and how they experience this interaction will be explored. In addition, their level of technological savviness and buying behavior as a result of targeted advertising on Instagram will be studied in the process.

2.2. Digital advertising

Only 25 years ago, no one could have imagined what impact the commercial use of the Internet and technological advancements could have (Kannan & Li, 2017). The advertising environment has changed accordingly; the digital space can go beyond time and space and digital advertising has increased in scale (Lee & Cho, 2019). Marketers can reach consumers at any time of the day; at any location they carry their mobile devices with them. Especially Digital Natives are prone to be reached by marketing content, since they spend a large amount of time on their mobile devices (Smith, 2017). Digital advertising uses interactive media technologies, enabling marketers to provide consumers with a frictionless brand experience. Lee and Cho (2019) refer to digital advertising as “a message of persuasion that interacts with consumers through digital media,” with digital media including traditional online media such as the internet, as well as all interactive media, both online and offline, such as smart phones, smart TV and in-game advertisements.

In digital advertising, interactivity is a main component, meaning that both marketer and consumer play a crucial role. Thus, in order to effectively reach consumers, who now have access to information at all times due to online digital communication channels, digital marketers need to be equally present in the digital sphere to facilitate this direct information retrieval. This thesis focuses on consumers’ perceptions of digital advertising approaches through the online channel Instagram and aims to explore how these individuals experience the interactivity of digital marketing on their mobile devices.

2.3. Social media marketing

Social media are defined as “forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content” (Social media, 2020). Social media is used to create and post content, interact with others and to look for product information and product suggestions (Smith, 2017). Especially Digital Natives are said to be experts in looking for product information on social media. At the start of social media, it turned out that it was difficult for businesses to fit in: brands were not always welcome in the social media landscape (Fournier & Avery, 2011). Social media was said to be created for people, not for brands, and consumers turned out to have a large amount of power in this landscape that urged businesses to adapt their marketing strategies. Taking the “Path of Least Resistance,” also known as surrendering to the power of consumers, “Playing their Game,” in other words seamlessly fitting in, or “Leveraging Web 2.0 Interconnectedness,” or getting consumers to work on behalf of the brand, were three different managerial approaches adopted by marketers over time (Fournier & Avery,

2011). With these different approaches in different moments in time, brands were said to attempt to drive cultural conversations on social media, however consumer mindsets were in turn said to be “shifting from long-term asset cultivation to fueling short-term cultural phenomena” (Fournier & Avery, 2011, p. 206). This short-term orientation is confirmed by Carah and Shaul (2016), who claim that due to social media, consumers are constantly exposed to flows of images, impacting their quality of attention and resulting in momentary, nonnarrative and repetitive glancing. Carah and Shaul believe this is exactly what Instagram was designed for: grabbing consumer attention and catching a glance on social media is crucial in every social media marketing strategy.

While still being a challenging landscape for businesses, advertising seems to have integrated itself into the social media platforms using techniques such as native advertising, to be discussed later in this framework, effectively shaping it into a marketing platform and reclaiming part of the power that once ended up in the hands of consumers (Smith, 2017; Liu & Mattila, 2017; Wojdyski & Evans, 2020). Social media platforms are now said to be used for two purposes by businesses: monitor and respond to users and persuade these users with specific messages (Carah, 2014). This way, open-ended and reflexive forms of value production are able to develop between users, the platform and businesses. Social media have particularly changed the information seeking process of consumers, as information is instantly available at all times. Product judgment, evaluation and perception, as well as attitude development, are now done through social media, where through multidimensional communications these conceptions are formed through peered opinions instead of the former one-way information flow (Shareef et al., 2019).

With creative social media marketing strategies, business attempt to grab consumer attention and stay connected with customers (Chen, 2017; Salleh et al., 2015). Advertisements on social media can be overt and obviously visible, however over time covert advertising types, to be referred to later in this framework as native advertising, have found its way to social media as well (Wojdyski & Evans, 2020). A successful social media marketing campaign needs to provide value to consumers and should come from a credible, trustworthy source (Shareef et al., 2019). This thesis will examine the ways in which Digital Natives define that value, seeking for insights in what aspects of advertisements they deem important or decisive. Existing literature proposes a large number of utilitarian and hedonic aspects in advertisements that are said to contribute to perceived advertising value. Overall, ad informativeness and ad entertainment appear to be the most influential consumer attitude and behavior predictors, especially for mobile devices and social media (Blanco et al., 2010; Lee & Hong, 2016). Informativeness, a utilitarian aspect, is said to have a concrete impact on the perception of social media advertisements, while there is some disagreement as to the influence of the hedonic aspect entertainment (Shareef et al., 2019; Lee & Hong, 2016; Ting et al., 2015; Blanco et al., 2010). Regarding ad informativeness, cognitive learning theory implies that consumers want to

analyze ad information through their personal abilities, learning something from an advertisement; the split brain theory suggests that ad informativeness is the predictor of the extent to which consumers perceive ad value (Shareef et al., 2019). Moreover, ad informativeness, together with ad creativity, was found to be a significant predictor of consumer perceptions of social media advertisements (Lee & Hong, 2016). Consumers' functional needs can more easily be met when a social media advertisement contains information about utilitarian product aspects, such as product benefits, facilitating the making of optimal purchases. In addition, consumers value the creativity expressed in social media advertisements due to the natural urge to consume something new or surprising, grabbing their attention and leading them to positively evaluate the advertisement.

With regards to ad entertainment, consumers on social networks are said to be in a constant search for pleasure and communication. Shareef et al. (2015) therefore propose and conclude that ad entertainment has a positive impact on consumer perceptions of ad value and on consumer attitudes towards advertisements. On top of that, other research supports that entertainment contributes to ad liking, especially among young people (Smith, 2017). However, while entertainment is often said to be the main success factor of an advertisement, Ting et al. (2015) concluded otherwise for the social medium Instagram specifically: Instagram users expect to be both informed and entertained by advertisements. Whether or not the consumer group of Digital Natives equally values the above-mentioned ad aspects will derive from a conversation discussing a set of screenshotted ads that were targeted at them. Their attitudes and perceptions as a result of these social media advertisements will be explored; findings will include what these young people perceive as valuable in targeted social media advertisements and where they base their advertising-related attitudes and behavior on.

2.3.1. Instagram

Founded in 2010, the social media platform Instagram has grown tremendously in its first decade of existence. The platform has over one billion monthly active users, of which 500 million are active on a daily basis (Clement, 2019; Mohsin, 2019). Due to its visual nature, Instagram as a marketing tool allows marketers to display products with visual descriptions (Chen, 2017). As mentioned, Carah and Shaul (2016) state that Instagram is designed for "glancing:" the act of momentarily and repetitively swiping and tapping to glance at particular content. According to them, the essence of Instagram lies in the promotional character of the posts: Instagram users, including businesses, attempt to catch glances from other users.

Instagram is known to attract younger generations (Ting et al., 2015). More recent statistics confirm this, as Statista reports that young Digital Natives are the largest group that is represented

on Instagram, with a share of 36.2% of its users falling in this group (Clement, 2019). The main component of Instagram behavior is scrolling through and liking posts in one's feed (Johnson et al., 2019). Next to their own inner circle, users usually follow personally relevant celebrities and influencers, which oftentimes nudges them into the direction of purchase due to the commercial nature of content.

There are different kinds of advertising on Instagram, as described by Johnson et al. (2019). Marketers publish traditional advertisements, that are easily recognizable in ones Instagram feed, or native advertisements, to be discussed in detail in the next section: ads that are designed to resemble an Instagram post by a "friend," as the platform's conventions for user-generated content (UGC) are being followed. If marketers mimic other forms of media content, the advertising content is more likely to be accepted by consumers (Johnson et al., 2019). It has been said that advertising has always been of native nature on Instagram, and that the platform has never attempted to distinguish advertising content from organic content (Carah & Shaul, 2016). Thus, while often being natively integrated into the constant flow of content, Instagram advertisements have the ultimate goal to catch a glance from consumers. Whether or not these native ads are recognized as such, as well as reactions and interpretations of these different advertisements, are likely to differ among consumers. This thesis will explore what content Digital Natives value, both organic and commercial. Their interpretations of different Instagram advertisements will be closely studied to gain more insights in how they make meaning of the advertisements businesses deem fitting for them.

2.3.2. Targeted mobile marketing and native advertising

A large part of social media marketing is mobile marketing, as social media users usually access the platforms via mobile devices (Smith, 2017). Each year, marketers spend more money on mobile advertising: In 2019, 190 million US dollars were spent on mobile marketing, compared to 82 million in 2016. Some even state that mobile marketing is required to effectively reach the younger generations such as young Digital Natives (Smith, 2017). While the informativeness of ads is of importance in traditional digital advertising, some claim it to be of less importance in mobile advertising, possibly due to smaller screens and the consequential need for concise ads. Moreover, where desktop computer users often prevent marketers from using their data to target them with advertisements using adblocking software, mobile marketers are most of the time unaffected by this, as mobile users are a lot less likely to install adblockers than desktop users (Smith, 2017).

What sets mobile marketing apart from other strategies, is the possibility of hyper-context personalized targeting based on consumer data (Tong et al., 2020). Rich, real-time mobile data such as location and the information searching process can be easily collected by platforms such as

Instagram due to the ubiquity of mobile devices, allowing marketers to create personalized strategies that are tailored to an individual consumer's behaviors and needs (Tong et al., 2020; Smith, 2017). With this personal and behavioral data, mobile marketers are able to target users that fit a specific profile. In a way, businesses can "get to know" consumers by analyzing their online data, and in this way profile them and provide them with personalized, relevant product information. Prior marketing research found that personalized messages and targeted advertisements resonate more with consumers, as this content is more in line with their personal interests and preferences and it reduces information search time (Liu & Mattila, 2017; Smith, 2017). Digital Natives are said to desire personalized advertisements tailored to entertain and inform them: "if they perceive personal benefit, this generation of consumers will permit location and data access by marketers" (Smith, 2017, p. 70). This research will explore whether Digital Natives are indeed more willing to trade personal data for a more frictionless social media experience, and whether they appreciate the personalized nature of the advertisements shown to them.

Having discussed the techniques of mobile advertising in detail, one form of it needs to be addressed separately due to its differing nature and different consumer reactions. Advertising efforts and spending are said to be undergoing a shift to formats that resemble user-generated content (UGC): content that resembles posts one's peers would publish (Wojdyski & Evans, 2020). One way of addressing this advertising form is 'native advertising,' which will be used in this thesis. In essence, this form of advertising is covert, meaning that at first sight, it is not obvious to consumers that the content they are exposed to is an advertisement. Sponsored social media posts, labelled with "Sponsored" at the top of the advertisement, and influencer marketing are examples that are visible on Instagram, often designed to resemble posts one's friends might publish. This makes it likely for the Digital Natives under study to be exposed to forms of native advertising, stressing the importance to define and discuss the concept in detail.

While on the one hand native advertisements are occasionally accepted by consumers as they resemble UGC, this ad technique is often seen as deceptive and consumers who are generally skeptic towards advertising feel negatively towards native advertising (Wojdyski & Evans, 2020). The nature of this lies in the finding that initially, native ads are often not recognized as such, resulting in a feeling of deception among consumers. Consumers feel more negatively towards advertisements when they recognize that it did not reach them organically on the platform they are on, whereas when they do not detect the paid nature, they largely perceive it as organic content (Wojdyski & Evans, 2016). This, of course, has a direct effect on their perceptions, meaning-making processes and behaviors. Given this understanding, it is crucial to learn more about the way in which native targeted Instagram ads, generally in the shape of a UGC-resembling post labelled with "Sponsored" at the top, are perceived and interpreted by users. Digital Natives' level of awareness

regarding the practice of native advertising and the way in which the practice makes them feel will derive from this research.

The consumer reactions and interpretations of normal and social media advertising have been thoroughly studied (Kirmani, 1990; Coulter et al., 2001; Sinkovics et al., 2012; Carah & Shaul, 2016; Lee & Hong, 2016; Martins et al., 2019; Chen, 2018; Zarouali et al., 2019; Shareef et al., 2019). However, this does not apply to covert advertising messages' effect on consumers, since in this case, the role of consumer ad recognition in messages plays an important role that needs to be studied more in-depth. Ad recognition occurs when consumers actively detect the persuasive and commercial nature of an advertisement, and when they do, the persuasion knowledge they possess is activated. They then evaluate the advertisement using this knowledge (Wojdynski & Evans, 2020). Recognizing native advertisements often leads to the activation of protective mechanisms, such as increased skepticism and critical processing of the ad, negatively influencing attitudes toward and perceptions of advertisements. Ad recognition thus has influence on consumer attitudes and purchase intent, with a direct effect of the source of the message and the consumer's beliefs about and attitudes towards this source (Wojdynski & Evans, 2020). If consumers recognize the source and deem it credible, they are more receptive of the advertising message. Similar consumer reactions are inclined to occur when they do not recognize the content as advertisement.

Wojdynski and Evans (2020) suggest that "the process of advertising recognition and consequent message judgments shape message outcomes in the form of attitudes, cognitions, and behavior" (p. 5). The way in which Digital Natives make meaning of certain advertisements targeted at them may therefore be influenced by whether or not the advertisement is a native advertisement that takes on the form and shape of a regular Instagram post, and whether or not they recognize these ads as such. By having active conversations with a group of Digital Natives discussing a set of screenshotted advertisements that were targeted at them, this meaning-making process will be critically studied, exploring their level of awareness of native advertising and whether native advertisements yield different reactions than ads that were perceived as more obvious advertisements.

2.3.3. Privacy concerns

While targeted advertising regularly elicits favorable attitudes as it increases personal relevance of advertisements, its drawback lies in the clash with consumers' perceived privacy, which is why the practice is only effective when consumers' privacy needs are met (Tucker, 2014). Informational privacy entails individuals, groups or institutions determining what, when and the extent to which

their information is communicated to others (Zarouali et al., 2019). When consumers become disturbed by the way in which others collect information about them, information privacy concerns arise. The point at which they get disturbed can be analyzed using the privacy calculus model, a theory which suggests that consumers calculate between the loss of their information privacy and the potential gain of disclosing this information when they are being marketed to (Zarouali et al., 2019). The privacy calculus model explains decisions made by consumers based on a calculus that is performed, assessing the outcomes of entrusting personal information in return for a certain personal gain. In other words, the privacy calculus can be used to explain the way in which Digital Natives respond to the privacy concerns they might have regarding data collection on social media, and whether they dedicate more value to their perceived privacy or the possible personal gain they receive from disclosing personal information in certain situations. Findings testing this model in relation to targeted advertising show two scenarios: while some regard targeted advertisements as convenient and aligned with their personal interests, other consumers regard them as creepy and inappropriate (Chen, 2017; Zarouali et al., 2019). In other words, if the benefits of targeted advertising exceed its losses, it is likely to elicit positive consumer feelings and behavior. Likewise, when a targeted advertisement raises information privacy concerns among consumers, the losses outweigh the benefits, with negative consumer feelings and behavior as a result. The latter may prompt a phenomenon called 'personalization reactance:' "a psychological resistance in response to highly distinctive and inappropriate personalized ads" (White et al., 2008, as cited in Zarouali et al., 2019, p. 3), which often results in consumer behavior opposite to what was intended by the marketer. Regarding this, White et al. (2008) found that consumers that perceive a higher utility from the personalized advertising content value the justification of personalization less, while consumers that perceive a low utility of the personalized message are more likely to respond with personalization reactance. The way in which social media users that grew up in the digital era perceive personalized advertising content will yield insights in their very own privacy calculus, about their concerns and how they cope with these concerns and what they tend to value when performing a privacy calculus.

The information privacy concerns described above can be approached with the concept of "privacy paradox:" social media users willingly disclose their personal information while expressing high levels of concern when this information is exposed and/or used (Young & Quan-Haase, 2013). This concept indicates that while on the one hand social media users claim to be concerned about their personal information, they do very little to protect themselves, resulting in a discrepancy between user attitudes and user behaviors (Barth & de Jong, 2017). Although there is some degree of awareness of privacy risks, social media users tend to disclose private data in exchange for retail value and personalized services. Users are, however, said to be engaged in certain privacy protection

strategies in the form of restricting wall post access, photo tags and utilizing the private chatting option (Young & Quan-Haase, 2013). Nevertheless, these protection strategies appear to be mainly of social nature, showing little concern for third parties collecting data in the background for commercial use. When being urged to do so by the platform, users share just enough data to enjoy an optimal social media experience, such as logging in on a website by linking one's Facebook profile.

Young and Quan-Haase (2013) argue that privacy policies of social media platforms are not transparent enough about the use of data for personalized commercial content offers, which results in users normalizing the data collection process: "Data aggregation and targeted advertisement is a normalized part of our society and the price we pay for accessing free services, such as Facebook" (p. 494). This thesis yields insights into the level of awareness of Digital Natives regarding this normalized data-collection process that is intertwined with the social media platforms they use on a daily basis. To facilitate meaningful, educated decision-making about data disclosure, suitable tools and information within devices and platforms should be established according to Barth & de Jong (2017). This way, clearer understandings between data-collecting companies and data-disclosing consumers are able to establish.

While the privacy paradox explains part of social media users' behavior with regards to information disclosure, it has turned out that this behavior may not always be as paradoxical as it seems (Dienlin & Trepte, 2014). When distinguishing between privacy concerns and privacy attitudes, it turns out that the privacy attitudes one has usually do resonate with the actual privacy behavior one carries out. In other words, information-sharing behavior is not always paradoxical; people's attitudes towards privacy and information sharing lead them to act accordingly, while people's privacy concerns may be inconsistent with actual behavior. Moreover, Vitak et al. (2018) note that privacy paradox related behaviors should be attributed to a sense of apathy or cynicism about one's online privacy: despite privacy protection efforts, users of social networking sites suspect that these efforts are most likely insufficient due to, for example, confusing privacy settings, leading them to believe that privacy violations are inevitable. This implies that the paradoxical behavior as described by the privacy paradox can also arise from user skepticism instead of ignorance or indifference. In addition, Xie et al. (2018) found that from a rational fatalist perspective, young people with high levels of fatalistic views on technology are less likely to protect their online privacy, particularly on social media. Their study showed that especially young internet users experience a high level of fatalistic belief in technology, business' ability to protect their privacy and existing laws, demonstrating a lack of trust in the law, businesses and technology in protecting their online privacy. In other words, the lack of privacy protection efforts among young social media users could be explained by their fatalistic perspective on privacy, as they feel like they have no control over the outcome of possible privacy risks, leading them to take more privacy risks: when people are

convinced of a bad outcome, they perceive no benefit from a reduction of risk-taking regarding their online privacy. Studying the way in which young, digitally-oriented social media users perceive online privacy and the way their data is being used to provide them with personalized advertisements will yield insights as to the nature of possible privacy protection behaviors, privacy concerns and privacy attitudes and perspectives.

Evidently, perceived control over personal data is a determining factor for the way in which consumers perceive targeted advertisements, engage in privacy-protection behavior and form privacy attitudes. In conclusion, this thesis will study the perceptions concerning privacy and targeted advertisements among a group of young Digital Natives, who are said to be willing to pay with their personal data for a better mobile experience (Smith, 2017). The way in which targeted mobile advertising and data collection in the background on Instagram are perceived and experienced by Digital Native users will be examined, as well as how these perceptions shape their information privacy concerns, privacy attitudes and privacy-protection behaviors. The theories and theoretical concepts outlined in this framework will function as a guideline for data collection, shaping the interview guide, as well as data analysis and interpretation.

3. Methodology

To answer the research question, in-depth understanding of real world experiences and perceptions of Digital Natives is required. To achieve this, this research relies on a set of qualitative interviews, which will be supplemented by discussion on participant collected advertisements on their personal Instagram.

3.1. Research sample & units of analysis

Ten participants were recruited using convenience sampling, making use of my own network. In order to avoid prior knowledge influencing their perceptions, it was ensured that participants have different academic and professional backgrounds, resulting in a diverse group. The research sample consists of a group young Digital Natives, as described in the previous section. An inclusion criterium therefore is that they are born between 1995 and 2010. In addition, to ensure meaningful insights based on real-time Instagram experiences, another inclusion criterium was that participants should be active on the platform Instagram. All selected participants are Dutch to ensure a consistent sample, simultaneously aiming to study the experiences and perceptions of a group of Dutch users of an international platform run by a large social media company based in the United States. A list with pseudonyms and basic information of the ten interviewees can be seen in table 1. Based on the in-depth interviews, this research aims to provide insights that are applicable to the studied population, the Digital Natives.

Participant's pseudonym	Age	Current or last-finished studies
Walter	25	Bachelor Entrepreneurship at Hogeschool Rotterdam
Nick	18	Currently not enrolled, finished HAVO
Sabrina	21	Bachelor Social Work at de Haagse Hogeschool
Rosalie	23	Premaster psychology at UvA
Martijn	24	Master Aerospace Engineering at TU Delft
Minke	23	Bachelor Human Resources at Tilburg University
Boris	24	Master Fiscal Economy at Erasmus University Rotterdam
Esther	22	Master Accounting and Audit at Erasmus University Rotterdam

Daisy	22	Hotel and Hospitality Management at Hotel Management School Maastricht
Theo	23	Master Media & Business at Erasmus University Rotterdam

Table 1. Interviewees' information and pseudonyms.

3.2. Data collection

Prior to the interviews, the respondents were asked to collect a set of targeted Instagram advertisements by means of taking screenshots: five advertisements they regard as generic, five they think fit themselves really well and five they do not think fit them at all. The ads could be both Instagram Story advertisements and in-feed advertisements, as long as the term "sponsored" is visible above the post, below the name of the publisher. Regarding this, ad recognition as outlined in the theoretical framework is somewhat impacted, as participants were asked to actively collect a set of targeted advertisements. This implies that these Digital Natives were supposed to recognize the advertisements inorganically, even if these can be seen as native ads. Nevertheless, these advertisements may still be qualified as native advertisements based on the design elements that comply with Instagram's standards for user-generated content. Moreover, while the ad recognition aspect is somewhat overruled, the receptiveness towards the advertisements the consumers under study are exposed to can still be influenced by the source of the ad, the level of ad informativeness and the level of ad entertainment as described in the theoretical framework (Wojdynski & Evans, 2020).

The criterium of the "sponsored" label ensured that participants are seeing an actual advertisement that is targeted to them, and not an influencer marketing post that is not necessarily targeted to them. For the collection of the advertisements, participants were provided with criteria to facilitate the selection of these advertisements to ensure their interpretation of the small assignment is correct. For the generic posts, they were supposed to get thoughts such as "everybody gets this ad," or "there is nothing specific about this ad." The advertisements that they think fit them really well should evoke thoughts such as "I like this item or service," "I would buy this item or service" or "I just looked up something like this, I actually need this." Lastly, the advertisements that do not fit them should evoke thoughts such as "I would not buy this (at all)," or "why am I getting this ad?" There was no specific time period dedicated to the collection of the advertisements, as long as they were collected before the actual interview. This is because the algorithm of Instagram generally shows one advertisement for every four posts, in users' feed as well as when browsing

through stories, so collecting the desired set of data can be achieved in a short timeframe (Gesenhues, 2019). The collected screenshots were collected before every interview and were solely used to guide the discussion; not for data analysis.

In-depth qualitative interviews are a suitable way of examining social phenomena and the ways in which individuals make meanings out of these phenomena (Opdenakker, 2006). The way in which Digital Natives perceive and react to targeted advertisements on Instagram is the social phenomenon under study that was examined by semi-structured interviews during which probing questions and active listening were core elements (Hermanowicz, 2002). Semi-structured interviews are the most commonly used in qualitative interviewing methods and encompass interview guides that ensure all desired topics are touched upon in a structured, yet flexible manner (Qu & Dumay, 2011). This method assists in unraveling important and often below-the-surface aspects of social behavior and is seen as the most effective and convenient way of collecting meaningful insights (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The interviews for this thesis were partly conducted face-to-face in a casual setting, to ensure both verbal and non-verbal cues are caught onto and to create a setting in which a natural flowing conversation without any technical errors can take place (Opdenakker, 2006). Due to the coronavirus that has recently impacted our social sphere, a large part of the interviews were conducted through Skype and Zoom, using the video call function to be able to catch onto visual cues. In order to kickstart the interviews and make interviewees feel at ease, as well as to establish rapport, several introducing questions were asked such as “What is your favorite brand on Instagram?” or “Can you tell me about your Instagram persona?” (Qu & Dumay, 2011). At the beginning of each interview and its recording, participants were asked for their consent for the recording. All participants gave their active consent on record, which was included in the transcripts of the interviews.

During the ten interviews, which on average took 54 minutes, the collected sets of advertisements were discussed with the interviewees and motivations for choosing these specific advertisements were investigated. Probing questions were used to learn specific attitudes towards the advertisements and the way in which their data was used to provide them. All the interviews were transcribed with the online tool O Transcribe, after which they were analyzed through a constructivist grounded theory approach.

3.3. Constructivist Grounded Theory approach to data analysis

The collected interview data was analyzed through a constructivist grounded theory approach, meaning that an analysis was generated from the shared experiences of the researcher and participants (Clarke, 2003). Grounded theory entails carefully analyzing social phenomena, from

which forms of theory about social behavior are developed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Understandings obtained from grounded theory research emerge directly from social interactions of the researcher and participants, which is why these understandings are considered to be rich (Clarke, 2003). Grounded theory is an inductive approach to qualitative research, as theory is built from the ground up during an iterative process of data collection, analysis, comparison and interpretation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constructivist grounded theory sets itself apart from other grounded theory approaches by seeing the method as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself; findings are a means of grasping and comprehending a social phenomenon, rather than an objective, static view (Clarke, 2003). In constructivist grounded theory, there is not just one version of reality and results of this method are not a static picture, but an interpretative portrayal of social phenomena. In this way, new forms of theory or ways of explaining and comprehending social phenomena are developed through thoroughly observing the phenomenon in question.

This thesis meticulously examines the ways in which Digital Natives perceive and experience advertisements that are targeted to them on Instagram. A constructivist grounded theory approach to analysis yielded patterns in which Digital Natives construct their own views on reality on the daily used social media platform Instagram and with this, I attempt to explain Digital Natives' social behavior.

3.3.1. Coding

In grounded theory, collected data is examined in a structured way, from which certain categories derive. These categories emerge from the data as an outcome of a constant comparison and analysis of data, in a process called coding. For this process, the tool Atlas.ti was used. Coding is a systematic approach to data processing and analysis that yields comprehensible patterns and meanings that in other ways would not have been found (Boeije, 2010; Schreier, 2014). Being systematic and well organized as a researcher is essential for the trustworthiness of research; for example, one needs to be transparent about how they came to a certain conclusion (Saldaña, 2011). Data was thus segmented and then reassembled with similar fragments, with the ultimate aim of transforming the data into comprehensible and meaningful findings that are able to explain social behavior (Boeije, 2010). The patterns that were detected during the coding process are described in detail in the Results & Discussion section, after which an in-depth interpretation regarding their significance is provided, as well as broader meanings and implications in relation to prior research.

Initially in the coding process, collected data is broken down into relevant fragments of typically one to three words, which are then compared in relation to each other, completing the open coding stage (Boeije, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After this follows the axial coding stage, in

which the importance and relevance of coded elements is assessed. The studied phenomenon is in this stage dis- and reassembled into several pieces of data, that are in turn rebuilt into an intelligible description (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). From this, several categories are generated that need to be exhaustive and mutually exclusive, meaning that the categories cover all the data and they can all be regarded as separate themes (Boeije, 2010). When the researcher ensures that all the data fits in the established categories after the open and axial coding stages, the researcher enters the selective coding stage, in which relationships between the dominant themes are examined. This yields a small number of key themes of the research that serve to explain the studied social behavior of the research participants (Boeije, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). With this method, this thesis structurally examines the way in which Digital Natives perceive targeted advertisements on Instagram. After completing the three coding stages, patterns in their social behavior derived that serve in answering the sub- and research question.

4. Results & Discussion

In this section, the overarching themes that were found in the process of data analysis are presented and discussed in relation to each other and to the defined theoretical framework. To answer the research question, it appears that we need to look at four different themes that facilitate grasping the different ways in which Digital Natives experience targeted advertisements on social media: *Accepting targeting & valuing convenience; Instagram as a mysterious, powerful consumer influencer; Attempting to hold onto consumer power and agency; Low trust in Instagram, data collection and targeting.*

While the three coding stages yielded four different themes that are all able to explain the way in which Digital Natives make meaning of the social media advertisements targeted at them, these themes were not equally divided over the participants, nor did only one occur per participant. In multiple instances, participants contradicted themselves in their responses, resulting in numerous nuances to these themes that altogether explain the ways in which Digital Natives perceive targeted social media advertisements. The four themes will be reported and illustrated by linked categories or axial codes, examples of open codes and literal quotes from the interviews, and iteratively compared to each other to highlight nuances to each theme. Ultimately, these themes and nuances will answer the research question of this thesis: *How do Digital Natives perceive targeted advertising on social media?*

4.1. First theme – “If they use my data to provide me with relevant content that matches my preferences and interests, win-win, right?”

Within the first theme, *Accepting targeting and valuing convenience*, a clear positive attitude towards targeted Instagram advertising was expressed, in which these advertisements and the preceding data collection provide perceived value for the studied Digital Natives during their daily Instagram use. A large proportion of the Digital Natives under study showed clear indicators of acceptance and appreciation, showing no concerns about data collection and targeting and perceiving it as convenient and expressing a positive attitude towards targeted advertising.

4.1.1. Perceiving data collection and targeting as convenient & No concerns about data collection and targeting

First of all, the Digital Natives under study tend to perceive data collection and targeting as convenient. Within this pattern, participants value some sort of identification with advertisements

that gives them perceived benefit, which for them is an incentive to agree with the sharing of personal information. Perfectly illustrating this pattern, one of the participants noted: "I don't worry about what they know about me. If they use it to provide me with relevant content that matches my preferences and interests, win-win, right?" (Walter). This participant deems Instagram able to know enough about him to provide him with advertisements that interest him and is actively willing to give them this information in return for personally relevant ads. In this perspective, data collection and targeting are clearly seen as useful and facilitating convenience, and no information privacy concerns as described by Zarouali et al. (2019) were present in the answers given that supported this pattern. This implies that in these instances, the calculated benefits of data disclosure outweigh the losses, resulting in a positive outcome of the privacy calculus model and in turn, favorable consumer attitudes and behavior such as clicking on advertisements.

Moreover, a number of participants showed that they are indeed willing to permit location and data access by marketers in return for a form of perceived personal benefit, in this case relevant advertisements or a reduction of certain efforts (Smith, 2017). A practical example that illustrates the latter is the fact that six of the participants regard logging into other platforms with their Facebook account as convenient, some of them explicitly mentioning being aware of Facebook sharing their data with these other platforms:

The only reason I sign into other platforms with Facebook is because otherwise, I have to manually create an account. Then I receive a confirmation email, I have to click on a link, create a password, save the password somewhere. It's just so easy to log in with Facebook, especially when you need a platform for one-time use. So it's mainly laziness. (Boris)

This implies that the convenience of this particular affordance outweighs the perceived risk of information sharing with third party platforms, implying an absence of concerns. A factor that plays a crucial role in this is self-proclaimed laziness, as the majority of participants reported that this is their main motivation to link their Facebook profile or to accept cookies: creating a separate profile or manually adjusting cookie settings simply is too much effort. From this, it is evident that the studied Digital Natives relate the Facebook-linking affordance provided by platforms they use to their sense of self, as it contributes to their own perceived "laziness." This reinforces the mutual shaping process as described by Boczkowski (1999), in which technological affordances shape social phenomena, as well as confirms the influence of social media on the identity-shaping process as described by Montgomery, as the use of social media contributes to the way in which the studied users define themselves (2015). Furthermore, Facebook-linkers stated things like "Facebook already knows this much about me" (Boris) and "one more app linked to my Facebook won't do any more harm"

(Theo), hinting at some level of skepticism, a pattern that will be discussed when elaborating on the fourth theme.

4.1.2. Positive attitude towards targeted ads

Within the theme of *accepting targeting and valuing convenience*, personalized advertising messages appear to resonate more with consumers, as predicted in the theoretical framework: multiple participants stated that these advertising messages are the ones that match their interests and evoke positive attitudes (Liu & Mattila, 2017; Smith, 2017):

I was always interested in gadgets. (...) I know that every year, a new version drops. Advertisements about that are the ones that appeal to me the most, the ones with new gadgets. (Martijn)

When I'm on the internet looking for a surfboard and I get a lot of ads about that after, well that's fine because apparently, they know I want a surfboard and through these ads, I might come across stuff that is relevant for me. I prefer seeing nice things that appeal to me related to that surfboard, rather than seeing something random that doesn't interest me. (Walter)

These findings indicate that personalized advertising content appears to be resonating with the studied consumers, as during the discussion of their screenshotted advertisements they actively expressed appreciation and specifically remembered the ads that they perceived as well-personalized. This confirms previous conclusions regarding the resonance of personalized advertising that proposed a positive effect of personalization on ad resonance (Liu & Mattila, 2017; Smith, 2017).

While a number of participants clearly showed a positive attitude towards relevant Instagram advertisements, it appears that the studied Digital Natives adopt other ad value indicators than identified in the theoretical framework. Participants indicated that for them, liking an ad is not the result of the hedonic factor entertainment, as proposed by Shareef et al. (2015) and Smith (2017), as none of the participants mentioned being entertained by the ads they liked, or seeing entertainment as a general value indicator for ad liking. Another factor that appears to be less important than predicted to Digital Natives is ad informativeness. A small number of respondents seemed to value informativeness, highlighting that the ad needs to clearly show the product and that they desire a way of direct information retrieval such as the "click to shop" option Instagram offers. However, the interviews indicated that ad informativeness nor ad entertainment are the determining factors for ad

liking as predicted by previous research (Shareef et al., 2019; Lee & Hong, 2016; Smith, 2017; Ting et al., 2015). The predominant determining factors that derived from the interviews for Digital Natives' ad liking consist of whether or not they like the advertised product, having a positive brand association, having a personal affinity with the subject of the advertisement and the way in which the advertisement looks:

It's not often when I see an ad I like, that I think "oh, this is a really good advertisement."
Most of the time I just like the product. (Esther)

I like this BaliBody ad because I get a positive association, because everything is so tropical and warm. Warm weather, the beach, tanned people. So I just have a positive brand association. Getting this ad is nice; even though the picture isn't that special, the thoughts I get when seeing this brand are. (Minke)

The tax authorities (Belastingdienst) also target me. I follow some of the Big Four companies and I study fiscal economics, so they probably got to me that way. This ad is really relevant for me, and I like it, I can appreciate this. (Boris)

In this ad I like the whole aesthetic. Nice filter, pretty model. I wouldn't necessarily wear this, but I really like the picture. If this girl would have been an influencer, I would go and follow her. It's just a really cute picture that portrays an appealing lifestyle. (Rosalie)

In the first quote, Esther stresses that the advertised product is the determining factor for ad liking, along with four other participants that mentioned liking the product when asking them why they liked specific advertisements. In the second quote, Minke stresses a "positive brand association" as the reason for liking the ad, giving her special feelings despite the ad not visually standing out. Next to Minke, five other participants reported associating their positive brand association with liking an ad. Boris, along with four other participants, points out that a preexisting personal affinity with the advertised product, service or brand is important. He stresses that the topic of the ad relates to his studies and career aspirations and evidently appreciates that Instagram targets him with ads that reinforce his sense of self. Together with five other participants, Rosalie expresses that ads can also function as inspiration, as for the specific advertisement she talks about "it's just a really cute picture that portrays an appealing lifestyle," stressing that she would not necessarily buy the advertised product but that she appreciates and identifies with the lifestyle the picture portrays. These examples illustrate that there are multiple different motivations to like an advertisement among the

studied group of Digital Natives, that cannot be pinned down to solely getting information from an advertisement or simply being entertained by an advertisement as defined in previous research (Shareef et al., 2019; Lee & Hong, 2016; Smith, 2017; Ting et al., 2015).

These participants indicate that ad likeability is very much linked to personal associations and preferences that where possible, they link to parts of themselves, causing some kind of identification with certain ads. Moreover, they point out that there are different dimensions about ads to like such as just the product, or instead of the product, the portrayed lifestyle that is perceived by consumers. That being said, these responses derived from a discussion of the specific screenshotted advertisements the participants collected for the interviews. When asking them what they generally value in advertisements, the predominant responses were that the ad design needs to grab their attention and that they need to like the product in order to like the advertisement. These findings imply the context-dependent nature of perceptions of ad likeability and that while ad informativeness is something Digital Natives moderately value, more personal factors such as product and brand preferences play a more crucial role in ad liking. This indicates that in mobile advertising, possibly due to the smaller screens, informativeness is indeed not of equal importance as in traditional advertising, and other factors are more determining (Smith, 2017).

It should be noted that this positive, accepting attitude towards targeted social media advertising mainly occurred when discussing the set of personally fitting ads, and that this attitude was mostly absent during the discussion of the generic and non-fitting ads. This shows that in order to answer the research question, we need to take these nuances and context-dependence of the four themes into consideration. Together, these themes help explain the perceptions and experiences of the studied Digital Natives regarding targeted social media advertising.

4.2. Second theme – “Instagram knows my interests and what I prefer to see. Does that mean they know me?”

From the second main theme, *Instagram as a mysterious, powerful consumer influencer*, it becomes clear that not all studied Digital Natives feel comfortable with targeted advertising and data collection processes, and that they feel Instagram is quite a powerful platform that knows things about them and is able to influence their consumer- and other online and offline behaviors. Three patterns that make up this overarching theme derived from the coding process that explain the way in which the studied Digital Natives experience the way in which Instagram collects their data and utilizes it for targeted advertising.

4.2.1. Feeling like Instagram knows them & Feelings of uncertainty about data collection and targeting

Firstly, within this theme, participants reported that they feel like Instagram knows them on different levels, such as their interests, demographics or that Instagram partly knows them as a person. As the defined theoretical framework states, Instagram and businesses using its advertising platform are said to be able to “get to know” consumers by collecting, using and analyzing their online data, profile them and target them with personalized advertising content (Smith, 2017). According to the studied Digital Natives, this is partly true. While just two participants literally stated that Instagram can profile them like the defined theoretical framework states, nine out of ten reported that they think Instagram knows their interests and half of them thinks the platform “partly knows them.” They perceive that Instagram knows quite a lot, based on a discussion about the advertisements they collected for the interview:

Well, I think they use my Facebook data, so they know my full name, where I worked, what I studied, where I live and have lived, that I travel a lot, what music I like, that I like watching drag races and other kind of shows... What I search for... I don't actually know if Instagram can see what I search for online. Probably. Then all the locations of my Instagram pictures, where I've been, maybe even where I live...? (Theo)

I think they can estimate my age and gender based solely on what profiles I follow. I think they can discover a lot about your interests, based on brands and celebrities you follow. Or my sport, they can discover that too. So, I think Instagram knows a lot of my interests. (Esther)

Yeah, I think Instagram kind of knows me and shows me the ads I get because I often click on stuff like that. So, I think they do track that or something, so the brands I search for and the ones I follow, there probably is an entire database about that. One that companies can get ahold of or something, I don't really know how that works. But I do think Instagram knows me quite well. I notice that in the discover page, how well they know me. If you click on certain people or brands, you see a lot of that when you refresh the page. So I do consciously notice that they are invested in what I want to see, also in my feed. And that reflects in the sponsored posts you get. (Rosalie)

Theo thus thinks Instagram knows his demographics, his interests, his search behavior and his different locations based on his Facebook data and Instagram behavior, while Esther claims that the platform knows her demographics and interests based on solely her Instagram behavior. Rosalie stresses the Instagram explore page as representative of what the platform collects and knows about her, being that what she clicks on and follows is what she likes to see, and suspects an entire database exists that companies have access to. Multiple interview answers, of which these are clear examples, imply that Digital Natives are aware of Instagram and partnering businesses knowing things about them, however the way in which they know and utilize it is perceived differently.

What also differs among the studied Digital Natives is the perceived amount and depth of personal information collected and used by Instagram. As mentioned, most participants did not adopt only one theme or pattern in interpreting and discussing their exposure to targeted Instagram advertisements; the same goes for this perceived amount and depth of information collection. Interestingly, when discussing the set of personally fitting advertisements with each participant, they admitted to thinking that Instagram knows them or knows certain information about them, albeit on a different level with every participant, however when discussing the sets of generic and not fitting ads, participants claimed that Instagram does not actually know them, or misinterprets them. The nature of this perception seems to be located in the context in which it is discussed, in this case meaning the different sets of categorized advertisements: only when participants feel like they can identify with an advertisement, it evokes the feeling that Instagram knows their interests or other personal information. In contrast, while the vast majority of participants reported regularly thinking that Instagram knows their interests, seventy percent also claimed that Instagram does not know them as a person and sixty percent reports that Instagram occasionally misinterprets them. This discrepancy between answers and the overlap in participants giving those answers support the context-dependent perceptions of the extent to which Instagram knows them as a person. These different reactions are illustrated below by the same participants that provided the examples of Instagram assumingly knowing them, stressing the discrepancy:

I think that they certainly know stuff, but that they can also completely get it wrong. However, I don't think companies do that themselves, maybe partly, I think mainly Instagram. Things they know about me can also be misleading. Sometimes you google something you don't like, for instance. So, Instagram doesn't necessarily do it wrong, I think that's just the risk of online advertising. (Theo)

Hmm... Well, I still don't think they know ME, but I do think they know certain things about me, such as my internet behavior. What I look for, what I do on websites. They probably know that. (Esther)

So, while the feeling that Instagram knows them fits within the theme of *Instagram as a mysterious, powerful consumer influencer*, it is clear that this feeling is context-dependent and mostly occurs when discussing advertisements that they identify with, and that the observed feelings of uncertainty about data collection and targeting belong there as well. There seems to be some degree of uncertainty among the studied group of Digital Natives as to what Instagram does and does not know, and how the platform gains insight in this personal information. This is exactly what Young and Quan-Haase (2013) argue: there is a lack of transparency in the privacy policies of social media platforms, and it appears to reflect in the perceptions of the studied Digital Natives. So, in order to establish clearer understandings between data-collecting companies and data-disclosing consumers, more transparency on behalf of social media companies is evidently needed.

4.2.2. Perceiving oneself as influenceable by Instagram ads

Another aspect belonging to the second theme is that part of the participants perceive themselves as influenceable by Instagram advertisements, which makes Instagram powerful in their eyes: "I wouldn't say that I'm influenced by ads in terms of style. My behavior on the other hand, is influenceable as I move towards the purchasing stage because of those ads" (Daisy). Regarding influenceability, previous research states that next to their own inner circle, users normally follow personally relevant celebrities and influencers, of which the commercial content supposedly nudges them towards a purchase (Johnson et al., 2019). Eight out of ten participants indeed reported to be following either personally relevant celebrities or influencers, implying that next to involuntarily being exposed to targeted advertisements, they are exposed to commercial content of Instagram users they purposely followed.

Considering influenceability, there are different levels of action one can take following the exposure to an advertisement. Half of the participants admitted to regularly clicking on advertisements they like while scrolling through their Instagram feed; four reported occasional curiosity as a result of an advertisement, mostly with personally fitting ads; six stated that they are usually triggered when seeing some form of discount in an advertisement regardless of whether or not the ad is personally fitting and four specified that an ad can trigger them because of a preexisting affinity, automatically rating it as personally fitting ads. Three participants, all females, reported that their purchases are moderately to very influenceable by the ads they encounter on Instagram,

opposed to all five male participants, who stated that their purchases are not influenceable by social media advertising. In addition, four participants suspect themselves of having made one or two in-store purchases or having made a postponed, subconscious purchase as a result of a relevant Instagram ad. This somewhat overlaps with prior findings stating that a vast majority of Digital Natives tend to base in-store purchase decisions on ads they were exposed to on their mobile device and implies that targeted Instagram advertisements do influence the behavior of Digital Natives, albeit with the right trigger (Smith, 2017). It should be noted, however, that seven out of ten participants reported never having consciously purchased anything as a result from an advertisement, though part of these “resistant” participants are often triggered to click on an ad for more information when they find it a relevant ad.

Furthermore, one of the participants stressed that when contemplating purchasing a product she saw in an Instagram advertisement, she would not spend a lot of money on this transaction, confirming the findings of several marketing studies stating that transactions made by young Digital Natives are relatively low (Fromm, 2018). This was complemented by two other participants, who stated that they regularly come across advertisements containing products they cannot afford, indicating their relatively low budget from which they are unlikely to make large transactions.

This ad was about some exclusive sports facility. I was like “why do I get this?” because I don’t think this is something you target at students; they don’t have a lot of money.
(Minke)

This comment, next to supporting the previously made point, contains an identification aspect that multiple participants used: being a student, mentioned by six participants, of which four mentioned thinking that Instagram knows this specific demographic and uses it for targeting. From the abovementioned quote, it is evident that one of them, Minke, used this line of thought to explain why she thought an ad was badly targeted at her, implying that Instagram got it wrong: if Instagram knows she is a student, why would she be targeted with an expensive product? Another part that stood out in one of the interviews was that as a result of seeing one of the ads that he categorized as not fitting, Martijn wondered “Maybe this is something for me?” while previously pointing out that the specific clothing brand was not something he would normally buy. The point here is that after encountering a targeted advertisement, he starts to think that Instagram might know what he likes, even if it is something that he did not previously like or have affinity with; seemingly shaping his lifestyle or taste in clothing a little bit. Regarding this, Montgomery (2015) states that social media platforms and data collection are intertwined with the process of self-discovery of younger users, having a part in shaping this process; something that seems to be experienced by one of the studied

Digital Natives here. Despite this, it seems that the possible shaping that took place was subconscious, as Martijn's overall perception of Instagram collecting his information is that he is a number, not a knowable person, and the information the platform collects about him ticks certain boxes which causes certain advertisements to show in his feed.

Concerning the degree to which the studied Digital Natives perceive themselves as influenceable, one of the participants noted: "However, I think regarding clothes, something I regularly order online, I would rather buy something I see in my friends' Instagram posts than in an ad or an influencer's post" (Esther). Marketing research has pointed out that the buyer decisions of young Digital Natives are apt to be influenced by peers, especially through social media, which is confirmed by Esther in this comment: regarding this specific product category, she is less likely to buy from an advertisement than from one of her peers (Fromm, 2018).

All in all, while approximately half of the group of studied Digital Natives perceives themselves as influenceable by targeted Instagram advertisements on different levels ranging from clicking for more information to purchasing, it seems that overall, there needs to be an existing affinity with the advertised product, service or brand. This is based on the fact that except for the discount trigger, all other reported triggers are solely evident in the advertisements that the participants categorize as personally fitting, implying that only if advertisements are actually relevant, Digital Natives could be an effective group to target, which, based on the ten interviews, appears to be harder than marketing research predicts.

4.3. Third theme – "I figured them out, but I think they will never figure me out completely."

Within the third theme grasping the way in which Digital Natives perceive targeted advertisements on social media, the studied Digital Natives express resistance towards these targeted Instagram advertisements by *attempting to hold onto consumer power and agency*. In this theme, patterns were found in which participants show awareness of data collection and targeting and actively engage in protecting this data. They firmly believe that Instagram does not and cannot know them as a person, feel resistant to the ads they are targeted with and express criticism and quite some negativity towards the practices of advertising and targeting.

4.3.1. Awareness of data collection and targeting

This theme starts with a pattern of awareness of both data collection and targeting. During the discussion of the screenshotted Instagram advertisements, the interviewees actively attempted to

comprehend the process of targeting, tracing back the ways in which Instagram and businesses had targeted them with these ads. Some even literally called targeting traceable:

Actually I had no cases of “why am I getting this?,” it’s always quite traceable. They know I live in Rotterdam; they can target me because Mother’s Day is approaching... So yeah, they do know how to target people. (Boris)

Only one of the participants, Walter, has a marketing background as he has got his own small business and therefore has been on the advertiser-side of targeting. Daisy possesses some marketing knowledge, having followed some courses during her education. The rest have little or no advertising knowledge: three have published a few ads themselves for a side-job or committee, while the rest has never been “backstage” on the advertiser platform. The more experienced advertiser, Walter, expressed a high level of confidence in tracing back the targeted advertisements he screenshotted, while Nick, who expressed a negative attitude towards advertisements in general, explicitly stated that he is not confident with tracing them back, as he generally reported perceiving them as irrelevant.

I’m in their retargeting group. I’ve been on their website, so that’s why they show me this advertisement. They can just select that when setting up the targeting. (Walter)

With most ads, I’m like “why am I getting this? This does not interest me. (Nick)

The other participants seemed to feel moderately confident about tracing back targeted advertisements, albeit with different responses: all of the participants mentioned search behavior targeting as a possible trace, a majority stressed targeting based on demographics and/or Instagram behavior such as following and liking and a few mentioned the Instagram explore page being related to targeting, as well as targeting based on cookies, Facebook data and random targeting.

With Instagram targeting I think it’s just your interests, which they get out of what you do on the explore page, the fact that I’m 24 years old, male, living in Rotterdam, but I think they mainly know that purely because of what I watch on the explore page and what I sometimes click on. However, I don’t think Facebook and Instagram target me immediately after googling jogging shoes. At least it hasn’t caught my attention yet. (Boris)

Sometimes I'm like "wow, did they know this?" but I'm not really surprised anymore. I think that a few years ago I would have been, but by now everyone knows that all your data is being spread around by everything and everyone. So no, not surprised anymore. It's more that I think "yes, that's about right, probably linked to this and this," and then I try to trace it back and think "right, I visited that website" or watched something on YouTube. For example, right now I'm doing a lot of yoga through YouTube, and then I get sporty ads on Instagram, things like that." (Minke)

While Boris lays focus on the Instagram explore page being determining for data collection and targeting, Minke traces it back to her online behavior outside of Instagram. Moreover, with this quote Minke implies that she is regularly attentive to the advertisements targeted at her on Instagram, while during his interview Boris mentioned habitually scrolling past advertisements. All of this indicates that while generally being on the same page about targeting and data collection awareness, the studied Digital Natives have differing perceptions of the way in which Instagram and businesses target them, as well as differing levels of attentiveness towards it. In conclusion, despite the normalized nature of data collection in social media usage, the studied Digital Natives showed clear signs of awareness, albeit in a somewhat cultivated setting; the majority of participants noted that normally, when scrolling through their Instagram feed, they do not actually pay attention to targeting and the data that is needed for this. Nevertheless, they appear to be generally aware of and attentive to data collection in situations in which a privacy calculus can be carried out, for instance when linking one's Facebook profile or when accepting cookies (Zarouali et al., 2019).

Despite the different perceptions of targeting, the confidence that participants show within this pattern is slightly contradictive to the coexisting feelings of uncertainty about data collection and targeting, as within the latter, participants expressed that they are unsure or confused about what data is collected and used for targeting. However, the fact that the studied Digital Natives have different ways of tracing back targeting despite this apparent confidence shows that their perceived awareness might be lower in reality, as only Walter was entirely sure about how he is being targeted with Instagram advertisements, while the others were predominantly speculating because they were asked to do so for the interview. These insecurities and speculations could be diminished by more transparency regarding data aggregation on behalf of social media companies, as proposed by Young and Quan-Haase (2013) and Barth & De Jong (2017).

4.3.2. Active data protection

Being generally aware of data collection and targeting, a pattern that was detected in the behavior of some of the studied Digital Natives was active data protection: efforts to disclose as little data as possible. This finding indicates that the studied Digital Natives regularly face a privacy calculus with a negative outcome, in which the benefits of disclosing data do not outweigh the perceived losses (Zarouali et al., 2019). The most frequently used ways of protecting personal information were selectively disclosing information, such as withholding one's phone number, attempting to avoid cookies by unchecking some boxes where possible or going to another website when not possible, and having separate email addresses and accounts for particular commercial and non-commercial purposes.

I disclose my age all the time, however I wouldn't easily allow location tracking. Maybe if you're active on the platform in that moment, however not in the background. I am careful with that. (Esther)

Next to Esther, six other participants used at least one of these data protection strategies, indicating that to a certain extent, young social media users care about their personal data and are willing to make an effort to prevent disclosure. That being said, during the interviews it became clear that sometimes, where participants restrain from linking their Facebook profile to other platforms, cookies are accepted easily, which raises the question how concerned they actually are about their privacy, or how aware they are of the different ways of data collection.

This can be approached by the Facebook-linking example. While six of the participants admitted regularly linking their Facebook profile to a third party platform, knowing the risk of data-sharing, there is some nuance to this. First of all, when considering linking one's Facebook and therefore disclosing data, four participants adopt the requirement of having to trust the platform or ensure that they will use the platform more often.

If it's something I'm going to use more often, or just something that really interests me, I would link my Facebook profile to another platform. However, if it's something I will just use once, I prefer not to. (Nick)

Nick's argument implies that while desiring the convenience of this affordance, he is still concerned about his personal information, being a typical case of the privacy paradox as described by Young and Quan-Haase (2013). Next to this, two of the six Facebook-linkers stressed that if possible, they uncheck some data-sharing boxes such as their contact list, engaging in some kind of data-protection effort despite desiring convenience.

Yes, I do that a lot, linking my Facebook. I do look at what data they want to use; I prefer them not using my list of friends, for instance.” (Sabrina)

These two participants thus do care about third parties collecting particular data, something Young and Quan-Haase (2013) state does not often occur when social media users disclose data in return for personal convenience. Still, these two people are, in a way, typical examples of the described privacy paradox, as they disclose just enough personal information to enjoy an optimal user experience. They did, however, not share the same level of concern as the remaining four participants, who rarely or never link their Facebook profile to other platforms for the sake of keeping their data to as little platforms as possible: two of the participants actively protect their data at the cost of convenience.

I prefer not to link my Facebook profile. For example, in Wordfeud you can login with Facebook, but I prefer creating a separate account with my email address because Facebook tracks so much and the apps I would log into could also start tracking my data. So, I try to separate my accounts as much as possible, however it does bother me that Facebook now owns Instagram and WhatsApp. (Martijn)

This pattern can be concluded in a sense that where possible, the studied Digital Natives that are concerned about disclosing their data always perform a privacy calculus that results in protection efforts on different levels by either giving up convenience completely, unchecking particular boxes and still choosing convenience or choosing to trust particular platforms that, for example, are suitable for frequent usage. In a way, the affordances of Facebook and Instagram, such as the profile-linking option, shape the level of caution users develop while using the platform, portraying a form of the mutual shaping process in which technological developments and affordances are able to shape social processes (Boczkowski, 1999; Boczkowski et al., 2016). By developing a sense of self-awareness of the consequences of engaging with certain affordances, these social media platforms have shaped the way in which data-conscious users are active on the platform; although this might possibly be an effect that was unintended by Facebook and Instagram as it has led users to refrain from using certain affordances.

4.3.3. Feeling like Instagram does not or cannot know them

A third pattern that was detected within the theme of preserving consumer agency is the feeling that, opposed to the context-dependent feeling that Instagram knows its users, Instagram does not or cannot know them. As mentioned, participants gave rather contradictory responses regarding this topic, occasionally admitting thinking Instagram does know their interests when discussing personally relevant ads but does not know “them” and that the platform often misinterprets them. This was the predominant perception: Instagram can discover certain facts, behaviors and interests of users, however knowing them as a person is beyond their powers. One participant stated “One click doesn’t define my interests; if I google baby nutrition once, because my colleague is pregnant, that certainly does not mean I want to receive a baby nutrition ad thirty times” (Daisy). Moreover, Martijn contributes by saying:

This is some kind of giant boombox that costs 900 euros. I wouldn’t know why I need this. I already have a speaker and I never looked this brand up. So this is either generic or random, or they think I find this interesting. The ad also says “If you can’t go to a festival, the festival needs to come to you.” If they really knew me, they would know I don’t like festivals. So yeah, I wouldn’t know how this ad relates to me at all. (Martijn)

Here Martijn is confused about getting a specific advertisement, not being able to identify with it as the concerning brand never occurred in his search queries and the message of the ad does not resonate with him at all because he dislikes festivals. In his opinion, Instagram thus does not know him as a person, which he emphasizes by saying the following:

No, I don’t think Instagram knows me as a person. I think they just profiled me, checking some boxes, and that these checks correspond with certain ads. And then they have this big tub of ads that fits with my profile that I get on my feed. I’m a number, I’m 100% sure of that, also for the companies that target me. (Martijn)

The perception that he is “a number” corresponds with Walter’s perception, who states “I think Instagram doses people in groups of a hundred thousand and draws an average from that,” implying that the platform treats consumers as groups and does not try to “get to know” them on an individual level. Next to Martijn and Walter, three other participants reported feeling part of a larger group that is being targeted with certain personally irrelevant ads, however these three participants reported it only when discussing the ads that they could not identify with, questioning why they were targeted with it. This, once again, stresses the context-dependent perceptions of the studied Digital Natives.

Most of the studied Digital Natives thus do not believe that Instagram knows them on a deeper level, as a person, and while getting certain behavior and interests right from time to time, the platform can also misinterpret them based on their behavior. One Google query does not define what a person likes, just like what posts a person likes on Instagram and buys online does not determine their personality and complete preferences.

I wouldn't say they know me, as sometimes you google things that don't correspond with your interests at all. And I think that what you publish and the way you act on social media is different from who you are in real life. So of course, there are certain touchpoints and basics they can unravel about you; habits, studies. But your complete identity and the way you interact with people, well they can read your comments, but all-in all I don't think that's the complete picture. Our digital self isn't the same as our offline self, how we are as a person. So no, I don't think they really know me. (Theo)

Theo touches upon identity performance on social media, and states that the way in which we present ourselves and act online does not fully correspond with one's true personality, and that is why Instagram cannot know someone's complete personality – simply because identity-performing users do not fully disclose it. This implies that the act of identity performance as described by Montgomery (2015) causes the perceived disability of Instagram to really “get to know” its users. This research thus shows that, next to assessing the personal information Instagram unravels of its users as mainly superficial and blaming the platform of regularly misinterpreting certain behaviors, Digital Natives experience that their own incomplete or inaccurate identity performance can contribute to the existing perception that Instagram does not know or cannot get to know its users in-depth. Regarding Instagram as part of one's identity, Theo also noted:

Well, I know that I used to value Instagram a lot in the past, wanting to share certain things that made me feel like I was sharing my identity. [...] I was 16/17 then, so it's been a while. How Instagram is part of my life right now, I still like it, but I've noticed that my use of it has become more habitual. (Theo)

Identity shaping is thus partly facilitated by Instagram at a younger age, as mentioned by Fromm (2019) and the platform is said to have a say in shaping this identity. Together with the previous comment, Theo implies that at least for him, Instagram is not the identity-sharing platform it used to be, and that even if it still was, one's identity performance is never fully in line with how they really are as a person.

4.3.4. Perceiving oneself as resistant to Instagram ads

Another way in which the studied Digital Natives showed holding on to their own agency is the way in which they appear to perceive themselves as resistant to forms of social media advertising. Seventy percent of the studied group of Digital Natives claim that despite appreciating personalized advertising content, their purchases are not influenced by any form of Instagram advertising, opposing Smith (2017), who claims that because they spend 70% of their time on mobile messaging and social apps, they are highly susceptible to mobile advertising.

Of course, I sometimes click on "more information," but I have never... Or maybe one single time... No, as far as I remember I have never actually bought something because of an advertisement. (Walter)

While the majority of the studied group of Digital Natives thinks of themselves as resistant to targeted Instagram advertisements in terms of purchasing behavior, half of them admitted to regularly clicking on an advertisement, indicating that they are not one hundred percent resistant: ads still have the power to make them interested or curious.

In addition to their purchasing behavior, something that was often noted during the interviews is that advertisements do not affect their emotions or feelings.

You know, I'm not really bothered by seeing an ad I dislike. I got one of BP, well I really didn't care about that, but I wasn't bothered or anything. Whatever. Then I scroll on and see ads with jewelry, which I really like, and I can get a little excited from that. (Rosalie)

As one of three exceptions, Daisy admits to perceiving herself as influenceable in terms of purchasing behavior, however not on a deeper, emotional level:

It's not that the ads I get to see determine what I do. I do get triggered to purchase stuff, but yeah, I just like online shopping. So yes, my purchases are influenceable, however it doesn't go deeper than that. (Daisy)

Daisy thus implies that while regularly purchasing something she saw in an online advertisement, this is the only manner in which these advertisements influence her; her emotions and sense of self are left untouched by personalized advertising. This sense of emotional unaffectedness was often the

case when discussing the general set of advertisements and the unappealing set of advertisements, while some participants stated that likeable advertisements occasionally evoked feelings of excitement and/or curiosity. It would thus be narrowminded to conclude that every participant that mentioned not feeling anything with certain ads is completely emotionally unaffected by Instagram advertising; it clearly depends on whether or not someone likes an advertisement.

While some participants reported occasional feelings of excitement, the other side of feeling emotions as a result of being exposed to advertisements is where social media users perceive these in a negative manner. This was reported quite frequently: seven out of ten participants reported occasionally feeling annoyed by either an advertisement in itself or its showing frequency, including generally negative Martijn: "I think I have seen this advertisement twenty times in the past two weeks. So, it made me feel a little aggressive, like damn, I really don't want to see this" (Martijn). From the interviews, it is evident that when asking the studied Digital Natives a general question about the influence of targeted advertisements on their emotions, they report less perceived influence than when discussing the specific sets of screenshotted advertisements; even though they initially thought they are emotionally unaffected by ads, it turns out that this influence is at times greater than they anticipated.

Lastly, next to consumer behavior and emotions, targeted social media advertising is said to influence young users' identity shaping and the way they see themselves (Montgomery, 2015). Based on the interviews, however, it became clear that the studied Digital Natives do not regard Instagram and the content they are exposed to as influential on their sense of self: they see their personalized content as something that is separate from their personality or identity, more as suggestions or inspiration. The studied Digital Natives did not perceive any kind of "persona" being shaped and presented by Instagram that could possibly influence their behavior or the way in which they see themselves:

I wouldn't say Instagram influences how I see myself. I completely distance myself from that. (Walter)

I don't think it goes as far as influencing how I see myself and my offline behavior. Not even really my online behavior. I think that's because I scroll through these ads so fast, I don't give them the change. The ads I get don't make me think about the way I see myself or anything. (Boris)

As mentioned, a total of six participants reported using ads as inspiration. They all claimed not being affected by ads in terms of their sense of self, implying that the studied Digital Natives feel a certain

kind of agency to use the advertising content they are exposed to in a way they desire, or to not use it at all. So, while Montgomery (2015) claims that the personalized advertising content shown to young social media users facilitates the shaping of their identity, this research seems to suggest that this is not necessarily the case, and that Digital Natives mostly feel like they are able to distance oneself from it and use it in a way they desire. However, while Minke also reports using ads as lifestyle inspiration and mostly thinks it does not affect her on a deeper level, she still notes:

Well, I do think some ads are inspiration for my style in clothing. But in general, I think there is not much influence. I don't really dwell on the ads I'm getting; I don't mind them. I use Instagram because I really like to watch content, and for instance when I see a skinny girl in an advertisement, that doesn't affect me or make me insecure. I don't think that what I get to see on Instagram influences me offline. Ads do contain all this materialistic stuff most of the time; maybe they make me more materialistic. That could be "the thing" of our generation. Maybe I'm being influenced offline by that. I do like pretty pictures and stuff, maybe I want everything offline to look pretty as well. Something like that. But my buying behavior is unaffected by ads. (Minke E)

Clearly, while her self-confidence is not affected by what she sees on Instagram or what Instagram deems relevant for her, she is open to the thought that the materialistic nature of the advertising content she is exposed to influences her ways of thinking in a sense that ads make her and her preferences more materialistic. She also implies that this materialism could be a generational trait, however this was not reciprocated by the other nine participants. Still, what Minke notes implies that Montgomery's (2015) identity-shaping claim holds value in the sense that when actively thinking about the way in which one is targeted with social media advertisements, one might realize one or two ways in which these advertisements shape certain ways of thinking or acting. However, since this realization occurred in a staged setting, this shaping is more likely to go unnoticed when Digital Natives engage in habitual Instagram use, allowing this shaping process to continue unless some level of awareness is present. This is another scenario that calls for increased transparency of social media platforms as proposed by Young and Quan-Haase (2013), as a higher level of awareness regarding data collection and targeting among users would reduce the risk of continuously and subconsciously stimulating materialism on them by means of personalized advertising content.

4.3.5. Negative attitude towards targeted advertisements

Among some of the studied Digital Natives, the abovementioned negative emotions evoked by advertisements resulted in an overall negative attitude towards targeted Instagram advertisements. Two participants reported preferring to see less advertisements, or no advertisements at all, implying that they agree with the social media consumer at the time of the beginning of social media marketing, who thought social media was made for people, not for brands (Fournier & Avery, 2011). Six of the participants use an adblocker on their laptop, while none of the participants use or know how to install an adblocker on their mobile devices, confirming previous findings that mobile advertisers are generally less affected by this affordance (Smith, 2017). While on their browsers the majority of the studied Digital Natives actively installed an adblocker, most participants expressed “not minding” getting advertisements in their Instagram feed, the majority preferring relevant advertisements but not being thrown off when an advertisement did not match their interests; something that happens a lot, listening to the studied group of Digital Natives.

“When I see an ad that doesn’t appeal to me, that does not really bother me. I just scroll on; I’m not affected by that.” (Rosalie)

While most participants reacted similar to this, some actually do mind when they see “badly targeted” ads:

“I can get really enthusiastic from ads, wanting to know more. I can also react like “Why am I getting this, super annoying!” So I have mixed emotions towards ads. [...] Well it’s not that I am actually bothered by irrelevant ads, but just a little interrupted and just want them to go away.” (Daisy)

These “mixed emotions” Daisy feels contradict her claim of ads not emotionally affecting her as evident in section 4.3.4., as well as appear to occur more often among the studied Digital Natives: five of the participants reported occasional feelings of excitement or curiosity as a result of seeing certain personally fitting advertisements, while seven of them stated that they can feel interrupted or get annoyed because of seeing irrelevant advertisements. Hence, though these participants adopt a pattern of expressing a negative attitude towards advertisements when discussing the generic and not fitting ads, they tend to express positive feelings when discussing the personally fitting ads, once again stressing the contradictory and context-dependent nature of their interview answers and the coexistence of the different patterns and themes that were found. Nevertheless, there were three participants that expressed an overall negative attitude towards advertising on Instagram and also

reported to be regularly bothered by it during their habitual Instagram use, of which Martijn is a perfect example:

Yes, I tend to feel annoyed a lot of times, because I think those companies... Well, I tend to connect it to my suspicion of them listening in on me, which may be incorrect, but I don't like their intentions. Of course, I understand this is the new way of marketing, but I still think things like "I didn't go on Instagram to scroll through advertisements." So for me, companies are one point behind when I come across their ad on Instagram. I prefer seeing those companies on TV ads, something that doesn't work on me either, or just on the streets, or via word of mouth. (Martijn)

So, while most participants are solely occasionally bothered by personally irrelevant ads, Martijn and two others are the most negative about targeted social media advertising, preferring to see no ads at all.

Above all, the main motivation for expressing a negative attitude towards targeted advertising appears to be a perceived lack of "personal fit" with the majority of advertisements, as reported by most participants, based on factors such as a negative brand association, affinity with a competing brand, a personally irrelevant product category or simply disliking the product: eight out of the total of ten studied Digital Natives mentioned one or more times that they dislike an advertisements because they dislike the product it encompasses. Moreover, advertisements were experienced in a negative manner due to having an unattractive layout, being perceived as interruptive, being unclear or shown too many times, as reported by half of the studied group.

"This ad, Method NL, I really don't understand it. I guess it's a soap dispenser. I think this ad is really unclear, I have no idea what it is they want to sell here." (Sabrina)

This example, along with the other remarks made about the lack of clear information in advertisements, shows that Digital Natives value ad informativeness as described by Shareef et al. (2019) to some extent: while not mentioning it among their main ad liking motivations, they do mention disliking ads because a lack of it.

This abovementioned lack of personal fit is experienced by eight out of ten of the studied Digital Natives. From the interviews, it became clear that most of the ads they are targeted with are not personally relevant, based on literal phrases in their answers and the fact that they reported spending the largest amount of time and effort on collecting the set of advertisements they found personally fitting. Taking into account that the studied Digital Natives only reported the feeling that

Instagram knows them when discussing personally relevant ads, it is no surprise that they did not experience this as in-depth knowledge, because the majority of ads was perceived as irrelevant to them.

4.3.6. Critical Instagram advertisements value indicators

Another way in which the studied Digital Natives showed they care about ad informativeness can be found in the last pattern of experiences within this third theme, in which broad set of critical Instagram ad value indicators is reported. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, a successful social media marketing campaign needs to provide value to consumers (Shareef et al., 2019). From the interviews, a number of value indicators or requirements derived, including ad design the desire for direct information retrieval. The following example illustrates this:

“[I mostly value] ad design, I think, because it grabs my attention. It has to look neat, contain enough information but not too much. I prefer to see the price, something they often don’t do, and where to buy it.” (Martijn)

According to the split brain theory, the level of ad informativeness predicts the extent to which consumers perceive ad value (Shareef et al., 2019). From the abovementioned quote by Martijn, it can be assumed that ad informativeness, as predicted by the split brain theory, indeed predicts the perceived ad value as experienced by consumers to some extent, and in accordance with the cognitive learning theory, consumers indeed want to analyze a certain amount information through their personal abilities (Shareef et al., 2019). While in most cases not being the main value indicator, the utilitarian aspect of ad informativeness certainly holds value among the studied Digital Natives. Other critical value indicators that were mentioned in high volume were that the ad design and/or color need to grab attention, that one needs to like the displayed product and that Digital Natives desire to feel some sort of personal fit with the ads. The first indicator, the desire for design and color to grab attention, was mentioned by a majority of the participants and confirms previously made conclusions about the value of creativity in advertising: consumers on social media constantly want to consume something new that grabs their attention (Lee & Hong, 2016).

Lastly, in order to treat targeted advertisements critically, some Digital Natives tend to judge the advertiser and his or her professional abilities. It should be noted that these critical remarks derived from an active conversation discussing the targeted advertisements the participants screenshotted, and many participants noted that when organically scrolling through their Instagram feed, they would possibly not interact with advertisements in this manner. However, seeing that four

out of ten participants made comments like these, one could say that a proportion of Digital Natives looks at ads more critically than others.

“What I find quite weird is that when I look up something right now, straight afterwards I will get an ad about it. I don’t know if that’s smart. On the one hand, you might want to buy something because you look it up, but for me personally, when I immediately see such an ad, I’m like “I’m not going to buy that right now.” (Boris)

“There’s supposed to be a call to action in every ad – in this one I see none.” (Daisy)

“I think the marketing team behind this didn’t put in enough effort, that they chose something that doesn’t clearly show their product or service. I think they could better choose to include their brand name on the picture instead of just using a picture of a beach, or something. Things like that don’t grab my attention.” (Sabrina)

“Well, the marketer that decided to market decorative pillows to a guy like me really has no idea about advertising.” (Walter)

Clearly, the studied Digital Natives are critical when it comes to targeting. Especially when having some degree of marketing knowledge, as with Daisy and Walter, these criticisms are expressed with a higher level of confidence. The other forms of criticism contain a moderately suggestive tone, as if saying that targeting could be improved without being entirely sure how.

Next to providing value, a successful social media campaign should also come from a credible, trustworthy source according to previous research (Shareef et al., 2019). This appears to be valued by Digital Natives, as two participants said they prefer to see ads from familiar brands and that they need to trust the advertised brand before an ad resonates with them in the form of liking the ad or undertaking some kind of action, such as clicking.

“I’ve never purchased anything I saw in an ad, at least not in a conscious way like “oh, these are clothes, I’m going to buy these now.” Not like that, because I don’t trust it anyway. [...] Most of the time it are quite unknown web shops, and for quality, I prefer going to Mango or Only, shops like these.” (Sabrina)

Digital Natives also showed that they have an opinion on native advertising. While one of the participants called organic-looking ads bad marketing, as Sabrina’s abovementioned second-last

critical quote refers to an organic-looking advertisement, a few others showed appreciation to ads that resemble organic content, also known as native advertisements (Wojdyski & Evans, 2020). None of the participants were aware of this technique, as no one identified these advertisements by the name "native advertisement," but some noticed and stressed them when discussing the screenshotted ads. One of the participants, Theo, even implied that in order for an ad to resonate with him, it needs to look organic:

"There needs to be some kind of recognition I think, almost that it comes across as a post from someone I follow; then I'll look at it." (Theo)

As mentioned, native advertisements are created using Instagram's conventions for user-generated content, resulting in an advertisement that fits in with the flow of images on one's feed, eager to catch an Instagram user's glance, a technique also referred to as "Playing their game" (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Carah & Shaul, 2016; Wojdyski & Evans, 2020). In this instance, native ads are accepted by this participant because they resemble UGC, which creates a trustworthy feeling; one of the two outcomes as predicted by previous research (Johnson et al., 2019; Wojdyski & Evans, 2020). Two other participants also mentioned appreciating organic-looking advertisements, stating that they often immediately recognize the ones that are irrelevant to them because they do not fit in the organic flow of images, but do not mind these, and that the ones they do not recognize at first resemble content they enjoy looking at:

"Maybe [I like organic-looking advertisements] because I'm mainly on Instagram to look at organic content, and when an ad resembles that, that kind of means you have something nice to look at anyway." (Esther)

In contrast, Sabrina, who labelled native advertising as assumed bad marketing, reported occasional feelings of deception when noticing native advertisements, which is also an outcome predicted by previous research (Wojdyski & Evans, 2020). She also reported to value brand trust in advertising as she regularly does not trust brands that she is targeted by. This may influence her perceptions of native advertising, as it has been said that consumers who are generally skeptic towards advertising feel negatively towards native advertising (Wojdyski & Evans, 2020). Moreover, in general, the source of the native advertising message and the way in which a consumer regards this source are a known predictor of native ad evaluation. In this instance, recognizing the advertisement as such lead to a critical processing of it, and ultimately a negative perception.

4.4. Fourth theme – “There’s not much you can do about it. Or maybe I should accept cookies less often. Whatever, they listen in anyway.”

The fourth and last theme encompasses the expressed general informational privacy concerns, skepticism towards data collection and protection efforts and, lastly, uncertainty expressed by the studied Digital Natives regarding their own actions. These concerns result in an overall *low trust in Instagram, data collection and targeting*.

4.4.1. Informational access concerns

First of all, a list of informational access concerns emerged from the interviews. Seven out of ten participants reported having some form of informational access concerns, related to either their online behavior being used for marketing, or even thinking their phone records and interprets conversations for marketing.

“Sometimes, and I think that’s the creepiest of all, I talk about something and later get an ad about it. Then I’m like “how is this possible?” So that I find disturbing. I’ve heard it’s Siri listening in when you’re talking, so that’s actually really disturbing!” (Esther)

Four of the studied Digital Natives expressed concerns about their mobile device recording conversations and utilizing them for marketing purposes, indicating that this is a real concern among this group of people. It is evident that some Digital Natives are concerned with the way in which information is collected about them, resulting in informational access concerns (Zarouali et al., 2019). There is no regular case of a privacy calculus here, as they did not perceive to have an active choice in disclosing personal information to Instagram or any other platform when engaging in a casual conversation. Therefore, the loss of their information privacy automatically outweighs the potential gain of disclosing information. However, a privacy calculus still took place when these concerned Digital Natives decided to use a smartphone with a voice recognition affordance to visit certain websites and social media platforms; it appears that they did not take this kind of perceived privacy loss into account when performing this calculus. Regarding perceived privacy loss versus perceived benefits of targeting, there were cases of personalization reactance, where participants did not evaluate the personalized advertisement as useful, leading them to interpret and respond to it in a negative manner (White et al., 2008). This implies that for some Digital Native consumers to favorably respond to personalized advertising content, they need to perceive utilitarian value from it,

for instance by receiving just enough information in the advertisement, one of the critical value indicators provided by the studied Digital Natives.

Other concerns shared by the studied Digital Natives is the unnecessary nature of data disclosure, as they state that certain parts of their personal data are “none of their business,” with the word “their” referring to Instagram and businesses collecting their personal information, and that it is often not necessary for them to know certain things.

“What I google isn’t really significant or anything. I don’t mind them tracking that I look up a lot of clothing online, I don’t find it scary, I don’t know. No, I’m not scared of it, sometimes it’s just unnecessary.” (Esther)

“Regarding this topic, people often say that if you do nothing wrong you have nothing to hide, but I completely disagree. Even if you do nothing wrong, that doesn’t mean they need to know everything about you. I don’t do anything illegal or anything, but that does not mean they can know my entire profile. At least then there is some privacy left.” (Martijn)

Striking is that even though they clearly value their privacy, both Esther and Martijn reported accepting cookies easily when no convenient “unchecking boxes” data protection option is present on a website. This, once again, reinforces the privacy paradox as defined in the theoretical framework, as both Esther and Martijn express information privacy concerns, however when it comes to data disclosure in the form of accepting cookies, they do very little to protect themselves (Young & Quan-Haase, 2013; Barth & De Jong, 2017). This discrepancy between privacy concerns and behaviors seems to be shaping predominant nuances to the different established themes, as on the one hand Digital Natives engage in active data protection as a means of holding onto their own agency, as well as expressing information privacy concerns within the overarching theme of distrust, while on the other hand they admit to accepting cookies and linking their Facebook profile with third party platforms. As mentioned, this discrepancy might be the result of their different levels of awareness of data aggregation; one might be aware of the consequences of linking a Facebook profile while being unaware of those of accepting cookies.

Interestingly, one participant hinted at a coincidence between one’s perceived level of technological savviness and their privacy concerns:

“Yeah, I’m concerned about that [speech detection technologies]. Especially since I worked with chat bots where I programmed them, also using speech detection. So I know how the process works, how easy it is to collect and interpret a small casual conversation between

people. So yes, I am concerned I think, also because of rumors about the Chinese government listening to everyone and everything for instance. And now this corona app, for which they will use our data for the greater good, but where do we draw the line? Will we continue with that when the virus is gone, prevention? I'm unsure about that, and companies like Facebook and Instagram are always ahead in the technical spectrum, creating a lot of space for them to gather consumer data, listen in on conversations, analyze consumer groups, before anyone has made a law about that. On the other hand, I'm a little naïve since I use it too, but I often ask myself "is this smart?" but then I get drawn in anyway. There's two sides – on the one hand I'm worried, but on the other hand I think "there must be a bigger party or organization that is also concerned about this, one that has more influence than me?" (Martijn)

On top of stressing the importance of privacy, Martijn evidently expresses serious informational access and future concerns, based on his above-average technological knowledge and skills that he gained from working in a tech company: his certainty about technology fosters his uncertainty about present and future data security. He also emphasizes that he suspects Facebook and Instagram of being ahead of regulations regarding data collection and usage, once again calling for increased transparency on behalf of social media companies as highlighted by Barth and De Jong (2017). In contrast, he identifies himself as "a little naïve" for using these platforms against better judgment. In a way, the realization that social media companies are powerful fosters an insecurity of his own actions; a pattern within the theme of distrust that will be addressed separately. He justifies not taking more privacy protection precautions by hoping for "a bigger party or organization that is also concerned about this," and has more power than himself, nullifying his own power or agency, almost hinting at skepticism, which is also a separate pattern within the theme of distrust.

Despite tech-savvy Martijn's privacy concerns, there appear to be no strong connections between the participants' level of tech-savviness and their privacy concerns. Looking at the other participants, of which three others perceive their own tech-savviness as high, five as average and one as low/ average, it appears that there is a fair amount of division as to their technological savviness as a Digital Native, as well as to their respective privacy concerns. Two of the participants with a perceived high tech-savviness and one with a perceived average savviness expressed no informational access concerns, opposed to the remaining seven highly-, averagely and lowly savvy participants. This indicates that while the person with the most technological knowledge and skills is evidently concerned based on this knowledge, privacy concerns are dispersed among Digital Natives, with no direct link to their perceived tech-savviness.

4.4.2. Skepticism towards data protection efforts

As his extensive quote describes serious information privacy concerns, Martijn also hints at a level of skepticism towards data protection efforts, as “there must be a bigger party or organization that is also concerned about this” that has more power than him. While this skepticism is not explicitly stated, other participants hinted at similar feelings towards data collection and data protection during the interviews. For instance, four participants reported experiencing cookies as forced, meaning that they do not feel like they have the agency to deny them.

“Most of the time when you want to visit a website, you want to get there as fast as possible. And then your screen gets blocked, you can’t click anything else before accepting cookies, or adjusting them yourself in some devious way. So, in that case I’m quite lenient: I want to move onto the website, so I accept.” (Minke)

“On a lot of websites, your cookies are still being tracked even though you denied the popup. I know, that’s not allowed, but it’s still possible depending on the plugin I know from experience. A lot of times there is no deny option, or no little cross to close the popup, otherwise it will remain on your screen, but then the cookies are already being tracked. Most of the time you don’t even have a choice.” (Walter)

In Minke’s example, it is evident that the feeling of compulsion leads to a privacy calculus that is in this case positive, as she chooses to accept the cookies for the sake of going to the desired website as fast as possible. In the second example, small business owner Walter knows from experience that cookies are indeed forced on a lot of websites, fostering his skepticism that is, if this is true, very much grounded. Walter’s example indicates that in some cases, similar to Martijn’s tech-savviness example, marketing or advertising knowledge relates to the way in which one perceives data collection and data protection efforts: possessing certain knowledge seemingly fosters skepticism towards both phenomena.

Skepticism among Digital Natives also shows by statements such as “Facebook already knows this much about me” and “one more app linked to my Facebook won’t do any more harm,” thoughts that occurred when participants explained why they regularly link their Facebook profile to third party platforms or applications. In addition, the observed skepticism is also fed by thoughts such as “if they know my email, they know my Facebook,” discrediting the argument of creating separate profiles using different email addresses for different applications and platforms. This is what Vitak et al. (2017) describe as an explanation for a lack of privacy protection efforts, nuancing the concept of

privacy paradox: while Digital Natives may be concerned about their privacy, due to their lack of trust in social media platforms or cookie statements they decide not to engage in privacy protection efforts. In addition, two participants even go as far by saying that there is not much one can do about it, in which the word "it" refers to the inevitable collection of ones data.

"Personally, I am not that concerned. Of course, some situations are problematic, but I think with the new GDPR regulation society is taking some positive steps. However, with social media, I think one needs to be more aware of what they publish and disclose, something I always have been. It's just how it is, they are always watching." (Participant G)

"Sometimes I'm like "oh, this is actually pretty creepy," because apparently your phone records conversations and tracks things you look up online that later show up in your timeline. That disturbs me, I'm not really comfortable with that. But oh well, there's not much one can do about it." (Daisy)

These statements imply that some Digital Natives perceive data collection as something inevitable, something that will always happen, hinting at a rational fatalistic perspective as described by Xie et al. (2018). By making statements such as "it's just how it is, they are always watching" and "there's not much one can do about it," both Theo and Daisy seem convinced of the inevitability of data collection. Both of them seem to surrender to their privacy concerns, as during the interview, they disclosed that they accept cookies ninety percent of the time, and Theo often links his Facebook profile to third party platforms. They seem to feel like they have no control over the outcome of their perceived privacy risks, causing them to take more risks by disclosing data in the form of, in their cases, accepting cookies and linking a Facebook profile. In addition to a perceived lack of control, this behavior could also be explained by the fact that people with a rational fatalistic perspective perceive no benefit from protecting their online privacy (Xie et al., 2018).

Regarding data- and privacy protection, Theo makes a comment that divides responsibility into the hands of both social media platforms and users:

"The effort needs to come from both sides. Facebook and Instagram need to take their responsibility and be transparent about their business operations, but the people who use these platforms don't read terms & conditions and accept them mindlessly. I do that as well, but I am aware of it. You shouldn't complain afterwards, when you already gave these platforms access to your data." (Theo)

Like Theo, Young & Quan-Haase (2013) also state that social media privacy policies lack transparency about the data used for personalized commercial content offers, which normalizes the data collection process. Moreover, Barth and De Jong (2017) state that to facilitate meaningful, educated decision-making regarding data disclosure, data-collecting platforms should establish suitable tools and information for users, which is in line with that Theo urges them to do: be more transparent. At the same time, he calls for more responsibility among social media users, a statement that is very much in agreement with the privacy paradox: one cannot justly complain about information privacy concerns while knowingly neglecting the protection of it. This feeling of responsibility and awareness is shared by three other participants that acknowledge being responsible for their own actions, meaning that if they accept cookies or disclose information, they are aware of and okay with the consequences. Rosalie even goes as far as saying she does not have the right to be concerned as a result of this sense of responsibility:

I'm a little unsure, because in the end I'm guilty of always accepting cookies. Sometimes I don't, but then I think what's the point, because I do appreciate seeing relevant ads that optimize my experience. Then I think it's fine... Actually they, whoever "they" are, the internet, can know everything about me, because it's my own responsibility. I'm aware that I visit certain websites and accept cookies and do nothing against it or block certain stuff. So I don't think I have the right to say "I'm not okay with getting these targeted ads," because I am aware of sharing this data. So I kind of give permission for them to know things about me, and I'm not necessarily concerned about that. (Rosalie)

While Theo stresses a two-way responsibility, Rosalie lays full responsibility on herself, highlighting that she discloses data for a better online experience, confirming Smith's (2017) predictions about Digital Natives being prepared to pay with data for a frictionless social media experience. Even though Rosalie does not express any concrete concerns in this quote, she states being "guilty of always accepting cookies," placing a negative connotation on the act of accepting cookies, as it supposedly is something one should feel guilty of. Minke agrees with this, as her answer to the question whether or not she regularly accepts cookies was "Yes, I accept cookies immediately. Quite bad actually," also taking on this negative connotation. These attitudes expressing a sense of responsibility hint at a nuance of the privacy paradox as described by Young and Quan-Haase (2013), as according to Vitak et al. (2018), one's privacy attitude usually resonates with one's actual privacy behavior. In this case, the expressed privacy attitudes stress one's own responsibility, that is taken by these Digital Natives in data disclosure situations because they are aware of data disclosure. However, the fact that Theo, Minke and Rosalie feel this sense of responsibility could also be an

indicator that they have normalized data collection in their daily social media use, which Young and Quan-Haase (2013) claim to be a result of the lack of transparency on behalf of social media companies.

Vitak et al. (2017) also note that privacy-paradox related behaviors should be attributed to a sense of apathy or cynicism about online privacy. This sense of cynicism is visibly present among the skeptical Digital Natives, illustrated by Walter by saying cookies are collected anyway, by Minke through saying that adjusting cookie settings is often devious and by Daisy, who states that there is nothing we can do about data collection. This low trust in social media platforms among some Digital Natives shapes the way in which they regard their privacy: unavoidably violated, so they might as well surrender to it and cease protecting their personal information online for an optimal experience. Striking is that while portraying a skeptical, sometimes fatalistic attitude, some of the studied Digital Natives still engage in privacy protection efforts by not linking their Facebook or using separate email addresses for certain newsletters, like Daisy. It appears that the privacy attitudes, concerns and behaviors of Digital Natives are apt to be somewhat inconsistent, depending on the conversation or situation, or the question that they are being asked.

4.4.3. Questioning their own behavior

As Martijn's extensive quote about information privacy concerns in section 4.3.4. indicates, it seems as if he starts questioning his own social media behavior as a result of the realization that social media platforms are powerful and even ahead of the law regarding data collection technologies and usage by asking himself "is this smart?" when engaging in certain social media usage. In total, four participants showed a tendency of questioning their own behavior when reflecting on the way in which their data is collected and used by social media platforms. The last way in which a low trust is experienced by Digital Natives is therefore by questioning their own behavior when discussing the disclosure of personal data and targeting:

"I think it's mostly Google [that tracks your search behavior]. A friend of mine chooses to use Bing. I don't really like that website, so I kind of support Google by always using it. But maybe that isn't the smartest thing to do, I don't know." (Theo)

"I'm onto them, yes. I was just thinking about this today. It's so stupid of me to download another lame mobile game if I know I'm going to keep getting ads like these. Well it's not that I think "I'm getting an ad about this now," but I do know that if I click on it, they will remember it." (Rosalie)

“Yes, I accept cookies immediately. Quite bad, actually.” (Minke)

In these examples, the studied Digital Natives hint at insecurities about their own online behavior as a result of being aware of and talking about data collection and targeting. While Theo asks himself whether or not he should always be using Google for search queries, Rosalie regrets clicking on an ad and Minke feels bad after accepting cookies. During the interviews, it seemed as though consciously thinking and speaking about data and targeting made the studied Digital Natives feel waves of insecurity, occasionally questioning their own behavior as a result. This might be a result of their level of attentiveness towards both targeted advertising and data aggregation. Half of the participants reported never having realized the high ad volume that is present on Instagram until they engaged in the collecting of the three sets of advertisements for the interview.

“Right now, I’m actively thinking about it, but normally I just scroll through these advertisements without thinking. But I think that I will probably be more attentive from now on. I appreciate being aware of this for a change, because I didn’t realize at all that there was so much advertising on Instagram.” (Boris)

One of the participants, Boris, even said to be unaware of any advertisement being present in his Instagram feed, and that he thought only the Instagram stories feature contained advertisements. This indicates that up until they started to actively search for advertisements with an artificial attentiveness that is normally absent, advertisements targeted to some of these Digital Natives generally did not catch their glance in the ongoing flow of images as described by Carah and Shaul (2016). The fact that some of the participants had never actively dwelled on targeting also suggests that they were never truly aware of the way in which they were being targeted, which possibly influences one’s level of concern: if one is unaware of a phenomenon, one cannot be truly concerned about it. Observing that during the interviews the majority of the participants did express informational access concerns to some degree and claimed to engage in one or more forms of data protection efforts, the question arises where these concerns actually come from. The fact that a lot of the studied Digital Natives had been engaging in these data protection efforts for a long time indicates that while possibly not being fully aware of advertising until being asked to be, there must have been some concerns before this sudden awareness of data collection and targeting.

Taking into consideration the fact that half of the participants never realized that they were being exposed to a high volume of advertising content thus possibly influences their preexisting and new concerns towards information privacy. At the start of the interview, when asking participants

about their regular Instagram use, all of the participants reported being largely content consumers, scrolling through their feed on a daily basis, largely as pastime, as predicted by previous research (Johnson et al., 2019). Half of the participants admitted that they regularly engage in mindless scrolling, not actually stopping to look at all the content they are being exposed to. This hints at their quality of attention being impacted by the constant flow of images Instagram users come across, supposedly being exactly where Instagram was created for, and possibly explains why half of the studied Digital Natives never recognized the high ad volume on Instagram (Carah & Shaul, 2016).

As previous research states, the process of data collection and surveillance is integrated within the stimulated habitual use of Instagram, and the sharing of personal information is fostered and rewarded by the platforms (Montgomery, 2015; Carah & Shaul, 2016). This might be one of the reasons why there appears to be some inconsistency and insecurity regarding the informational privacy concerns of Digital Natives: pressing a like button is stimulated by the platform and is done on a daily, habitual and sometimes subconscious basis, and when one discovers during a critical evaluation of targeted advertisements that this kind of behavior is being tracked and used for marketing purposes, certain informational privacy concerns may arise. To conclude, it might be possible that the insecurities experienced by the studied Digital Natives that led them to question their own behavior are a result of the sudden realization or sudden awareness of data collection and targeting, as normally this is a process that is inextricably woven into one's habitual Instagram use. There seem to be different levels of concern among Digital Natives with differing preferences, technological savviness and diverse attitudes and perspectives.

5. Conclusion

This thesis examines the ways in which Digital Natives experience, perceive and respond to advertisements that are targeted to them on social media. An analysis of ten in-depth interviews with ten Digital Natives resulted in four main themes. Together with their corresponding patterns as discussed in the Results & Discussion chapter, these themes help making sense of the experiences and perceptions of Digital Natives regarding targeted social media advertising.

It appears that to some extent, Digital Natives are accepting and appreciative of personalized advertising content, as well as the preceding data collection process and the additionally perceived time- or effort saving, supporting previous research findings stating that personalized advertising content resonates more with consumers (Liu & Mattila, 2017; Smith, 2017). The studied Digital Natives like ads because of diverse reasons, including the predicted factors ad informativeness and creativity (Shareef et al., 2015). Regarding this perceived ad value and ad liking among the studied Digital Natives, however, it turns out that they rather value ads based on personal preferences such as preexisting affinities, product likeability and the subjective interpretation of ad appearance, occasionally linking relevant ads to their sense of self.

Mostly indicated during the discussion of the relevant set of advertisements, the studied Digital Natives regard the data collection process that is used for providing them with tailored advertisements as useful, expressing no concerns about this. Their privacy calculus is in these instances positive: the convenience of accepting cookies or logging in with Facebook outweighs their perceived privacy risk (Zarouali et al., 2019). Ads do appear to influence one's sense of self, as because of this perceived convenience, participants regularly identify themselves as lazy, signs of both identity shaping as described by Montgomery (2015) and the mutual shaping process as described by Boczkowski (1999). Overall, while many context-specific appreciative remarks were made regarding targeting, only one of the studied Digital Natives fully responded to targeted advertising in this positive manner. This participant represents a minority among Digital Natives that see no harm in data collection and regard targeted advertising as a win-win situation. Most participants showed a mix of the observed patterns, appreciating relevant advertisements on the one hand but disliking the bulk of irrelevant ads and being concerned about their privacy on the other.

In contrast to this context-dependent positive attitude towards targeting, the studied Digital Natives tend to be hard on advertisers at times, expressing a lot of criticism, negative attitudes and criteria that they believe advertisements should meet in order for them to like them. Overall, the Digital Natives under study generally agree on the fact that if they are going to be targeted, they

would prefer to be targeted with relevant ads over random or irrelevant ads, and that relevant ads could even spark feelings of curiosity and excitement. However, most of them believe that only a relatively small part of the advertisements they are targeted with is actually relevant, occasionally fostering a negative attitude towards targeted social media advertising in general. Furthermore, because most Digital Natives reportedly engage in the habit of mindlessly scrolling on Instagram and advertisements rarely catch their glance, half of them reported that outside of the interview, they never noticed the high volume of ads on Instagram, which possibly explains why they are normally not bothered by the bulk of irrelevant advertisements. Only when consciously looking at what they were being targeted with, feelings of annoyance and disliking erupted, stressing the impact of the constant flow of images on Instagram on the quality of the attention of Digital Natives (Carah & Shaul, 2016). Native advertisements appear to fit in this constant flow of images, which is why they are frequently accepted and even appreciated as they do not disturb this flow. This appreciative attitude overshadows the deceived attitude in the studied group of Digital Natives.

Altogether, the studied Digital Natives seem to be hard-to-get consumers. They largely indicate that in order to be influenced towards a purchase, there needs to be an existing affinity with the advertisement, which requires ads to be extremely relevant for them. Since they report not identifying with most ads, it appears to be difficult to successfully target this group.

From the interviews, it also became clear that Digital Natives have a certain way of seeing the advertising platform Instagram as a mysterious, powerful consumer influencer that knows things about them, influences them and confuses them about the way in which it gets to know them. Striking is that participants simultaneously limit this power by stressing their own agency as social media users and consumers. The studied Digital Natives showed they are aware of data collection and targeting, although they hint at some inconsistencies and uncertainties with regards to tracing back the process of targeting, suggesting that this perceived awareness might be lower in reality. This stresses the need for more transparency as identified by Young & Quan-Haase (2013) and Barth & De Jong (2017). The participants seem to agree on the perception that a social media platform can never know a person in-depth and unravel all their preferences and desires, which could be attributed to the incomplete identity performance of social media users and possible misinterpretations of aggregated data – the way one behaves on social media does not give a full representation; neither does a google query.

Moreover, the perceived extent to which Instagram knows the participants turns out to be context-dependent, as during the discussion of personally relevant ads they expressed feeling like Instagram knows them, while during the discussion of the generic and non-fitting ads they felt the opposite. Generally, the studied Digital Natives see personalized ads as separate from their identity

and sense of self and more as inspiration or suggestions. Despite being exposed to a high volume of commercially targeted content, they do not identify a “persona” being implemented on them, limiting the perceived power of Instagram. This can be attributed to the perceived lack of personal fit with the majority of the ads participants are exposed to. Notwithstanding this perception of limited power, there were signs of subconscious identity shaping in habitual Instagram use that are linked to questioning oneself and one’s behavior as a result of sudden realizations in the artificially attentive setting of the interview.

It is evident that the studied Digital Natives also attempt to hold onto their agency by engaging in active data protection efforts by withholding certain information, avoiding the acceptance of cookies or restraining from linking one’s data-rich Facebook profile to other platforms. In this sense, affordances of social media shape their level of caution, a sign of the mutual shaping process of social media and its users: interacting with certain affordances evoke a sense of self-awareness among users that influences the way in which they interact with these affordances (Boczkowski, 1999). However, this is where they often contradict themselves, as they adopt certain data protection efforts, claiming to have informational privacy concerns while at other times acting towards the convenience of an optimal website or easy login – a clear representation of the privacy paradox, where private data is disclosed in return for perceived personal benefit (Young & Quan-Haase, 2013). This behavior is possibly linked to the different levels of awareness of the ways in which data is collected, once again stressing the need for more transparency on behalf of social media companies. A small proportion of the studied Digital Natives, however, seems to be aware of this discrepancy and believes that the way in which we disclose our data is our own responsibility. This sense of responsibility can possibly be attributed to the problematic normalization of data aggregation in social media usage as described by Young & Quan-Haase (2013), making users feel like it’s their own “fault” their data is being commodified.

As mentioned, the interviews seemed to evoke feelings of sudden awareness or realization towards data collection and targeting within the participants. By realizing the power social media companies have, a feeling of distrust arises, which the studied Digital Natives respond to in different ways. Firstly, these realizations ostensibly induce feelings of insecurity among Digital Natives about their own actions regarding privacy protection, conceivably caused by their habitual inattentiveness towards and incomplete awareness of privacy risks. To reduce these insecurities, the level of awareness of normalized data collection on social media platforms should be improved, as urged by previous research as well as one of the participants (Young & Quan-Haase, 2013; Barth & De Jong, 2017).

While some informational privacy concerns are linked to one’s insecurities or uncertainties, others appear to be approached with skepticism, a known nuance to the privacy paradox according

to Vitak et al., (2017) and by adopting a fatalistic perspective as outlined by Xie et al. (2018). A relatively large number of participants express a low trust in social media companies, technology or the law and believe that privacy will be violated anyway, either due to the fact that data protection has been made devious by social media companies that are ahead of law-making, or due to wariness of technology, suspecting their devices of recording and interpreting private conversations. This leads to a decrease in privacy protection efforts, not due to indifference or ignorance, but due to skeptical or cynical attitudes or fatalistic perspectives shaped by the way in which these Digital Natives perceive the data collection and targeting process on social media platforms.

This thesis sets the groundwork for comprehending the perceptions Digital Natives have of targeted social media advertising. While partly grasping certain perceptions separately, they mostly offset each other because of the contradictive behavior and responses of the studied Digital Natives. One can appreciate relevant ads but still have information privacy concerns, while restraining from linking one's Facebook profile but accepting cookies without thinking. One can be opposed to social media advertising but still appreciate the few personally relevant ads they are getting, or one can be in favor of social media advertising, occasionally be annoyed by the perceived interruptive nature of it while not having any information privacy concerns. This illustrates that these perceptions and responses are highly dependent on context, such as the way in which they are asked about it, their level of awareness of data aggregation, as well as personal preferences, or just one's mood, as one participant mentioned. With the four provided main themes and their different corresponding patterns, I aim to provide a guideline on how to make sense of the social behavior of the studied group, Digital Natives, and how they perceive and respond to targeted social media advertisements.

5.1. Possible limitations and suggestions for future research

In this thesis, four clear overarching themes derived that form a solid ground for approaching the studied social phenomenon. It should be noted that all participants were eighteen years of age or above, meaning that officially, they have largely passed the adolescence stage. This might have influenced the results and interpretations, in a way that interviewing younger adolescent Digital Natives may have yielded different responses, especially regarding the identity-shaping process. Future research could therefore build on the findings of the currently studied age group by looking at this younger cohort and their perceptions of targeted advertisements to broaden the available academic knowledge on Digital Natives. Moreover, while ensuring a consistent research sample, only Dutch Digital Natives were interviewed. Future research could therefore contribute to this Dutch

collection of perspectives and experiences by exploring possible differences between specific national contexts.

Moreover, being a Digital Native myself may have had a certain influence on the way in which the analysis was carried out and the way in which the results were interpreted. The fact that there was a sense of identification with the research participants allowed for a stronger connection with them during the interviews, allowing the conversation to flow easily because rapport was established naturally. However, different results might have been yielded by a researcher that did not fall within the Digital Native generation as described in the theoretical framework. Future research could therefore test whether different responses, themes and patterns evolve from interviews with a non-Digital Native researcher, broadening the knowledge base on the different perceptions, experiences and behaviors of this generation.

Lastly, his thesis identified multiple insecurities and uncertainties among the studied Digital Natives regarding data aggregation and usage by social media companies. Previous research, as well as the perceptions of the currently studied group of Digital Natives, urge for increased transparency on behalf of these social media companies. Future research can investigate the ways in which this transparency can be realized, diving deeper into the levels of awareness of data aggregation and the specifics of these existing insecurities and uncertainties, and explore the concrete transparency needs Digital Natives have in order to come closer to solving this transparency gap.

References

- Barnhart, B. (2020). How to survive (and outsmart) the Instagram algorithm in 2020 [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/instagram-algorithm/>
- Barth, S., & De Jong, M. D. (2017). The privacy paradox—Investigating discrepancies between expressed privacy concerns and actual online behavior—A systematic literature review. *Telematics and informatics*, 34(7), 1038-1058. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.04.013>
- Blanco, C. F., Blasco, M. G., & Azorín, I. I. (2010). Entertainment and informativeness as precursory factors of successful mobile advertising messages. *Communications of the IBIMA*, 1-11.
- Boczkowski, P. J. (1999). Mutual shaping of users and technologies in a national virtual community. *Journal of Communication*, 49(2), 86-108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02795.x>
- Boczkowski, P., Crooks, R., Lievrouw, L., & Siles, I. (2016). Science, technology, and society studies. *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy*, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118766804.wbiect172>
- Boeije, H. (2010). *Analysis in qualitative research*. London: Sage
- Carah, N., & Shaul, M. (2016). Brands and Instagram: Point, tap, swipe, glance. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 4(1), 69-84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157915598180>
- Chen, H. (2018). College-aged young consumers' perceptions of social media marketing: The story of _____ Instagram. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 39(1), 22-36. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/10641734.2017.1372321>
- Clarke, A. E. (2003). Situational analyses: Grounded theory mapping after the postmodern turn. *Symbolic Interaction*, 26(4), 553-576.
- Clement, J. (2019). Instagram: the distribution of global audiences 2019, by age and gender [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/248769/age-distribution-of-worldwide-instagram-users/>
- Clement, J. (2019). Facebook: distribution of global audiences 2019, by age and gender [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/376128/facebook-global-user-age-distribution/>
- Clement, J. (2019). Estimated annual Instagram revenue 2017-2019 [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/271633/annual-revenue-of-instagram/>
- Clement, J. (2019). Number of monthly active Instagram users from January 2013 to June 2018 [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/253577/number-of-monthly-active-instagram-users/>

- Coulter, R. A., Zaltman, G., & Coulter, K. S. (2001). Interpreting consumer perceptions of advertising: An application of the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique. *Journal of advertising*, 30(4), 1-21. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/00913367.2001.10673648>
- Dienlin, T., & Trepte, S. (2015). Is the privacy paradox a relic of the past? An in-depth analysis of privacy attitudes and privacy behaviors. *European journal of social psychology*, 45(3), 285-297. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1002/ejsp.2049>
- Fournier, S., & Avery, J. (2011). The uninvited brand. *Business horizons*, 54(3), 193-207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.001>
- Friedrich, R., Peterson, M., Koster, A., & Blum, S. (2010). The rise of generation C. Implications for the world of 2020. *Booz & Company*, 24.
- Fromm, J. (2019). How much financial influence does Gen Z have? [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jefffromm/2018/01/10/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-financial-impact-of-gen-z-influence/#6381d67056fc>
- Gesenhues, A. (2019). Has Instagram increased its ad load? Marketers report as many as 1 in 4 post are ads [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://marketingland.com/has-instagram-increased-its-ad-load-marketers-report-as-many-as-1-in-4-posts-are-ads-264109>
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goel, V. & Ember, S. (2015). Instagram to open its photo feed to ads [Online news article]. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/03/technology/instagram-to-announce-plans-to-expand-advertising.html>
- Guttmann, A. (2019). Social media platforms used by marketers worldwide 2019 [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/259379/social-media-platforms-used-by-marketers-worldwide/>
- Hermanowicz, J. C. (2002). The great interview: 25 strategies for studying people in bed. *Qualitative sociology*, 25(4), 479-499. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021062932081>
- Hirst, M. (2012). One tweet does not a revolution make: Technological determinism, media and social change. *Global Media Journal-Australian Edition*, 6(2), 1-11.
- Instagram Ads: Now available around the world [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/instagram-ad-expansion>
- Johnson, B. K., Potocki, B., & Veldhuis, J. (2019). Is that my friend or an advert? The effectiveness of Instagram native advertisements posing as social posts. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 24(3), 108-125. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmz003>
- Judd, T. (2018). The rise and fall (?) of the digital natives. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 34(5). <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.3821>

- Kannan, P. K. & Li, H. (2017). Digital marketing: A framework, review and research agenda. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 34(1), 22-45.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2016.11.006>
- Kirmani, A. (1990). The effect of perceived advertising costs on brand perceptions. *Journal of consumer research*, 17(2), 160-171. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208546>
- Lee, H., & Cho, C. H. (2019). Digital advertising: present and future prospects. *International Journal of Advertising*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1642015>
- Lee, J., & Hong, I. B. (2016). Predicting positive user responses to social media advertising: The roles of emotional appeal, informativeness, and creativity. *International Journal of Information Management*, 36(3), 360-373. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2016.01.001>
- Liu, S. Q., & Mattila, A. S. (2017). Airbnb: Online targeted advertising, sense of power, and consumer decisions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 60, 33-41.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2016.09.012>
- Martins, J., Costa, C., Oliveira, T., Gonçalves, R., & Branco, F. (2019). How smartphone advertising influences consumers' purchase intention. *Journal of Business Research*, 94, 378-387.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.12.047>
- Mohsin, M. (2019). 10 Instagram stats every marketer should know in 2020 [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://www.oberlo.com/blog/instagram-stats-every-marketer-should-know>
- Montgomery, K. C. (2015). Youth and surveillance in the Facebook era: Policy interventions and social implications. *Telecommunications Policy*, 39(9), 771-786.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2014.12.006>
- Newberry, C. (2019). 37 Instagram stats that matter to marketers in 2020 [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-statistics/>
- Opdenakker, R. (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Research*, 7(4). <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-7.4.175>
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, digital immigrants part 1. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1-6.
- Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative research in accounting & management*, 8(3), 238-264. <https://doi.org/10.1108/11766091111162070>
- Saldaña, J. (2011). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Salleh, S., Hashim, N. H., & Murphy, J. (2015). Instagram marketing: a content analysis of top Malaysian restaurant brands. *E-Review of Tourism Research*, 6, 1-5.
- Schreier, M. (2014). Qualitative Content Analysis. In *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis*, 170-183. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243>

- Shareef, M. A., Mukerji, B., Dwivedi, Y. K., Rana, N. P., & Islam, R. (2019). Social media marketing: Comparative effect of advertisement sources. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 46, 58-69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2017.11.001>
- Sinkovics, R. R., Pezderka, N., & Haghirian, P. (2012). Determinants of consumer perceptions toward mobile advertising—a comparison between Japan and Austria. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(1), 21-32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2011.07.002>
- Smith, K. T. (2019). Mobile advertising to Digital Natives: preferences on content, style, personalization, and functionality. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 27(1), 67-80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2017.1384043>
- Smith, M. R., & Marx, L. (1994). *Does technology drive history?: The dilemma of technological determinism*. Mit Press.
- Social media. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster online dictionary*. Retrieved February 7, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media>
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Sturgiz. (2020). "Let's play with the instagram algorithm" How does this work? [Online forum entry]. Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/Instagram/comments/fmhvug/lets_play_with_the_instagram_algorithm_how_does/fl4lcdi/
- Ting, H., Ming, W. W. P., de Run, E. C., & Choo, S. L. Y. (2015). Beliefs about the use of Instagram: An exploratory study. *International Journal of business and innovation*, 2(2), 15-31.
- Tong, S., Luo, X., & Xu, B. (2020). Personalized mobile marketing strategies. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48(1), 64-78. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00693-3>
- Tucker, C. E. (2014). Social networks, personalized advertising, and privacy controls. *Journal of marketing research*, 51(5), 546-562. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.10.0355>
- Warren, J. (2020). This is how the Instagram algorithm works in 2020 [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://later.com/blog/how-instagram-algorithm-works/>
- White, T. B., Zahay, D. L., Thorbjørnsen, H., & Shavitt, S. (2008). Getting too personal: Reactance to highly personalized email solicitations. *Marketing Letters*, 19(1), 39-50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-007-9027-9>
- Who's spending their money? Some surprising answers. (2019) [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://www.marketingcharts.com/customer-centric/spending-trends-107347>
- Wojdyski, B.W., and N.J. Evans. 2016. Going native: Effects of disclosure position and language on the recognition and evaluation of online native advertising. *Journal of Advertising* 45(2): 157–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2015.1115380>

- Wojdyski, B. W., & Evans, N. J. (2020). The covert advertising recognition and effects (CARE) model: Processes of persuasion in native advertising and other masked formats. *International Journal of Advertising*, 39(1), 4-31. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1658438>
- Xie, W., Fowler-Dawson, A., & Tvauri, A. (2019). Revealing the relationship between rational fatalism and the online privacy paradox. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 38(7), 742-759. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2018.1552717>
- Young, A. L., & Quan-Haase, A. (2013). Privacy protection strategies on Facebook: The Internet privacy paradox revisited. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16(4), 479-500. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.777757>
- Zarouali, B., Poels, K., Walrave, M., & Ponnet, K. (2019). The impact of regulatory focus on adolescents' evaluation of targeted advertising on social networking sites. *International Journal of Advertising*, 38(2), 316-335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1419416>
- Zote, J. (2020). 55 critical social media statistics to fuel your 2020 strategy [Web article]. Retrieved from <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-statistics/>

Appendix A – Coding tree

Selective code (theme)	Axial codes (patterns)	Exemplar open codes	
Accepting targeting and valuing convenience	Perceiving data collection and targeting as useful	Appreciates relevant ads	
		“Logging in with Facebook is convenient”	
			Accepts cookies for convenience
	No concerns about data collection and targeting	No informational access concerns	
		Accepts cookies easily	
			Lenient with data disclosure
	Positive attitude towards targeted ads	Likes product	
		Uses ads as inspiration	
			Excited by ads
	Instagram as a mysterious, powerful consumer influencer	Feeling like Instagram knows them	“They know my interests”
“They know my demographics”			
“They partly know me”			
Feelings of uncertainty about data collection and targeting		“No idea why they target me”	
		“I never looked this up”	
		“Not sure what they know about me”	
		Clicks on ads	
Perceiving oneself as influenceable by Instagram ads		Ads raise curiosity	
		Triggered by discounts	
Attempting to hold onto consumer power and agency		Awareness of data collection and targeting	Perceived search behavior targeting
	Attempts comprehending targeting		
	Perceived high ad volume		
	Active data protection	Selectively discloses data	
		Attempts avoiding cookies	
			Having separate email addresses
	Feeling like Instagram does not or cannot know them	“They misinterpret me”	
		“They don’t know me”	
		“Your online behavior doesn’t represent your personality”	
	Perceiving oneself as resistant to Instagram advertisements	Purchases not influenceable	
Emotionally unaffected by ads			
		Never purchased from advertisement	

	Critical Instagram advertisements value indicators	Ad design needs to grab attention
		Judging advertisers' skills
		Few personally fitting ads
	Negative attitude towards targeted advertisements	No perceived personal fit
		Dislikes product
		Annoyed by ads
Low trust in Instagram, data collection and targeting	Informational access concerns	"It's not their business"
		Finds data sharing unnecessary
		Experiencing creepiness
	Skepticism towards data protection efforts	"They listen in"
		"Too lazy to make protection effort"
		Cookies feel forced
	Questioning their own behavior	"Maybe I shouldn't google it"
		"Stupid of me to click"
		"Maybe I should worry more"