

Ad Disclosures on Social Media: An Excessive Obsession?

A quantitative study of the effect ad disclosure presence and positioning has on viewers advertisement recognition and disclosure attentiveness

Abstract The way in which brands promote their products and services is constantly developing whilst adapting to the ever-changing media landscape. Today, it is all about communicating with customers in a two-way format, incorporating marketing in social channels and creating content of value. Consequently, many brands choose to advertise themselves through influencers on Instagram. However, incorporating paid content into an editorial feed, raises many ethical concerns in regards of how to disclose this content as advertisement. Swedish labelling policies require disclosures to be placed at the beginning of the post, clarifying who the advertisement owner is. However, these policies lack substantial empirical support.

This thesis challenges the Swedish marketing regulations and industry recommendations, by comparing these against previous studies on the subject. The findings of this study prove that the ad disclosure position does not have a significant effect on viewer attentiveness. This empirical evidence favours neither the regulations nor previous theories. Additionally, the presence of an ad disclosure is not as critical an element as has previously been thought, in the quest of clarifying the post's paid nature to the viewer. These results imply that instead of focusing solemnly on the ad disclosure, other post elements should be examined in order to identify the most effective way of disclosing the paid nature of an advertisement.

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Definitions

Advertisement (Ad) Disclosure = a disclosure indicating that a post is sponsored or paid for.

Advertisement Owner = the company paying to have their content advertised through the use of an influencer.

Advertorial = an advertisement in a newspaper or magazine that is designed to look like an article by the writers of the publication.¹

Attentiveness = in this thesis attentiveness relates to whether or not the viewer has seen the ad disclosure.

Deceptive Advertising = a manufacturer's use of confusing, misleading, or blatantly untrue statements when promoting a product.²

Digital Marketing Communication = marketing communication using digital interactive media intended primarily to promote products or to influence consumer behaviour.³

Influencer Marketing = a form of marketing in which focus is placed on specific key individuals' influence over potential buyers, and the subsequent orientation of marketing activities around these individuals.⁴

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) = a world business organisation helping businesses of all sizes and in all countries operating responsibly relating to marketing of products and services. The ICC has three main activities: rule setting, dispute resolution and policy advocacy.⁵

Instagram = a photo-sharing social networking service that enables users to take pictures, edit them with a selection of digital filters, and share them with friends and followers.

¹ Cambridge Dictionary, 2018

² Laws, 2017

³ International Chamber of Commerce, 2011

⁴ Duong, 2017

⁵ Wikipedia, 2018

Marknadsföringslagen (MFL) = Swedish law designed to promote the interests of consumers and businesses with regards to the marketing of products and services; protecting consumers from deceptive advertising through the enforcement legislation.

Native Advertising = the practice by which a marketer borrows from the credibility of a content publisher by presenting paid content in a format and location that matches the publisher's original content.⁶

Recognition = in this thesis, recognition relates to whether or not the viewer recognises the post as an ad.

Reklamombudsmannen (RO) = an organisation with the purpose of creating an ethical marketing environment in Sweden.

Reklamombudsmannens Opinionsnämnd (RON) = a committee under RO with the purpose of investigating reported cases given that no similar case exists.

Social Media Influencer = an individual who has the power to influence the perception of others and to affect their purchasing decisions due to his/her authority, knowledge, position or relationship with his/her audience through social media channels.

⁶ Wojdyski and Golan, 2016

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A Changed Media Landscape; Blending Advertising into Editorial Content

The ways in which brands market their products and services is constantly changing and developing. During the past decade, the practices of traditional marketing have developed into new forms of more personalised ways of reaching consumers. Brands are moving away from mass marketing and instead focusing on reaching a narrower set of consumers through more engaging mediums. Today, it is all about communicating with customers in a two-way format, developing a long-term following and a positive brand image; incorporating marketing in social channels, creating content of value and building a community around a brand, product or service. As a result, marketing through the use of influencers has become a medium widely adopted. This new form of marketing is known as influencer marketing, and falls under the category of native advertising.⁷ Native advertising aims to mimic the content of the rest of the media outlet. As a result of this, it often becomes unclear whether or not compensation has occurred.

1.1.2 Instagram and Influencers

During the last couple of years, the use of social media has grown a considerable amount. Today, the social media platform Instagram is used by more than half of all Swedish internet users (53%).⁸ 31% of all Swedish internet users in 2017 used Instagram on a daily basis, ranking the platform as the second most used social media channel after Facebook.⁹ With this high level of penetration amongst Swedes, Instagram has become a powerful platform - both from a social and business perspective.

Along with Instagram's usage growth, a new way for brands to reach consumers has emerged, through so called influencers. The Oxford Dictionaries defines an influencer as "a person with the ability to influence potential buyers of a product or service by promoting or recommending items on social media".¹⁰ Influencers are characterised by a combination of three different factors, which form the foundation for them being such powerful

⁷ See Definitions

⁸ Internetstiftelsen i Sverige, 2018

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ The Oxford Dictionaries, 2017

communicative tools; reach, contextual credibility and salesmanship.¹¹ Reach is defined as their ability to deliver a message to a large amount of people. Contextual credibility meaning they have a certain level of trust and authority from their audience. Finally, salesmanship implies the ability to explain things in a commercially convincing way to their audience.

The increased awareness of the possibilities of reaching and influencing consumers through the use of influencers and social media channels, has led companies of all sizes to explore this communicative tool for advertising purposes. Advertising through Instagram and influencers is primarily done by companies within the B2C sector.¹² According to a study by Burgess in 2016, 81% of marketers who had used influencer marketing believed it to be effective and 37% reported to have a better retention rate among consumers, as they claimed influencer advertisement conveyed more trust than traditional marketing.¹³ Advertising on social media has also demonstrated to be widely more effective in terms of money spent. The advertising metric CPM (cost per thousand impressions), shows that social media advertising generated a CPM of \$2.50, as opposed to that of broadcast TV (\$28) and newspaper/magazines (\$16). This clearly shows that with the goal of reaching as many relevant people at the lowest possible cost, social media advertising trumps that of traditional media.¹⁴

1.1.3. Swedish Legislation

With the rapid development of this new way of advertising, rules and regulations governing this area are today inadequate. This affects both the influencers, as well as the brand behind the advertisement. Subsequently, the expression “deceptive advertising” is a concept which has become widely associated with influencer marketing and a heavily debated issue in Sweden.

During the last 3 years, the number of influencers reported to Reklamombudsmannen (RO; Sweden’s equivalent to the Federal Trade Commission, FTC) for deceptive commercial collaborations, has escalated from 2 in 2015 to 24 in 2017. During 2017, a Swedish influencer was reported and taken to court (Patent- och marknadsdomstolen) for deceptive advertising. The charge against the influencer was in regard to the posting of commercial content on her blog and Instagram. The ad disclosures were not considered to be made clear

¹¹ Dada, 2017

¹² Nanju, 2017

¹³ Burgess, 2016

¹⁴ Lyfe Marketing, 2017

enough as they were positioned at the end of the posts, instead of at the beginning. On January 31st, 2018, the verdict was finalised stating that if the influencer is to violate the court decision, a penalty of 100,000 SEK per opportunity will be issued.¹⁵ This is the first time a Swedish influencer has been taken to court and penalised for deceptive advertising.¹⁶ In light of this recent ruling, the issue of deceptive advertising and ad disclosures in social media is as relevant as ever. Furthermore, it becomes clear, when looking at the increasing number of influencers being reported to RO that there is a need to define what constitutes deceptive advertising, outlining what is allowed and what is not when disclosing paid content.

1.1.4 Instagram Creates Standardised Disclosure Format

In June 2017, Instagram launched a new feature: a standardised format for influencers to be able to label posts as sponsored whenever paid for by an advertiser.¹⁷ The feature includes a disclosure at the very top of the post, under the users Instagram name and above the image posted, with the wording “Paid partnership with [tag to business partner’s Instagram account]”. This feature contributes to a general format for all sponsored posts, adding clarity and clearly conveying the advertisement owner. On June 14th, 2017, along with the beta launch of the feature, Instagram wrote on its own blog that the purpose of this new feature was “*bringing more transparency to commercial relationships on Instagram*”.¹⁸ Furthermore, the company states that “*as more and more partnerships form on Instagram, it’s important to ensure the community is able to easily recognise when someone they follow is paid to post content*”.¹⁹

1.2 Problem Area

When writing this thesis, a Swedish jurisprudence has recently been established regarding ad disclosure positioning when marketing through the use of influencers. Furthermore, recommendations created by industry organisations exist, however these have not yet been officially incorporated by law. Sveriges Annonörer, an industry organisation with the purpose of aiding its members with investments in advertising and media, have created a recommendation for the influencer marketing industry. This recommendation states: “[...]ad

¹⁵ Grönlund, 2018

¹⁶ Eltell, 2018

¹⁷ Techcrunch, 2017

¹⁸ Instagram Press, 2017

¹⁹ Instagram Business Blog, 2017

disclosures must be marked out at the very beginning of a paid post, along with information in regard to the sender”.

The reports to RO towards Swedish influencers, are based solemnly on the general Swedish law governing all types of marketing, Marknadsföringslagen (MFL), and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). MFL 9§ states: *“All marketing must be constructed and presented in such a manner, that it is clear to the viewer it is in fact marketing. The marketer behind the material should also be made clear”*.²⁰ Furthermore, the ICC states, under chapter D, Advertising and Marketing Communications Using Digital Interactive Media: *“Where a digital marketing communication is individually addressed to a consumer, the subject descriptor and context should make this clear. Subject descriptors should not be misleading and the commercial nature of the communication should not be concealed. The commercial nature of product endorsements or reviews created by marketers should be clearly indicated and not be listed as being from an individual consumer or independent body.”*²¹ Both the law and the recommendations require disclosures to conform to the following: Firstly, the disclosure should convey information regarding the nature of the post, i.e. the fact that compensation has occurred. Secondly, the ad disclosure must inform the viewer of who the advertisement owner is, i.e. the brand advertising their products or services. Lastly, the disclosure must be placed at the very beginning of the advertisement. Cecilia Tisell, director general of Konsumentverket, states: *“Consumers have the right to, in an easy and understandable way, be able to differentiate between what is paid content, and what is editorial content”*.²²

We believe that the existing industry recommendations and the subsequent jurisprudence lack substantial empirical support. Hence, the judicial grounds are not correctly accustomed to this new form of marketing.

1.3 Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to test the current presumptions of which the judiciary decision was based upon in the ruling against the Swedish influencer on January 31st, 2018. We challenge the current Swedish legislation in regard to influencer marketing and ad disclosures, comparing this to theories relating to ad disclosures in traditional media

²⁰ Svensk Marknadsföringslag, 2008

²¹ International Chamber of Commerce, 2011

²² Tisell, 2016

channels, such as online newspapers.²³ Furthermore, the aim of this study is to provide legislators with a better insight of what official regulations should include when it comes to brand's advertising on social media platforms through the use of influencers.

We recognise social media marketing as a unique marketing format, highly differentiated from other types of marketing - traditional and digital. Hence, we believe that regulations should be accustomed to the nature of the specific platform and its subsequent audience. The purpose of this thesis is to shed light on the current grey area prevailing with regards to what constitutes as a deceptive presentation of this type of content, both in an ethical and legal manner. Moreover, we aim to provide a better understanding of how users perceive ad disclosures on Instagram in order to clarify and call attention to what future regulations on the matter should include.

This culminates into the following research question:

“Are ad disclosures really the main indicators of a sponsored post on Instagram? If so, does the location of an ad disclosure affect consumers attentiveness and their recognition of the nature of the advertisement?”

1.4 Expected Contribution

With this thesis, we study the attentiveness towards ad disclosures among Instagram post viewers. We investigate this by measuring the differences in viewers' attentiveness to the ad disclosure, depending on the disclosure position. Furthermore, we study if the location of the ad disclosure has a significant effect on viewers' recognition on whether the post is an advertisement or not. This is done by tabulating ad disclosure location against advertisement recognition. Additionally, we study the effect of moderating factors; if viewers stress-level has an effect on their attentiveness towards the ad disclosure. This is done by tabulating stress-level against attentiveness of ad disclosure.

With our study, we hope to provide legislators, marketers and influencers with an indication of what constitutes a correct placement of ad disclosures when advertising on Instagram through the use of influencers. This, we believe, is a valuable first step in the creation of future guidelines and recommendations. Furthermore, we believe that these findings could provide better insights into what revisions should be made to Swedish marketing law (MFL). We believe that there is a great need for marketing regulations to

²³ Wojdyski, 2016

account for this relatively new form of advertising. Finally, we hope to provide a better understanding for what causes a viewer of an Instagram post to perceive it as an advertisement. This in turn gives an indication of the role ad disclosures actually have in conveying the nature of the content.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Formulation

In the following section, a theoretical framework supporting our research will be presented. First, we will present what has been studied previously on the subject of ad disclosures, in order to determine a research gap. Then, we will continue by covering previous research and theories relevant to our hypotheses. We cover previous research on: native advertising, visual hierarchy, factors affecting viewer attentiveness, information processing as well as persuasion theories.

2.1 Previous Studies on Ad Disclosures

Within the field of ad disclosures, a variety of different studies have been conducted, exploring different mediums - including TV²⁴, news articles²⁵, search sites²⁶, blog posts²⁷ and social media posts^{28,29}. Attempts have been made in order to examine individuals' abilities to differentiate between advertising and editorial content. A great deal of these previous studies are examined through the perspective of the persuasion knowledge model and the underlying mechanism of the responses to native advertising. Boerman and Reijmersdal studied the effects of ad disclosures on TV, and came to the conclusion that the ability to remember the ad disclosure was higher if placed in the middle or end of the television program. This due to the fact that the involvement in the program decreased the respondent's ability to process and to remember the ad disclosure, if placed in the beginning. Wojdyski and Evans explored the effects that ad disclosure language and position has on viewers ability to recognise the nature of native advertising content. This was tested in an online newspaper outlet. Furthermore, the authors examine whether or not disclosure position affects visual attention. Additionally, Wojdyski explored, in another study³⁰, how readers of online news recognised and perceived native advertising. Specifically, how individual readers interpret the ad disclosure labels set out by the U.S. Federal Guidelines. Moreover, he studied how the readers interpretation of the article content shaped their understanding of it. Four disclosure characteristics were tested against recognition of the sponsored content, and furthermore how recognition influenced the readers perception of the article and the sponsor.

²⁴ Boerman et al, 2014

²⁵ Wojdyski and Evans, 2016

²⁶ Nair and Sahni, 2016

²⁷ Carr and Hayes, 2014

²⁸ Boerman and Kruikemeier, 2016

²⁹ Evans et al, 2017

³⁰ Wojdyski, 2016

Nair and Sahni³¹ explored if and to what extent native advertising is a means of deception. They did this by conducting experiments on native advertising on a mobile restaurant-search platform. Carr and Hayes³² explored the presence of ad disclosures on blog posts, and came to the conclusion that viewers get a better understanding of the persuasive intent when an ad disclosure is present. Finally, Boerman and Kruikemeier studied how consumers respond to social media advertising when confronted with targeted tweets sent by brands and political parties.

Few studies on the subject focus on native advertising in a social media context, and even fewer focus on Instagram specifically. Consequently, a research gap is found relating to the effects on ad recognition of native advertising in an Instagram context. Furthermore, few studies target the actual disclosure placement in relation to whether or not a native advertisement is seen as deceptive.

2.2 Hypothesis Formulation

2.2.1 Disclosure Presence

2.2.1.1 Deceptive Advertising and the Persuasion Knowledge Model

Whenever a consumer is exposed to any form of advertisement, they have the right to know that what they are being exposed to, is in fact an ad.³³ Ads that consumers can't distinguish from the rest of the content on the platform are seen as deceptive, which challenges the ethical aspect of marketing. Native ads are especially scrutinised when it comes to deceptive advertising, as these types of ads are generally similar to the surrounding content. This makes it difficult for viewers to distinguish these advertisements from the rest of the content, which can lead to a wrongful impression of who the sender of the message is. As a result of this, many brands and influencers have become very meticulous in the labelling of their paid posts, in order to avoid any harmful predicaments - whether it be ethical or judiciary.³⁴

A study by Hyman et al examined how consumers perceive native advertisements, and came to the conclusion that ad disclosures result in a higher level of advertisement recognition.³⁵ Furthermore, they conclude that self-regulatory ad disclosures (meaning the sender chooses themselves how to disclose the ad) is not sufficient to eliminate the risk of the ad being classified as deceptive. Moreover, they conclude that advertisement on social media

³¹ Nair and Sahni, 2016

³² Carr and Hayes, 2014

³³ Svensk Marknadsföringslag, 2008

³⁴ Hagängen, 2018

³⁵ Hyman et al, 2016

platforms is less recognisable than in traditional media, which further highlights that there is a need for conformity in regulations on social media platforms.³⁶

According to Wojdyski, two processes must take place in order for the viewer to properly understand that they are being exposed to an advertisement. Firstly, they need to notice the ad and secondly, they must comprehend the language of the disclosure.³⁷ The process of ad recognition has also been studied by Friestad and Wright, who introduced the persuasion knowledge model.³⁸ The model is a framework outlining how consumers understand and respond to persuasive messages.³⁹ The persuasion knowledge theory claims that when a consumer is continuously exposed to advertisements, they develop a deeper understanding of the persuasive intent over time. Consequently, their ability to identify persuasive messages increases. Once the consumer has actively seen the ad disclosure and is aware of the intent of the post, their persuasion knowledge is activated.⁴⁰ Studies have shown that ad disclosures help consumers activate their persuasion knowledge. Carr and Hayes found a greater level of activation of persuasion knowledge among viewers if blog posts were in fact labelled with an ad disclosure. The respondents in their study showed a greater understanding of the paid relationship between the brand and the blogger when they were exposed to the ad disclosure. This indicates that viewers get a better understanding of the persuasive intent when an ad disclosure is present.⁴¹

A study conducted in 2009 by Kim et al showed, in contrast to Carr and Hayes, that ad disclosures may not be needed in order to activate persuasion knowledge. This was because the majority of the respondents in their study recognised advertisements based on the nature of the content, and not the disclosure itself. However, this study was conducted on advertorials. We believe that greater similarities exist between blogs and Instagram, as opposed to newspapers. Therefore, based on Carr and Hayes study, the following hypothesis is formed:

H1: *When an ad disclosure is present, viewers are more likely to recognise the post as an ad.*

³⁶ Reijmersdal et al, 2010

³⁷ Wojdyski 2016

³⁸ Friestad and Wright, 1994

³⁹ Friestad and Wright, 1994

⁴⁰ Reijmersdal, 2016

⁴¹ Carr and Hayes, 2014

2.2.2 Disclosure Position

2.2.2.1 *Visual Attention and Visual Hierarchy*

Similarities can be seen between advertorials and influencer marketing, as they both blur the line between what is editorial content and what is paid content.⁴² Influencers are predominantly seen upon and identify themselves as individuals, explaining their informal manner of communication. Thus, it is natural that their content may not come across as sponsored. Similarly, native advertising in an editorial context, such as newspapers, might not come across as advertisement either, due to the fact that the post may be perceived as providing the reader with editorial value. Due to the similarities between native advertising and influencer marketing, we choose to focus on studies exploring ad disclosures within native advertising. A study by Wojdyski and Evans⁴³ explores if viewers attentiveness of the advertisement disclosure (in a newspaper context) differs depending on where the ad disclosure is positioned. This was tested through a quantitative study as well as an eye-tracking experiment. In the first study, results showed that, out of the three different conditions tested (top, middle, bottom), 90% of viewers paid attention to the disclosure label when placed in the middle. Furthermore, 60% of participants noticed the disclosure in the bottom condition, and only 40% of participants noticed it when in the top condition.⁴⁴ Thus, these results proved that the middle condition was the most effective, as it improved participants attention to the disclosure. These results were also confirmed by the second study, where the middle condition attracted greater attention and likelihood of fixation, compared to the other two.

A study carried out by Faraday in 2000, explores the visual organisation of web page layouts outlining a framework based on viewers cognitive processes when viewing a web page.⁴⁵ The author argues that a web page is made up of a set of layers of different perceptual elements, and these elements in turn guide the viewer through the web page. Tufte suggests that that the viewer arranges the different layers, thus creating a layer hierarchy.⁴⁶ In Faraday's model, the process of reading a web page is divided into two stages - the search phase and the scanning phase, of which the first phase is particularly interesting for our study. The search phase decides where the viewer's attention should enter the page, and thus the design elements further decide where attention should follow. Elements which hold a higher

⁴² Evans, 2017

⁴³ Wojdyski and Evans, 2016

⁴⁴ Wojdyski and Evans, 2017

⁴⁵ Faraday, 2000

⁴⁶ Tufte, 1998

order in the visual hierarchy in the search phase are motion, size, images, colour and font. In order for an element to be noticed, one should aim to make the object stand out through the use of one of these elements. The most important variable in the search phase is motion, as movement draws immediate, automatic attention to an object, causing it to “pop out”.⁴⁷ Furthermore, larger objects will be focused on rather than smaller objects.⁴⁸ Colour can be used to determine which elements are more important than others.⁴⁹ The colour red is preferred when gaining attention, as the colour physically stimulates the body, raising blood pressure and heart rate, as well as it creates a sense of urgency.⁵⁰ Typographical cueing systems can be used as non-verbal devices for attracting and focusing a viewer’s attention.⁵¹

Images are of particular importance to our study, as Instagram is a medium dominated by imagery, with its purpose to present users with a platform for taking and sharing photos with friends and followers. Studies by Stone and Glock⁵² as well as by Brandt⁵³, both eye-tracking experiments, provide empirical evidence that viewers of a subject focus on imagery before viewing attached text. Brandt concludes that “*pictures have an exceedingly high attentional value; reading copy is only a last resort*”. This aligns with the guidelines set out by Faraday that “*images will be attended to in preference to text*”. This is confirmed by a Yale study⁵⁴ which states that a viewer will “*begin to pick out specific information, first from graphics, and only afterward do they start parsing the ‘harder’ medium of text*”. Another study⁵⁵ investigates eye gaze patterns and whether these comply with the F-pattern viewing style presented by Nielsen.⁵⁶ Different web pages’ content was explored (image vs. text) as well as the user’s task (searching vs. browsing). They found that the F-shaped pattern holds true only whilst browsing or searching text-based web pages. When presented with image-based web pages, users show greater fixations on the images. Fixation then dramatically drops, further down they scroll on the webpage.

In the case of influencer marketing on Instagram, we believe, based on the above theories, that the dominating presence of imagery results in viewers ignoring ad disclosures which are placed above images. Furthermore, Instagram’s official ad disclosure does not

⁴⁷ Triesman, 1988

⁴⁸ Arnheim, 1955

⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁰ Daschburst, 2017

⁵¹ Glynn et al, 1985

⁵² Stone and Glock, 1981

⁵³ Brandt, 1954

⁵⁴ Lynch and Horton, 1997

⁵⁵ Shresta and Lenz, 2007

⁵⁶ Nielsen, 2006

make use of the above-mentioned findings, leading to the disclosure being less noticeable to the viewer. Many similar characteristics exist between native advertising in an editorial context and influencer marketing in a social media context. Based on the findings from previous research, we form the following hypotheses:

H2: *Viewers are more likely to notice the ad disclosure, if placed in the middle of the ad.*

H3: *Viewers are less likely to notice the ad disclosure if placed above the image.*

2.2.2.2 Level of Involvement

We believe there to be notable differences between the consumption of Instagram content opposed to i.e. that of newspaper content. A reader of a newspaper article is considered to be more involved with the content, and therefore processes and registers the information to a higher extent. Instagram on the other hand, is mainly comprised of visual material, and therefore information processing is done on a lower level.⁵⁷ In order to understand how viewers process information when exposed to paid Instagram posts, we use previous studies on information processing strategies and cognitive processes in order to determine the individual advertising effects. A study carried out by Mitchell specifies the different stages in the information acquisition process, the cognitive processes initiated by exposure to an advertisement, as well as the factors which may affect these processes.⁵⁸ Mitchell suggests that depending on whether the viewer demonstrates low or high involvement towards the advertisement, this affects the retrieval of the amount of information stored and recalled - the depth of information processing. The results of Mitchell's study imply two dimensions of attention strategy, and these may lead to different models of semantic information acquisition.⁵⁹ When characterised by high involvement, information from the advertisement is actively processed and evaluated. When low involvement prevails, information from the ad is either actively processed, but not critically evaluated, or the advertisement message is not comprehended and thus no opinions in regards of the message is formed. This is a direct consequence of the lower level of attention devoted to the advertisement.

⁵⁷ MacInnis and Price, 1987

⁵⁸ Mitchell, 1980

⁵⁹ *ibid*

The processing of information influences to what extent the viewer actually pays attention to an ad, and the likelihood of paying attention to an ad disclosure, regardless of its position. Lavie states that the ability to focus attention improves under task conditions of high perceptual load, but deteriorates under conditions of high load on cognitive control processes such as working memory.⁶⁰

A study by Baram showed that short term stress can actually disrupt the process in the brain that collects and stores memory.⁶¹ Furthermore, other studies have shown that stress leads to impaired attention⁶² and higher error rates.⁶³

Based on the above theories, we form the fourth, and last hypothesis:

H4: *Ad disclosure position has a greater effect on the attentiveness of people under high stress levels, as opposed to people under low stress levels.*

⁶⁰ Lavie, 2010

⁶¹ Science Daily, 2008

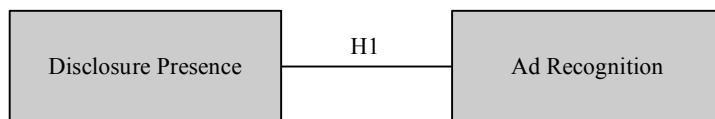
⁶² Vedhara et al, 2000

⁶³ Sanger et al, 2014

2.3 Framework of Study

To summarise our theoretical framework, the study is divided into two different parts - attentiveness and recognition. Both aspects have the same purpose of ad recognition. We study the effects the position of the ad disclosure has on viewer recognition, making the viewer come to the understanding that the content which they are seeing, is in fact advertisement.

Disclosure Presence



Disclosure Position

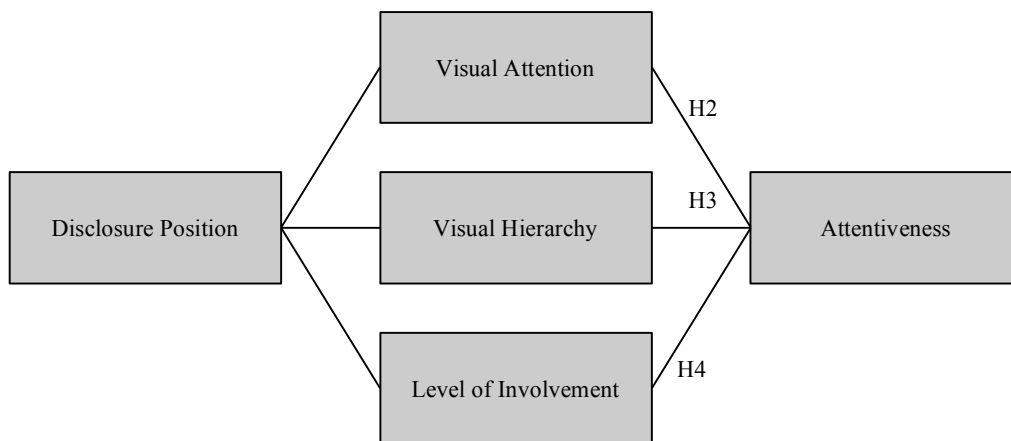


Figure 1 Framework of study and hypotheses

The model “Disclosure Presence” covers the first part of our study. Based on our first hypothesis, this model shows the relationship between the presence of an ad disclosure and the consumers recognition of the post being an ad. After having established this, we move on to our second and more complex model, which shows the relationship between the positioning of the ad disclosure and three different aspects based on previous theory (visual attention, visual hierarchy and level of involvement) affecting the level of attentiveness.

2.4 Hypotheses

Based on the above theoretical framework, our hypotheses are as follows:

H1: *When an ad disclosure is present, viewers are more likely to recognise the post as an ad.*

H2: *Viewers are more likely to notice the ad disclosure if placed in the middle of the ad.*

H3: *Viewers are less likely to notice the ad disclosure if placed above the image.*

H4: *Ad disclosure position has a greater effect on the attentiveness on people under high stress levels, as opposed to people under low stress levels.*

3. Methodology

In the following section, the scientific approach of our study will be presented. We will give a detailed account of the study design as well as how the data was collected. Furthermore, we will explain how the validity and reliability of our study was ensured.

3.1 Choice of Scientific Approach and Method

As this study aims at exploring the differences in attentiveness and recognition related to the positioning of ad disclosures on Instagram, we use a quantitative data collection approach. Although similar studies measuring attentiveness effects of ad disclosures have been done before, these have either been conducted in different mediums or different formats (i.e. native advertising in online newspapers), or with the focus on another party, i.e. influencers or businesses. Hence, this study focuses on the target audience; an Instagram user. A quantitative approach is chosen due to its objective orientation and emphasis on quantification in the collection and analysis of data, in turn leading to a greater amount of credibility.⁶⁴ Additionally, a quantitative data approach allows for collecting and handling larger amounts of data in a more efficient manner. However, a quantitative approach does not provide the same level of depth in data, in comparison to a qualitative approach.

A literary review was conducted beforehand, where established theories and concepts were studied relating to native advertising in various mediums, advertising psychology and social media behaviour to name a few. This was done in order to understand and structure the research interests with the study, and in turn formulate the hypotheses. Consequently, a research strategy was formed in order to test said hypotheses.⁶⁵ In-depth interviews were also conducted with professionals from influencer agencies (Cube Media and Cure Media) as well as one interview with Sveriges Annonssörer in order to get an insight to both perspectives in the industry regarding the use of ad disclosures. A deductive approach was applied, with the data collected and observations leading to either a rejection or confirmation of the hypotheses. Deduction begins with an expectation of a specific pattern, which is then tested against the observations conducted from research.⁶⁶ To summarise, a deductive method was chosen due the possibilities to explain causal relationships between the concepts and variables and to be able to generalise our research findings.

⁶⁴ Bryman and Bell, 2015

⁶⁵ Wilson, 2010

⁶⁶ Babbie, 2010

An experimental research design was applied in order to investigate the cause and effect relationship between the dependent and independent variables, due to its robustness and trustworthiness in its causal findings.⁶⁷ The study comprised of a total of five experimental groups, differentiated by the manipulation of the independent variables. Each experimental subject was exposed to only one version of the manipulated independent variable.

3.2 Setting of Experiment

3.2.1 Data Collection

A questionnaire was used for collection of the data. In order for the data to be collected from a representative sample of people, in terms of socioeconomic background, age and gender, as well as a mixed level of social media usage, the questionnaire was distributed to people at the Stockholm Central Station. This was done through handing out a pamphlet to people who were waiting for their train. The data collection took place during four separate days, ranging from 4-5 hours per occasion.

The pamphlet briefly described the study and included a link and a QR-code to the questionnaire. Using this system, people were flexible to answer when they had a spare moment; something we believed would lead to more accurate results.

3.2.2 Sampling

A total of 507 participants partook in answering the questionnaire, but only 270 (N=270) responses were completed and thus included in the study. Participants ranged from 13-70 years of age (M=30,8, SD=11,8). The variety of ages was an important aspect to include, as a younger generation will more likely have a different experience and attitude towards Instagram and social media, and therefore also be more acquainted with sponsored posts and influencers in contrast to an older generation. The sample group consisted of 74,1% female respondents and 24,4% male. Respondents varied in terms of occupations (40% students, 54,4% employed, 1,5% job seeking, 1,9% retired, 2,2% other). All respondents were Swedish speaking.

Both active and non-active Instagram users were included in the study, in order to truly be able to study the effects of ad positioning on viewers advertisement perception.

⁶⁷ Bryman and Bell, 2015

3.3 Experimental Design

3.3.1 Structure of Study

In order to test our hypotheses, all participants were randomly assigned one out of five different conditions; four treatment conditions and one controlled condition. The different treatment conditions related to the positioning of the ad disclosure. Each respondent was thus exposed to one condition only, followed by the same questions for all respondents after they had seen and studied the Instagram post which they had been exposed to. In order to be able to compare the results between the different conditions, everything except the positioning of the manipulated Instagram post was kept the same. Throughout the questionnaire, a 7-point Likert scale was used wherever respondents were asked to what extent they agreed/disagreed with a statement.

The experiment was conducted using a questionnaire through the online service Qualtrics for collection of the primary data. First, all respondents read a scenario relating to the consumption of Instagram and social media. The purpose of this was to get all respondents in the same state of mind, placing the manipulated condition in a typical daily scenario. Hereafter, each respondent was randomly exposed to one of the five conditions. After this, respondents answered the survey questions.

The questionnaire comprised of a total of 7 question blocks and 25 questions. The first block related to initial perception of the Instagram post's content in terms of the ad disclosure, the sponsored nature of the posts, as well as respondents' alertness to the disclosure and image. Questions included whether or not respondents had seen an ad disclosure. If respondents answered yes, they were asked about the positioning of the ad disclosure. Hereafter, all respondents were asked questions with regards to their perception, whether or not the content made them believe the ad was sponsored. If answered yes, they were asked to specify the reason for this. Thereafter respondents were asked which brand was behind the Instagram post.

The second block of questions, focused purely on the attitudinal and behavioural aspects towards the content of the Instagram post. Attitude was measured through respondents marking out their attitude in terms of bad/good, dislike/like and negative/positive. Behaviour was measured in terms of likelihood of taking actions through five statements describing the likelihood of clicking on the ad, search additional information about product, reposting content, recommending product to friends and family and lastly, buying the product.

The third block collected information about attitudes towards the influencer. Again, general attitude was measured in terms of bad/good, dislike/like and negative/positive. Thereafter, respondents were asked to describe their attitude towards the post through 12 adjectives. In the fourth block the same procedure was done but with regards to the brand. Furthermore, in the fifth block, questions about the respondents Instagram usage were asked as well as attitude towards advertisement in general and on social media. Lastly, in the sixth block, demographic questions about the respondent were asked (gender, occupation, age).

3.3.2 Reliability

In order to assure the reliability of our data, several questions asked respondents the same thing, but was formulated differently. These questions related to the general attitude towards the post, the influencer and the brand. These questions took the form of “What was your overall attitude towards X” and respondent answered by rating their attitude on three Likert scales; good/bad, like/dislike, positive/negative. This was done as a means to be able to sort out those respondents who were not paying attention to the questions being asked, as we would consider those respondents to being unreliable in their answers, disallowing us to have faith in consistency.

3.3.3 Independent Variable

The chosen stimulus was a manipulated and fictional Instagram post, by a fictional influencer. (*lisamat*). When choosing the image to be displayed and the product being advertised in the post, the aim was to be as gender neutral as possible, yet still make the content feel authentic. The caption and product description were relatively vague in regard to the advertised brand, in order to lessen the chance of previous bias or other irrelevant opinions to details having an effect on the sample group’s responses. All the above precautions, were made with the purpose to avoid schema-based preconceptions.⁶⁸ The advertised product was clearly displayed in the image, with the brand name visible in the caption. The brand name is again mentioned in the caption, along with the product name. The fictional Instagram post serves as the independent variable in this study.

⁶⁸ Halkias, 2015



Image 1 Chosen stimulus for experimental study

3.3.4 Manipulation of Independent Variable

The manipulation of the independent variable (ad disclosure position) was done in order to determine whether or not the independent variable had an influence on the dependent variables (attentiveness and recognition). This allows for measuring the level of attentiveness of the disclosure and recognition of the nature of the post, depending on the manipulation of the independent variable. Each experimental subject was allocated one experimental group, exposing them to one version of the independent variable. The manipulation was done by altering the position of the ad disclosure in the Instagram post. The conditions included:

AD 0	<i>Control condition. Stimuli in its original form; No ad disclosure</i>
AD 1	<i>Ad disclosure positioned above image</i>
AD 2	<i>Ad disclosure positioned below image, in the beginning of caption</i>

AD 3	<i>Ad disclosure positioned in the midst of caption</i>
AD 4	<i>Ad disclosure positioned in the end of caption</i>

Table 1 Ad disclosure conditions (AD 0-4)

Below, the Instagram post variations are seen, with the ad disclosure position in each post marked out:

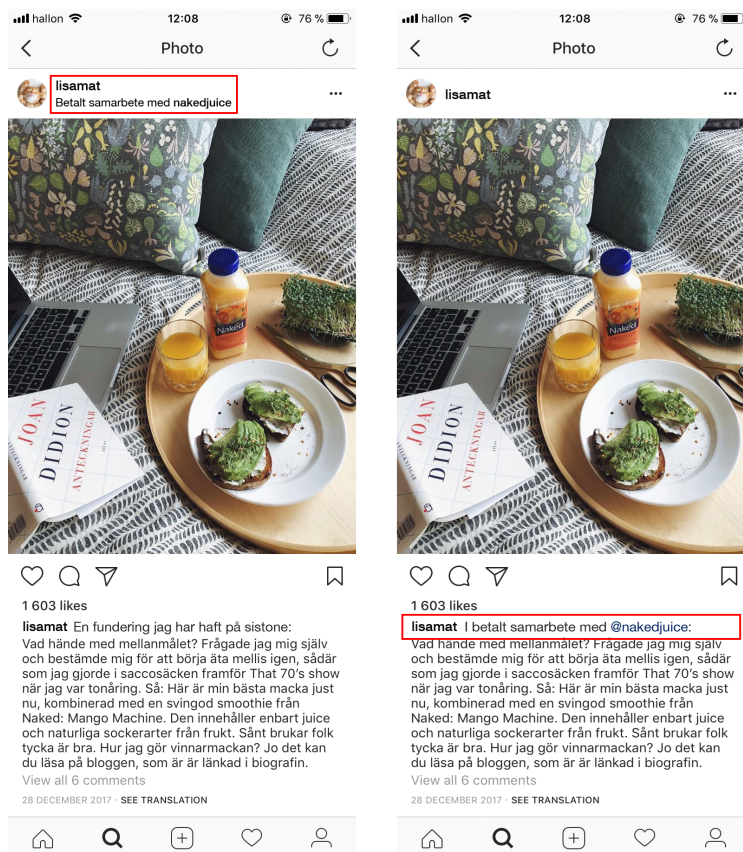


Image 2 Condition AD 1 and AD 2



Image 3 Condition AD 3 and AD 4

3.3.5 Dependent Variables

The dependent variables included viewers recognition and attentiveness to the ad disclosure. The dependent variables are believed to be affected accordingly to the positioning of the ad disclosure.

3.3.6 Framework of Variables

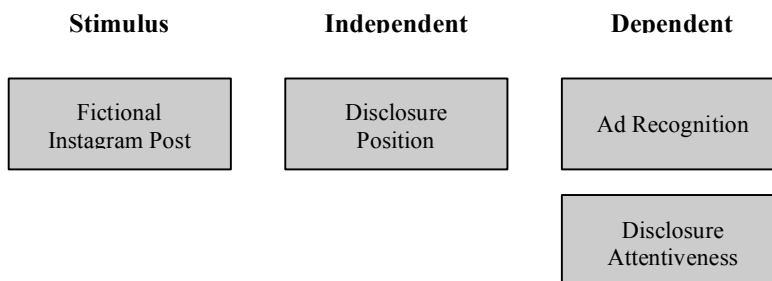


Figure 1 Framework of variables

3.3.7 Results Analysis

When analysing the results conducted from the survey, the statistical analysis tool SPSS was used. The results were extracted by conducting descriptive tests and cross tabulations. The descriptive tests were used in order to measure the differences in viewers attentiveness to the ad disclosure, depending on the disclosure position. Cross tabulations were conducted in order to measure ad disclosure location against advertisement recognition. Additionally, a cross-tab test was made to study if stress-level has an effect on attentiveness, by tabulating these two against each other. Apart from the above-mentioned variables studied in the results, the data set also included variables explaining attitude, behaviour and viewer's state of mind. When analysing the results, none of the variables relating to attitude or behaviour proved to be significant. The same applied to the majority of the moderating factors – the only variable which proved to be significant was the one relating to the respondent's stress-level. Hence, the variables which were not significant were excluded from the analysis.

Questions relating to the respondent's Instagram usage as well as demographics were also included in the survey. The intention was to make comparisons between the respondents, grouping them by Instagram usage habits and demographic factors such as age. Once again, no significant differences existed, hence no such comparisons were made.

3.4 Pre-study

3.4.1 Method

Prior to the main study experiment, a pre-study made in Qualtrics with 61 recorded responses was conducted. The pre-study included four alterations of the independent variable, and were the same as those of the main study. The pre-study did however not include a control condition. Subsequently, the pre-study comprised of four experimental groups, each respondent randomly exposed to one independent variable alteration. After being exposed to the stimuli, respondents were asked three questions. The first question related to whether or not the respondent had seen an ad disclosure or not. If the respondents answered “no” here, they were not asked any more questions and sent to the end of the survey. If the respondents answered “yes” to the first question, they were asked which brand was behind the native Instagram ad, followed by a question where the ad disclosure was placed in the post. The pre-study was sent out on social media to friends and family. The aim of the pre-study was to make sure the criterion for measurement validity was achieved, assessing the concept's value and feasibility.

3.4.2 Results

The results from our pre-study showed that most respondents noticed the ad disclosure when it was placed in the end of the caption of the Instagram post (81,8%). These results strengthen the study carried out by Wojdyski and Evans on ad disclosure position on a native advertising platform. Furthermore, the experimental group in which most respondents could correctly recollect where they had seen the ad disclosure, were also those who had been exposed to the ad disclosure at the end of the post (85,7%). However, the group with the majority of respondents of which could correctly recollect the brand name (Naked Juice), were those exposed to the ad disclosure at the very beginning of the post, before to the image (61,5%).

4. Results and Analysis

In the following section, key results from the main study will be presented and analysed. This will be used in order to reach a conclusion whether to reject or accept our hypotheses as well as contribute to the discussion in the next section.

4.1 Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Characteristics of the survey respondents aims at getting an understanding of the sample group and their Instagram usage. These are presented below.

"Do you use Instagram?"	
<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
90.0%	10.0%

Table 2 Whether or not respondent used Instagram

"How often do you visit Instagram?" (n=243)	
<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Every day	75.9%
Several times a week	8.1%
Several times a month	2.2%
Very seldom	3.3%
Never	0.4%

Table 3 Frequency of visits to Instagram

Out of a total sample group of N=270, 90% use Instagram. Within this group, 75.9% use Instagram on a daily basis, 8.1% several times a week, 2.2% several times a month and 3.3% use Instagram very seldom. Only 0.4% of those subjects who have Instagram, never use it.

Main reason for visiting Instagram		
To see what my friends are up to	206	75.9%
As a means to pass time	170	62.6%
To be entertained	120	44.4%
To get inspired	109	40.4%
To see what idols/celebrities are up to	79	29.3%
To stay informed on news	50	18.5%

Table 4 Main reason for visiting Instagram

The main reason for respondents Instagram usage, is to see what friends are up to (75.9%), followed by using it as a means to pass time (62.6%). Thereafter to be entertained (44.4%), to

get inspired (40.4%), see what idols/celebrities are up to (29.3%) and lastly to stay informed on news (18.5%).

4.2 Recognition of Advertisement Nature

The first part of the analysis aims at shedding light on whether or not the viewer recognises the post as an advertisement, as opposed to part of the regular content.

Significance	Cramer's V	Presence of ad disclosure (AD)	"Did you percieve the post as an ad?"	
			Yes	No
0.000	0.360	Yes; AD 1-4 (n=211)	83.4%	16.6%
		No; AD 0 (n=59)	45.8%	54.2%

Table 4 Whether or not respondents perceived the post as an advertisement or not. Conditions AD 1-4 against AD 0.

The results show that, there is a significant difference between viewers perception of the post being an advertisement, depending on whether subjects were exposed to an ad disclosure or not. 83,4% of those who were exposed to an ad disclosure in the stimuli (AD 1-4) confirmed that they had percieved the post as an ad, whilst in the group that was exposed to the control variable, the majority confirmed they did not actually recognise it as an advertisement.

Empirical support found for H1.

H1: *When an ad disclosure is present, viewers are more likely to recognise the post as an ad.*

Even though the majority of respondents exposed to the control condition did not perceive the post as an ad, it is worth noticing that 45.8% did state they perceived the post as an ad. This suggests that there might be other elements apart from the ad disclosure in the post that signalise the nature of the advertisement.

Furthermore, when looking upon what made viewers perceive the post as an ad, we see that there are a variety of aspects contributing to this perception of the post being a commercial collaboration, as seen below:

Significance	Cramer's V	Position of ad disclosure (AD)	"What made you believe the post was a commercial collaboration?"					
			<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Picture</i>	<i>Caption</i>	<i>Call to action</i>	<i>Ad disclosure</i>	<i>Entirety</i>
0.000	0.262	AD 0 (n=59)	0.0%	25.9%	37.0%	3.7%	0.0%	33.3%
		AD 1 (n=59)	0.0%	5.9%	17.6%	0.0%	58.8%	17.6%
		AD 2 (n=49)	0.0%	11.4%	6.8%	0.0%	72.7%	9.1%
		AD 3 (n=50)	2.4%	4.8%	16.7%	0.0%	52.4%	23.8%
		AD 4 (n=53)	2.6%	18.4%	13.2%	0.0%	36.8%	28.9%

Table 5 What made respondent believe the post was a commercial collaboration. Conditions AD 0-4.

Upon answering the question “What made you believe the post was a commercial collaboration?” the results showed great variation in responses. Nevertheless, across all groups, the majority of respondents who understood the nature of the ad, did so due to seeing the ad disclosure.

4.3 Attention Towards Ad Disclosure

The second part of the analysis focuses on exploring the respondents attentiveness towards the ad disclosure, hence its position.

4.3.1 Acknowledgement of Ad Disclosure

This analysis depicts if the viewer saw the ad disclosure or not.

Significance	Position of ad disclosure (AD)	"Did you notice an ad disclosure?"	
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
0.587	AD 1 (n=59)	78.0%	22.0%
	AD 2 (n=49)	73.5%	26.5%
	AD 3 (n=50)	68.0%	32.0%
	AD 4 (n=53)	67.9%	32.1%

Table 6 Whether or not respondents noticed the ad disclosure. Conditions AD 1 - AD 4.

In order to find out whether or not the same conclusion applies to native advertisements on Instagram, similar tests to the ones Wojdyski carried out in 2016 were conducted. Studying the differences in attention towards the positioning of ad disclosure between the different conditions (AD 1-4), we see a Pearson Chi-Square value of 0,587 (2-sided asymptotic significance). This suggests that there is no significant difference in the noticing of the ad disclosure between the different condition groups.

No empirical support found for H2.

H2: *Viewers are more likely to notice the ad disclosure, if placed in the middle of the ad.*

No empirical support found for H3.

H3: *Viewers are less likely to notice an ad disclosure if placed above the image.*

4.4 Level of Involvement

4.4.1 Stress

The results indicate that people who were in a stressful state of mind were less likely to notice the ad disclosure, regardless of its position.

Position of ad disclosure (AD)	"Did you notice an ad disclosure?"			
	Not stressed ($p=0.00$; $n=193$)		Stressed ($p=0.021$; $n=18$)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
AD 1 (n=59)	76.8%	23.2%	100.00%	0.00%
AD 2 (n=49)	70.5%	29.5%	100.00%	0.00%
AD 3 (n=50)	69.0%	31.0%	62.50%	37.50%
AD 4 (n=53)	68.6%	31.4%	50.00%	50.00%

Table 9 Whether or not respondents noticed the ad disclosure, and if they were stressed or not. Conditions AD 1-4 against stressed/not stressed.

Furthermore, when only examining the group of respondents in a stressful state of mind, the results indicate significant differences between the groups. All respondents in condition AD 1 and AD 2 saw the ad disclosure (100%), whilst only about half of the respondents saw the ad disclosure in conditions AD 3 and AD 4 (62,5% and 50%). The respondents examined in this analysis were however too few in order to accept or reject the fourth hypothesis (H4). However, our results indicate that there is a tendency of being less attentive when being in a stressful state of mind, which could be due to lower level of involvement.

Not enough empirical support to form a decision for H4.

H4: *Ad disclosure position has a greater effect on the attentiveness on people under high stress levels, as opposed to people under low stress levels.*

5. Discussion

In this section, we will discuss the results from our study and the findings from the theoretical framework, in relation to our research question:

“Are ad disclosures really the main indicators of a sponsored post on Instagram? If so, does the location of the ad disclosure affect consumers attentiveness and their recognition of the nature of the advertisement?”

We found that ad disclosures do indicate the nature of the paid post. However, according to our results, this is not the only indication signaling the the nature of the advertisement, and thus there are other factors to consider when disclosing a post as an advertisement. Moreover, our results suggest that the ad disclosure position demonstrates no significant effect on viewer attentiveness.

5.1 Recognition of Advertisement Nature

In line with previous research, our results indicate that the presence of an ad disclosure does indeed increase the likelihood of viewers perceiving a paid Instagram post as an advertisement. However, an interesting observation was that as many as 45,8% of respondents understood the post’s advertisement nature, when being exposed to the control condition - thus, where no ad disclosure was present. This strengthens Kim et al’s theory that viewers recognize an ad based on the nature of it and not solemnly by the ad disclosure. This suggests that instead of focusing on the ad disclosure, other elements in the post should be examined. This leads us to believe that in the social media landscape of today, people are becoming increasingly aware of the existence of native advertisements. Therefore, they have developed an understanding of the ways in which native advertisements (especially on social media channels) are presented.

5.2 Attention Towards Ad Disclosure

In contrast to Wojdyski’s theories on native advertising⁶⁹, we oppose the notion presented in their study, that a native advertisement is the least deceptive when the ad disclosure is positioned in the middle of the text. Our findings demonstrate that when the ad disclosure is

⁶⁹ Wojdyski and Evans, 2016

positioned in the middle of the post caption, it is the second least effective alternative in terms of the viewer's ability in noticing the ad disclosure.

Our main aim of this thesis is to challenge the Swedish ruling in January 2018, the subsequent industry recommendations on which the ruling was based and to compare this to the theories on native advertising. However, due to the results of the tests relating to viewer attentiveness not being significant ($p=0.587$), the results favor neither the ruling nor previous theories. This sheds light on a new aspect; the ad disclosure positioning on Instagram is not as critical as has been previously believed. This leads us to the conclusion that the applying of the rules and regulations from MFL onto social media marketing, is built upon the wrong foundation. Too much focus is directed on *where* and *if* an ad disclosure is present. Policymakers should instead consider a greater number of elements when making a decision upon the deceptive nature of the post. We conclude that the law which was put into practice in 2008 (MFL), cannot be used as the basis for advertisement on platforms such as Instagram. Therefore, the findings of this study can be used as an indication of what actions must be taken and what areas to improve and adjust. Consequently, a specific labelling policy governing social media marketing should exist.

Furthermore, the results lead us to question Instagram's role in this debate, and we ask ourselves: should Instagram, as a platform hosting this new type of native advertisement, take on greater responsibility in the prevention of deceptive advertising? Instagram demonstrated in June 2017, that they have clearly understood their responsibility in minimising the occurrence of deceptive advertising, caring for their users and preserving the integrity of their platform. However, as presented in the theoretical framework, the way in which Instagram's current partnership disclosure is presented does not align with the visual hierarchy theory. In order to be truly effective, other arrangements in the formation of the partnership disclosure should be considered. These include differentiating the disclosure through colour, font, size or movement. As more and more partnerships form on Instagram, it is important to make sure that the community has the ability to easily recognise when a post is paid for.

5.3 Level of Involvement

The results showed that viewers in a stressful state of mind had more difficulties noticing the ad disclosure (at least when it was in the middle or bottom) which confirms the theory that stress has an impact both on information processing and brand recollection. Since the survey was handed out at a train station in Stockholm, the surroundings could be considered rather busy and stressful, which we assumed would impact the respondents state of mind. However,

a relatively small number of respondents actually considered themselves to be stressed. Therefore, the test was limited, and not reliable enough in order to either accept or reject the hypothesis. Even though the respondents were few, those considering themselves stressed, did conform to the hypothesis. This suggests that there is a correlation between stress and level of attentiveness, however more thorough studies must be made on the subject in order to properly come to a conclusion.

5.4 Limitations

5.4.1 Delimitations

Due to the chosen focus, the study is limited to only exploring native advertising on Instagram, meaning content posted by an influencer on Instagram paid for by a brand. Furthermore, the questionnaire and the subsequent results forming the basis for the thesis, were in Swedish and therefore can only be used to represent a Swedish population.

Moreover, the study only examines one type of visual imagery and image composition as well as advertising one certain product, in this case juice. Additionally, the influencer advocating the product was a fictional character in order to avoid prejudgement. We are aware that results might differ to some extent, if under other conditions in the post composition.

5.4.2 Non-significant Results

The attitudinal and behavioural effects would have been interesting in order to get a better understanding on further effects generated by the post. By gathering data on the respondent's Instagram usage and demographics, our initial intention was to make comparisons between groups based on Instagram behaviour as well as examining if there were differences between generations. We believed this would have been an interesting aspect to study and draw conclusions from. Unfortunately, none of above variables were significant and could therefore not be used for further analysis.

5.4.3 Validity

When validating the results of our study, we discuss this in terms of internal, external and ecological validity. In order to ensure internal validity and to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the situation which prevails, a larger sample group ($N > 270$) should be examined. Furthermore, to be able to generalise the results of the study beyond the specific research context, hence ensuring external validity, the sample group should include a more

balanced gender representation. In terms of ecological validity, it is difficult to get survey respondents to act naturally, in the exact same way in which one would look at an Instagram post in one's own Instagram feed. Subjects are likely to be prone to studying the fictional Instagram post in a more meticulous manner than they would normally. Hence, the level of attentiveness subjects pay to the content will differ somewhat from a regular setting.

5.4.4 Inconsistencies in the Results

Inconsistencies between the results from the pre-study and the actual study were revealed. In the pre-survey respondents leaned towards the theory of Wojdyski, thus were more prone to notice the ad disclosure when positioned in the end of the caption. In the actual study however, respondents' answers revealed the opposite, even though not significant.

5.5 Implications

When analysing our results, we found that the ad disclosure did not actually have as much importance as we thought, which allows for a new perspective to open up. In fact, other elements in an advertisement on Instagram might have more importance in order for the consumer to recognise it as an advertisement. This further strengthens the theory of Kim et al. As advertising via influencers is a relatively new form of marketing without any set rules yet, there is a vast amount of ways of communicating the nature of the post, still unexplored to a large extent.

Without a theoretical foundation, the Swedish RO have decided that an ad disclosure above the image is the most transparent way of communicating an advertisement. Our study indicates that the way in which to communicate the commercial characteristic of native advertisements on Instagram, is not to be based upon the laws compiled for traditional media, and that new rules and regulations must be composed representing Instagram as a channel specifically. We also believe there is an opportunity for Instagram in taking on a larger responsibility in working towards designing an ad disclosure taking in account the means of consumption and the nature of Instagram's specific content.

7. Conclusion

The presence of an ad disclosure does have an impact as to whether or not the viewer recognises a paid Instagram post as an ad. However, the disclosure is clearly not the only aspect which makes viewers perceive the post in this way, as 45,8% of viewers not exposed to a disclosure still recognised the post as an ad. Furthermore, 74,1% of respondents exposed to the control condition, were able to correctly recollect the brand name of the advertisement owner. These results indicate that the need for ad disclosures is not that substantial.

The current discussion with regards to avoiding deceptive advertising on Instagram focuses too much on the ad disclosure itself. It is considered by current policymakers to be more or less the only means for a consumer to recognise the nature of an ad, and therefore they claim the disclosure must be positioned at the top of the post. Our study however indicates that the positioning of the ad disclosure does not contribute to a significant difference whether or not the viewer notices the ad disclosure. In fact, regardless of the position of the ad disclosure, a majority in each group noticed it and perceived the paid post as an advertisement.

The moderating factor, stress-level, indicates that viewers attentiveness towards the disclosure is lowered. Nonetheless, the results were unreliable due to the fact there were too few respondents in the group that identified themselves as being stressed. Hence, while these results can be discussed, they cannot be used in order to draw a statistically significant conclusion.

Upon answering the research question *“Are ad disclosures really the main indicators of a sponsored post on Instagram? If so, does the location of an ad disclosure affect consumers attentiveness and their recognition of the nature of the advertisement?”* we come to a conclusion that the results from this study partly negate our research question. Ad disclosures are a significant indicator implying the paid nature of an Instagram post, however, there are other indicators that must be considered. Moreover, the location of the ad disclosure does not demonstrate a significant difference on viewers attentiveness of said disclosure.

8. Future Research

The findings of our study and the reached conclusion in regard to the importance of ad disclosures opens up to a great deal of future research to be conducted on the subject.

Rather than focusing on the disclosure, other elements of the paid post should be examined, investigating to what extent these could serve as indicators of the post's paid nature, perhaps in a more effective manner than a disclosure does. Elements could include the way the caption is written and how the visual layout is composed, in order to find out what features are most likely to trigger the viewer's attentiveness and recognition of the advertisement. Furthermore, our study indicates that a stressful state of mind affects the level of processing among viewers, and in order to confirm our indication this should be examined in greater scale and depth, where a larger sample group in each condition is included. Furthermore, studies comparing native advertising in low involvement mediums against high involvement mediums, could aim at shedding light on differences in information processing. This would further give an indication as to whether MFL should include a separate section regarding social media marketing.

Lastly, future research should examine the role in which platform owners, such as Instagram, play in protecting its users against deceptive advertising. This could include examining the differences in ad disclosure format and the effects upon user attentiveness and ad recognition.

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7. Appendix

1. Survey

Introduction



The screenshot shows the introduction page of a survey. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the logo of the Stockholm School of Economics on the left and the text "Handelshögskolan i Stockholm" on the right. The main content area is white and contains the following text:

Hej! Vi är två studenter från Handelshögskolan i Stockholm som skriver vår C-uppsats. Stort tack på förhand att du tar dig tid till att svara på vår enkät. Enkäten tar ca 6 minuter att genomföra.

Dina svar är självklart anonyma och kommer enbart att analyseras i grupp i forskningssyfte.

När du strax klickar dig vidare, kommer du att få läsa ett kort scenario och sedan exponeras för ett Instagraminlägg. Lev dig in i scenariot, och föreställ dig att du ser bilden i ditt vanliga Instagramflöde - ha detta i åtanke när du sedan besvarar de efterföljande frågorna.

Tänk inte efter för mycket innan du svarar, utan gå på magkänsla!

In the bottom right corner of the white area, there is a small dark blue button with a white right-pointing arrow.




The screenshot shows the scenario page of the survey. It has the same dark blue header as the previous page, with the logo and "Handelshögskolan i Stockholm". The main content area is white and contains the following text:

Föreställ dig att du står och väntar på bussen på väg hem för dagen. Du plockar rutinmässigt fram din mobil ur fickan och går in på Instagram. Ett av inläggen som dyker upp i flödet, är en bild som *lisamat* just har lagt upp. *lisamat* är en matbloggare och influencer som du följer, med ca 145 000 följare.

In the bottom right corner of the white area, there is a small dark blue button with a white right-pointing arrow.

[Instagram post displayed at random, see page]

About the ad disclosure

 Handelshögskolan i Stockholm

Såg du någon annonsmärkning?

Ja

Nej

[→](#)

 Handelshögskolan i Stockholm

Var i inlägget var annonsmärkningen placerad?

Ovanför bilden


Under bilden, i början av inlägget

I mitten av bildtexten

I slutet av bildtexten

[→](#)

About the paid nature of the post


 Handelshögskolan i Stockholm

Uppfattade du inlägget som ett annonssamarbete?

Ja

Nej

[→](#)

 Handelshögskolan i Stockholm

Vad fick dig att tro att inlägget var ett annonssamarbete?

Vilket varumärke låg bakom annonssamarbetet?

[→](#)

About the Instagram post



Vad är din allmänna inställning till Instagraminlägget du just fick se?

Dålig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Bra
Gillar inte	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gillar
Negativ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positiv

Hur sannolikt är det att du skulle klicka dig vidare på inlägget?

Inte alls sannolikt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Mycket sannolikt
---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

Hur sannolikt är det att du skulle söka efter mer information om produkten i inlägget?

Inte alls sannolikt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Mycket sannolikt
---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

Hur sannolikt är det att du skulle dela inlägget (repost)?

Inte alls sannolikt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Mycket sannolikt
---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

Hur sannolikt är det att du skulle rekommendera produkten till vänner och bekanta?

Inte alls sannolikt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Mycket sannolikt
---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------

Hur sannolikt är det att du skulle köpa produkten?

Inte alls sannolikt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Mycket sannolikt
---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------



About the influencer (lisamat)



Vad är din allmänna inställning till influencern (lisamat) som publicerade inlägget?

Dålig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Bra
Gillar inte	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gillar
Negativ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positiv

I vilken uträkning uppfattade du influencern (lisamat) som:

	Mycket liten utsträckning	2	3	4	5	6	Mycket stor utsträckning
Professionell	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tydlig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personlig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kunnig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trovärdig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intressant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angenäm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Störande	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Informerande	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relevant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vinklad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Saklig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



About the advertisement owner/brand (Naked Juice)



Vad är din allmänna inställning till produktvarumärket (Naked Juice)?

Dålig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Bra
Gillar inte	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gillar
Positiv	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Negativ

I vilken utsträckning uppfattade du varumärket (Naked Juice) som:

	Mycket liten utsträckning	2	3	4	5	6	Mycket stor utsträckning
Trovärdiga	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personliga	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Genuina	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ärliga	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kompetenta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tjätiga	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professionella	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Störande	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tråkiga	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kunniga	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intressanta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



About the respondent



I vilken typ av miljö befinner du dig i just nu?

- Lugn miljö
- Stressig miljö
- Varken eller

Hur känner du dig för tillfället?

	Mycket liten utsträckning	2	3	4	5	6	Mycket stor utsträckning
Stressad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uppjagad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Glad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ledsen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lugn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Harmonisk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tillfredsställd	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arg	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rädd	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



About the respondent's Instagram usage



Använder du Instagram?

- Ja
- Nej



Hur ofta besöker du instagram?

- Varje dag
- Flera gånger i veckan
- Flera gånger i månaden
- Mycket sällan
- Aldrig

Vad är det huvudsakliga syftet till att du använder dig av/besöker Instagram?

- För att inspireras
- För att ta del av nyheter
- För att se vad mina idoler/förebilder/andra personligheter gör
- För att se vad mina vänner gör
- För att fördriva tiden
- För att bli underhållen



About the respondent's attitude towards advertisement



Vad är din inställning till reklam i allmänhet?

Dålig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Bra
Gillar inte	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gillar
Negativ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positiv

Vad är din inställning till reklam i sociala medier?

Dålig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Bra
Gillar inte	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gillar
Negativ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positiv



Demographic information about the respondent



Jag identifierar mig som

- Man
- Kvinna
- Annat

Min sysselsättning:

- Studerande
- Arbetande
- Arbetssökande
- Pensionär
- Annat

Min ålder:



End of survey



Tack för att du svarade på vår enkät! Dina svar är nu registrerade.

Inlägget du fick se och besvara frågor kring var ett fiktivt Instagraminlägg, skapat i forskningssyfte.