Factors Contributing to Consumers' Assessment of Advertisement Value on Social Networking Sites: A Cross-Cultural Focus Group Study

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ABSTRACT

The way online consumers assess the value of advertisements on social networking sites (SNSs) is important to know, because it has been shown that value of these advertisements can influence consumers' behavior toward advertised products and brands. In that regard, this study aimed to provide insights into how online consumers think about and assess the value of advertisements on SNSs by using a focus group method. Two focus groups were conducted with two groups from the different cultural background (Indian and Swedish). By using Krueger and Casey's (2000) five weighting factors, the participants revealed different weights for the tested factors. The Indian participants were more information-oriented, and the presented factors seemed applicable to them. In comparison, the Swedish participants were more focused on credibility, and factors like interactivity seemed not applicable to them. This is the first study that empirically examines online consumers' assessment of advertisement value on SNSs by using a focus group approach. It helps to gain a deeper insight into that research phenomenon. In the future, researchers need to carry sequential exploratory studies to confirm the effects of social influence and pre-purchase search motivation.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, Facebook, Advertisement Value, Social Media, Cultural Backgrounds, Social Influence, Motives, Belief Factors
JEL Classifications: M31, M371

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, the rise of social networking sites (SNSs) is very evident; they have become an essential part of people's daily activities. For example, monthly active Facebook users for Q4 2017 were over 2.13 billion, and on average the like and share buttons were viewed across almost 10 million websites daily (Zephoria, 2018). This increasingly widespread use of such sites has gradually resulted in a shift in the advertising platforms used by business organizations from traditional media to social media. Therefore, SNSs are becoming an increasingly important part of an enterprise media strategy (Peters et al., 2013). Recently, it has been widely acknowledged that marketers use them to advertise new products and services or to communicate with potential customers. The marketing potential of SNSs has led scholars to investigate a

widening range of phenomena about their use as advertising platforms. One recent research context is assessing the value of advertisements (ads) on those sites. At the same time, ad value is on the core determinants of brand success (Okazaki and Tayalor, 2013) and one of the tools for evaluating the effectiveness of an ad (Kotler et al., 2017). Yet, little is known about online consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs. Hadija et al. (2012) reported the inadequacy of literature in this research context. Also, assessments of ad value on SNSs remain an overlooked research area, as indicated in a search of the Halmstad University mega index database (OneSearch) that contains the majority of resources from Emerald, IEEE Xplore, Interscience Publishers, JSTOR, Libris, Sage Journals Online, ScienceDirect, Scoupos, Taylor and Francis Online, SpringerLink, Web of Science, Wiley Online Library, and others. Only a few peer-reviewed empirical studies focus on

consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs. Nine survey studies were found (Logan et al., 2012; Saxena and Khanna, 2013; Dao et al., 2014; Dar et al., 2014; Deraz et al., 2015a; Deraz et al., 2015b; Haida and Rahim, 2015; Martínez-Navarro and Bigné, 2017; Shareef et al., 2017). in addition to one exploratory interview study (Gaber and Wright, 2014).

Moreover, each of the previous studies about consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs has inevitably been limited in scope. Researchers focused on Ducoffe's (1996) model, with its three variables, and they have ignored other related variables such as interactivity value (INT), credibility value (CRE), pre-purchase search motivation, and social influence, which are more logically related to SNSs. Also, researchers focused on exploring the aggregate relationship between variables and have failed to offer an in-depth analysis to answer how consumers perceive the value of ads on SNSs and what are the explanations for their assessments. We can therefore say that there is no evidence of existing studies providing an in-depth qualitative analysis regarding online consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs.

Thus, this paper seeks to provide insights into how SNS users think about and assess the value of ads on SNSs by using a focus group method. Also, it seeks to gain an understanding of that issue from the perspective of social network users from different national cultures.

Consequently, the research questions proposed are as follows:
1. How do SNS users assess the value of ads on SNSs?
2. How does each of these factors contribute to their assessment?

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, after the introduction, the paper presents the related concepts as proposed by the author, then discusses these related concepts, along with theoretical challenges related to applying them. It then presents an overview of current knowledge concerning each of them that led to the interview guide. That is followed by a methodology section, which contains descriptions of the research sample, variables used, and the dimensionality and reliability tests. Finally, after discussing the empirical findings, we examine the theoretical and empirical implications of this study.

2. THE MEASURED FACTORS

Most of the previous studies on assessing ad value on SNSs depend on Ducoffe's (1996) model, which aimed to test online consumers' attitude toward online ads. Yet, Ducoffe's (1996) model, with its three variables (informativeness of the ad, entertainment value (ENT), and irritation value [IRR]) did not fit with many of the previous studies within the SNS context (Logan et al., 2012; Dar et al., 2014; Haida and Rahim, 2015). Moreover, according to the use-diffusion model presented by Shih and Venkatesh (2004), the diffusion of new technology will lead to changes in consumers' use-diffusion patterns, and that change in use-diffusion patterns will change outcomes in the form of the perceived impact of the used technology, satisfaction with the technology, and more interest in future technologies. Also, previous studies have argued that to understand how online consumers respond to ads,

it is crucial to understand their motivations for going online (Rodgers and Thorson, 2000). Similarly, to study online consumer response to ads on SNSs, we need to take into account consumers' motivations for engaging in those sites, as recommended by Taylor et al. (2011). From that perspective, to further our understanding of the factors likely to impact consumers' assessments of ad value on SNSs and to extend models related to online ads, it is appropriate to consider consumer needs and gratifications from viewing those ads. The extended factors used in this study depend on:
• The main bodies of research regarding online users' assessment of ad value on SNSs.
• The Uses and Gratifications approach.

2.1. Information Value (INF)
An ad's INF represents the ad's ability to provide effectively relevant information in its context, as perceived by its audiences (Blanco et al., 2010). It is one of the leading driving factors for assessing the value of online ads (Brackett and Carr, 2001; Ducoffe, 1996; Schlosser et al., 1999; Wang et al., 2009). Also, it reflects one of the main gratifications from using SNSs, which is the cognitive need of online users to collect information and gain knowledge (Park et al., 2009: Whiting and Williams, 2013; Choi et al., 2016). It is one of the leading driving factors for assessing the value of ads on SNSs (Logan et al., 2012; Saxena and Khanna, 2013; Dao et al., 2014; Deraz et al., 2015a; Haida and Rahim, 2015; Shareef et al., 2017).

Focusing on SNSs, researchers have found that ads' INF affects users' assessment of ad value on SNSs. Thus, INF deemed to have a significant effect on consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs, and it is considered to play a central role in contributing to ad value on SNSs

2.2. Entertainment Value (ENT)
ENT of an advertisement reflects the degree of pleasure and involvement in the interaction with the advertising, as perceived by the consumer (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). Advertisers believe that ENT increases the effectiveness of an ad's message and generates a positive attitude toward the brand (Logan et al., 2012; MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989; Shavitt et al., 1998). Ducoffe (1996) found that the success of online ads depends on their level of entertainment.

Regarding the SNSs, ENT reflects consumers' need to be entertained, which is one of the main gratifications from using SNSs (Park et al., 2009; Williams, 2013; Choi et al., 2016). ENT is particularly salient in SNS ads, as scholars have identified it as one of the primary factors in assessing the value of such ads (Logan et al., 2012; Dar, 2014; Haida and Rahim, 2015; Shareef et al., 2017). Scholars have concluded that ENT has a significant positive effect on users' assessment of the value of ads on SNSs. Based on these notions, ENT is therefore deemed to have a significant effect on consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs, and it is considered to play a central role in contributing to ad value on SNSs.

2.3. Irritation Value (IRR)
A feeling of irritation toward the social media ads arises when the consumer experiences discomfort while watching these ads (Saxena and Khanna 2013). Many researchers (Chu, 2011; Kim

and Ko, 2012; Logan et al., 2012; Hayes and King, 2014; Shareef et al., 2017) have argued that if online consumers feel Irritation toward viral ads for any reason, they are unwilling to be exposed to these ads. Taylor et al. (2011) asserted that feeling Irritation toward viral ads contributes to a loss of privacy, and it can distract consumers to receive the intended meaning of the statement, and thus can have a negative effect on the value of an advertisement. Based on the models of assessing the value of online ads, it predicts the online users' assessment of these ads negatively (Ducoffe, 1996; Brackett and Carr, 2001).

Focusing on ads on SNSs, some researchers have found that IRR does not predict consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs (Logan et al., 2012; Deraz et al. 2015a; Haida and Rahim, 2015). Contradictory, others found IRR had a significant negative effect on assessing the value of these ads (Saxena and Khanna, 2013; Shareef et al., 2017). Finally, Dar et al. (2014) found that it has a small and unexpected positive coefficient for assessing the value of ads on an SNS. As a research community, we need to understand better the reasons behind these different effects of IRR on consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs. Thus, it is important not to ignore IRR as one of the leading dimensions of the extended model of assessing the value of ads on SNSs for both general SNS users and brand community consumers (BCCS). IRR is therefore deemed to have a negative significant effect on consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs.

2.4. Credibility Value (CRE)

Lutz (1985. p. 53) defined ads' CRE as the degree to which the audience perceives claims made about the brand in the advertising to be truthful and believable. Moore and Rodgers (2005) added the extent to which consumers believe or trust in the media claims as an additional source for ad credibility. According to Brackett and Carr's (2001) model of consumers' attitudes toward Web advertising, ads' CRE is an essential dimension that directly predicts consumers' assessment of online ad value. In contrast with Brackett and Carr's (2001) findings, credibility is considered by many researchers to be a crucial dimension when assessing both the value of online ads and consumers' attitudes toward these ads (Breitsohl et al., 2010; Clewley et al., 2009; Prendergast et al., 2009; Wang and Sun 2010a). Likewise, consumption credibility is considered to play a central role in contributing to the assessment of ad value on SNSs as perceived by the Southeast Asia social media users (Dao et al., 2014). Dao et al. (2014) found that credibility has a positive effect on consumers' perceived value of ads on Facebook, which is confirmed by Deraz et al. (2015a).

Based on the UGT, audiences in an online brand community have empathy, trust, and feelings of safety with the online brand based on their personal integrative needs (Brodie et al., 2013). Also, regarding brand communities and cyber psychology studies, credibility is an essential dimension for assessing online consumer responses to certain online brands (Lee et al., 2011; Chatterjee, 2011). Consistent with these findings and the lack of investigation into the effect of credibility on consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs, credibility has been considered to be an essential dimension of the extended model for assessing the value of SNS ads by both regular SNS users and BCCs. CRE is therefore deemed

to have a decisive and significant positive effect on consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs.

2.5. Interactivity Value (INT)

The INT of an advertisement is defined as the extent to which audiences can participate in modifying the messages they receive through an advertisement (Steuer, 1992). It has been identified as a factor that can explain both the value of web advertising (Brackett and Carr, 2001) and consumers' attitudes toward ads on Facebook (Yaakop et al., 2013). However, it has not been tested in the context of assessment of ad value on SNSs. Recently it has become apparent that the focal point of using SNSs is to build and maintain a network of friends for social interaction (Trusov et al., 2009). One of the interactive capacities of SNSs is their ability to encourage users to use text, images, videos, and links as interactive content, as strategies to track and share new products with consumers (Yaakop et al., 2013). Based on UGT, it is claimed that this communicatory utility and information sharing are the main gratifications from using SNSs (Whiting and Williams, 2013). Also, Deraz et al. (2015a) found that INT has the strongest influence on assessing ad value on SNSs as perceived by Swedish Facebook users.

Thus, based on the role of INT in consumers' attitudes toward ONAs and the nature of interactivity as a central purpose of using SNSs, this study posits that INT is one of the leading belief factors in assessing ad value on SNSs. INT is therefore deemed to have a positive and significant effect on consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs.

2.6. Pre-Purchase Motivation (PPM)

Consumer motives reflect the physiological needs and desires of consumers in using online media (Wang et al., 2002). Scholars consider consumer motives to be driving factors of consumer behavior, related to the level of satisfaction with their needs and desires (Rodgers, 2002). Regarding SNSs, one of the purposes of using them is to fulfill users' pre-purchase information needs (Ha, 2002; Goldsmith and Horowiz, 2006). That information advantage of SNSs helps users to arrive at well-considered purchase decisions (Muntinga et al., 2011) and make sensible brand choices (Ha, 2002). As mentioned by Park et al. (2009), online consumers employ SNSs to find appropriate information that can help them in making correct and risk-free purchasing choices.

Drawing on UGT, Mir (2014) found that users' pre-purchase search motivation for using SNSs influences users' cognitive attitude toward ads on those sites. Also, information seeking is one of the main consumer gratifications in using SNSs (Park et al., 2009; Whiting and Williams, 2013; Choi et al., 2016). Yet no one has tested the effect of consumers' pre-purchase search motivation on the assessment of ad value on SNSs. In keeping with these findings concerning the role of pre-purchase search motivation in consumers' attitudes toward SNS ads, thus study thus considers the pre-purchase search motivation of SNS users to be an essential factor that contributes to the assessment of ad value. Pre-purchase search motivation is therefore deemed to have a positive significant effect on consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs.

2.7. Social Influence (SOI)

The recent construction of SNSs defines them as online hosts that enable their users to construct and maintain profiles, identify other members with whom they are connected, and participate by consuming, producing, and interacting with content provided by their connections (Tuten and Solomon, 2017). That definition can reflect one of the main advantages of SNSs as an interaction tool, in that SNSs offer facilities for their users to interact with one another and to exchange information, reviews, and ratings. With reference to Tuten and Solomon's (2017) definition, we can assume that social influence is a crucial variable to explain ad value on SNSs, in addition to the previously identified variables.

Within the context of the online communities, social influence occurs when users adapt their behavior, attitudes, or beliefs to those of others similar to them (Leenders, 2002). Focusing on social media, individuals join these media to satisfy their social needs, such as strengthening contact with family, friends, and the world (Wang et al. 2012). Also, they achieve these social needs by connecting with each other and engaging in interpersonal communication as a way of enjoying their activities and getting approval from other individuals using the same site (Urista et al., 2009). According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), this interpersonal communication creates group intention, which results from an internalization process in which a person adopts the values, beliefs, or attitudes of others based on congruence criteria. In contrast, social media users intuitively evaluate the reliability and trustworthiness of ads on these media through other participants' comments, especially comments from the members of their existing networks (Okazaki, 2004). Furthermore, they may seek other consumers' comments and recommendations on the Internet to reduce the perceived risk involved in a purchase decision (Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006). Moreover, collective consumers are also more likely to be conformist and influenced by friends, and then to adopt their opinions (Erdem et al., 2006).

Within the context of SNSs, previous studies have found that the effect of social influence on consumer response to ads on SNSs derives from certain factors such as personal social identity and group norms (Zeng et al., 2009), personal needs for online social capital (Chi, 2011), social ties and endorser expertise (Chang et al., 2012), or subjective norms (Lee and Hong, 2016). Yet no one has tested the effect of social influence on consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs.

In keeping with these findings, this study considers social influence to play a central role in contributing to the establishment of ad value on SNSs. Social influence is therefore deemed to have a significant influence in assessing the value of ads on SNSs.

2.8. National Culture (NAC)

Individuals' cultural background affects their patterns of message processing (Nisbett, 2004). Scholars have argued that advertising messages that are congruent with the message recipient's cultural characteristics and that avoid conflict with beneficiaries' fundamental cultural values tend to be more efficient than those that are culturally incongruent (Cui et al., 2012; de Mooij and Hofstede, 2010; Han and Shavitt, 1994).

As noted by Hyder et al. (2014), attempts have been made to measure the impact of national culture on different research contexts since the 1960s. However, researchers only began to focus on the effects of national culture on business practices in the 1990s (Luthans et al., 1993; Offermann and Hellmann, 1997; Thomas and Ely, 2001; Gitman and McDaniel, 2008). Likewise, researchers in the field of online marketing have recently begun to examine online users' behavior and attitudes in the context of national culture (Chau et al., 2002; Wei-Na and Sejung, 2006; Shu-Chuan and Jhih-Syuan, 2012; Brosdahl and Almousa, 2013; Kim et al., 2016).

Regarding consumers' perception of electronic ads, researchers identified differences in consumers' attitude toward mobile ads depending on their cultural backgrounds (Chia-Ling et al., 2012). In another cross-cultural study, Wang and Sun (2010) identified differences in consumer beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral responses toward ONAs in the United States, China, and Romania. Moreover, Tsai and Men (2012) reported differences between Eastern and Western cultures for some values regarding the appeal of users' communication. The authors argued that scholars need to advance their understanding of marketing communications on SNSs from a cross-national perspective. Finally, Kim et al. (2016) found that individuals from different cultural backgrounds tend to have different attitudinal responses to similar ads on Facebook. The authors found that consumers from individualistic cultures (e.g., the United States) had different response rates compared to those from a collectivistic culture (e.g., Korea) regarding comparative vs. non-comparative advertising. Nevertheless, the effect of national culture on the assessment of the value of SNS ads has not been explored.

Based on the above, cultural differences might explain differences among consumers in assessing the value of ads on SNSs. Consequently, scholars need to advance their understanding of the effect of culture on consumers' assessment of the value of ads on SNSs. The consumption of national culture is considered to play a central role in contributing to the assessment of ad value on SNSs. Thus, it is part of the extended conceptual framework.

3. METHODS

3.1. Study Design and Setting

The author chose a qualitative study design to explore factors predicting consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs and to give deeper insights about how SNS users assess that value. SNSs users' assessments of the ten factors presented above were collected from two different groups of five to six participants each. Each group was from different cultural background, in order to explore the underlying reasons behind their assessments according to their cultural backgrounds. An overview of the group characteristics is presented in Table 1.

The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and to answer the research question (Creswell, 2009). With respect to this, a purposeful sampling technique is a widely used in qualitative research to identify and select information-

Table 1: Participants' Profile

Participants' profile	Group one (Indian)	Group two (Swedish)
Age	Average age 29 years	Average age 32
Gender	Men 4	Men 2
	Women 2	Women 3
Platform	Facebook 6	Facebook 5
	Twitter 4	Instagram 5
	LinkedIn 4	Twitter 2
Length of involvement in Facebook	>2 years	>2 years
Time spent on SNSs	Average 15.2 h/week	Average 9.8 h/week

SNS: Social networking sites

rich cases for the most efficient use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The sampling technique used involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are exceptionally knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Clark, 2011). As presented in Kothari (2004), such a procedure may give very biased results, especially when the population is not homogeneous. To avoid such biased results and to ensure homogeneously, each selected group member had the following characteristics:

- 24-37 years old.
- All active daily users of one or more SNSs, for at least 2 years.
- Same cultural background (the first group was Indian, and the second one was Swedish).
- Representatives of a particular group (the first group was from the industrial marketing master's degree program at Halmstad University, and the second group was from the healthcare service in Falkenberg city).

3.2. Data Collection

The author used a semi-structured interview guide as the main method to collect the empirical data for this study. He used the same interview guide with the different groups. As explained by Saunders et al. (2009), in business studies, researchers can use semi-structured interviews to find out what is happening and seek new insights, in addition to understanding the relationships between variables in explanatory studies.

Data were collected through two focus group discussions (FGDs). Focus groups can be defined as organized, interactive group discussions that aim to explore a particular topic (Becker and Bryman, 2004). Because the hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights (Morgan, 1997), FGD session for each group were carried out separately in a location chosen by the participants and the facilitator. Moreover, the previously presented ten factors in ad value were tested to address the measured factors during each session. Also, a semi-structured interview guide was created to guide the facilitator through the sessions.

The author was the only facilitator; a colleague took notes and made audio-recordings. Each FGD included open-ended questions, which led to fostering new ideas, directed by participant responses (Appendix 1). Each interview continued until none of the participants came forward with a new response. This point is referred to as data saturation and indicates that further continuation of the FGD will not provide new information. Every FGD session

began with a standard introduction, which consisted of meeting the researcher, a brief description of the study's aims and procedures, and an assurance of participant confidentiality. Before beginning, participants provided oral informed consent. Then, the facilitator began by asking a set of prepared open-ended questions and encouraging participation. Each FGD session lasted approximately 90 min, and upon completion of the FGD, the participants had refreshments.

3.3. Data Analysis

Qualitative research and focus group interviews, in particular, generate large amounts of data (Rabiee, 2004). In this study, the three focus groups provided information about a range of primary and distant antecedents that contribute to SNSs users' assessment of ad value on SNSs. To be able to arrive at the final results, after transcription of the audiotapes, alongside with the written field notes, the author followed Krueger and Casey's (2009) guidelines by going through the following steps:

1. First, a long table approach was used for indexing and charting the data, transcribing each interview in a different table using Microsoft Word as follows:
   - Numbered each line of each transcript.
   - Made two hard copies of each transcript; one to cut up and one that stayed intact.
   - Printed the two transcripts in different colors; black for the Indian group, and blue for the Swedish one.
   - Arranged the working transcripts in a reasonable order according to the interview guide, which helped to compare findings between the two groups based on their cultural backgrounds.
2. Following that, each transcript was coded, writing quotes about ideas or concepts that can explain the relationship of each tested factor in the assessment of ads on SNSs.
3. Finally, interpretation of the collected data started with the use of Krueger and Casey's (2000) five weighting factors: frequency of comments, specificity of responses, emotion of participants while giving their comments, extensiveness of comments, and a bigger picture of each group.

4. FINDINGS

Focus groups were conducted with the aim of investigating online consumers' assessment of ad value on SNSs. The discussions were based on two themes. In the first one, the study aimed to identify consumers' thoughts about the ads. The second theme was aimed at understanding the factors that drive participants' assessment

of ad value on SNSs and comparing that with the participants' cultural backgrounds.

4.1. Consumers' Thoughts About ads on SNSs

Three questions of the questioning route were designed to capture respondents' thoughts about ads on SNSs. The first question was about the respondents' feelings toward Facebook ads. The Indian participants seemed to hold a more positive attitude toward the ads. They distinguished between the pros and cons of these ads. For example, one of the Indian participants said:

> "As I can see in India, ads on SNSs keep track of what is relevant, useful, and necessary for online consumers."

Another one said:

> "Some companies are putting effort into making their ads look nice and clean. However, many others just look trashy."

In comparison, the Swedish participants had more suspicious feelings and gave more skeptical impressions about ads on SNSs in general. For example, one of them said:

> "I think feeling credible toward the media and the brand name is the most essential thing when I am thinking about ads on SNSs. A lot just spread inaccurate information on Facebook."

The second question relates to consumers' thought about factors that attract their attention to Facebook ads. The Indian online users identified product relevance, offering complete and accurate information, feelings of credibility regarding the brand, and appeal potential of ads are the most important factors that attract them to an ad on Facebook. For example, one of them said:

> "INF is the most important factor as far as I'm concerned. When I compare the information the company offers on Facebook to the information on their website, and I see it is accurate and relevant, that will increase my feeling of security and trust toward that brand's posts."

Another one said:

> I think Facebook ads need to have the potential to attract online consumers. They can create that potential though designing a high-quality ad which has a story related to our culture. I like the ads where the company spends money on it; not the trashy ones, and we are missing that on SNSs."

In comparison, the Swedish participants were more focused on their feelings of credibility toward the media, the brand, the ad source, and the ad's relevance to their needs as the main factors. For example, one of them said:

> "When I get an ad on my Facebook, the first thing I am looking for is the source of that ad, and if it is credible or not. If I feel any suspicions as to the source of the ad I never open it."

Another one said:

> "I am just looking at an ad if I feel interesting about the advertised products; otherwise I am not opening the ad."

The third question to explore the respondents' thoughts about ads on SNSs concerned their beliefs about frustrating factors in these ads. The Indian participants identified unnecessary ads, a lack of accurate information, and unreliability of ads as the most frustrating factors. In comparison, the Swedish participants also confirmed that irrelevant ads and a security system to avoid fraud are the factors that are most frustrating to them. However, when the two groups were asked about the reasons behind their negative feelings toward these ads, the Indian group explained that they are annoying and disturb their work efficiency; in comparison, the Swedish group explained that it makes them feel insecure when browsing their Facebook page. For example, one of the Indian participants said:

> "I think the main problem is that Facebook offers an open gate for people to cheat and to get thousands of unnecessary ads, especially those related to the sponsored stores."

Moreover, one of the Swedish participants said:

> "The problem is we still have aggressive attacks from marketers, we get a lot of ads, and I feel they are just frauds, they need to hack into our accounts or collect our personal data and credit card information."

4.2. Information Value (INF)

The participants were asked about their beliefs about the informative value of ads on SNSs, and whether that can be related to their assessment of the value of these ads. Most of the Indian participants indicated that the INF of these type of ads is the most crucial factor in assessing an ad's value. They clarified that companies have to consider which information they should give and not just depend on their names. The Indian participants looked for information that was relevant to their needs and expectation. They added that companies have to give complete and accurate information about the durability of the advertised product. They added that the information they gather from other people's reviews has an essential effect on their response to those ads. For example, one of the Indian participants said:

> "I think to show the durability of products is the most important thing, and that depends on the information the ad offers, especially when the company connects the ad to family, since that enhances my emotions toward the ad, and that draws me to watch the ad and to recommend it to my friends."

Another one said:

> "I believe that the company should think about which information they should present in their ad and not just depend on the brand name."

In comparison, most of the Swedish participants agreed that if an ad is not relevant to them, they will never click on it. They added

that they believe that companies on SNSs mostly offer inaccurate information about their products. Companies use that to entice them to open the ad, and they keep a lot of the information hidden. For example, one Swedish participant said:

"If I see that the ad does not offer information relevant to my needs, I will never click on it."

Another one said:

"Companies on SNSs are not giving complete information about their products or their services, which makes me feel more confused. I think they offer that mainly to draw us to their website."

4.3. Entertainment Value (ENT)

The participants were asked about what makes them feel interested while watching ads on SNSs, and what they dislike while watching these ads. In general, both groups confirmed the role of ENT in assessing ad value. Moreover, they both perceived ads on Facebook as less entertaining. Furthermore, the Indian participants indicated that environmentally friendly ads and ads related to the family and their culture are the most appealing ads to them. They added that they refuse to watch discriminatory ads against a particular group of people on Facebook, and such ads may lead them to spread negative WOM against the advertised products. For example, one of the Indian participants said:

"I saw a Swedish ad on a company page on Facebook, and I felt it was appealing. The ad was about dairy products and how they take care of the cattle to ensure quality. I realized that they are taking care of the environment."

Another one said:

"I do not like to watch a discriminative ad against some culture or a specific group of people."

In comparison, the Swedish participants focused on children, historical and cultural content, and environmentally friendly ads as the main factors that attract them to an ad on Facebook. They indicated that ads on SNSs are more information oriented, and that video ads are mostly not appealing; some companies put effort into making their ads look appealing, but it is not common. They confirmed that some ads are well done and appealing, but not amazing. They further explained that most of the video ads on Facebook are short movies that last between 10 and 20 s each. They added that they dislike seeing ads on SNSs that focus on price cuts. Instead, companies should focus on the durability of the advertised product. For example, one of the Swedish participants said:

"As I am a fan of Samsung, one of the appealing ads I recently watched on Facebook was about the Samsung S9 mobile phone. The company produced some appealing ads lasting 10 to 30 seconds each; mostly they focus on the advantages of the camera features for that model."

Another one said:

"Low prices are not the rule; expensive products mean more quality and more value. So, when I see the low-price ad, I feel skepticism toward the source of that ad and the advertised product."

4.4. Credibility Value (CRE)

The participants were asked about factors that make them feel that an ad on Facebook is an accurate and believable ad. Both FGDs revealed the crucial role of feeling that the brand is credible when assessing the value of ads on SNSs. The FGDs reflected that feeling that the brand is credible makes SNS users more comfortable when watching the ad. The Indian participants mentioned that trusting the media, brand familiarity, accurate information, and offering a secure payment process are the main factors that allow them to feel to feel secure when responding to Facebook ads. For example, one of the Indian respondents said:

"I want to see Facebook make more effort to secure our privacy; a lot of sponsored stories and recommended ads offer fake information."

Another one said:

"When I get an ad from an unfamiliar brand and feel interested in the offer, the first thing I do is go to the company and check if it is affiliated with security providers that offer a secure payment process."

In comparison, the Swedish participants focused on feeling that the medium and the source of the ads have credibility as the main factors that make them feel secure when watching an ad on Facebook. They explained that if they do not trust the medium, they will never respond to an ad on it. They will feel insecure even if the ad is from a known brand. For example, one of the Swedish participants said:

"I used to buy from a specific brand online, but one day I found an offer for the same brand at a 75% discount, I thought the company itself sent me that offer. I ordered some stuff, but after receiving them I found they were not original parts."

Another one said:

"First I look at the company name before clicking on an ad on Facebook. If I know the company name, I can check out that ad."

4.5. Irritation Value (IRR)

The participants were asked about what makes them feel deceived and annoyed when watching ads on Facebook. The Indian participants indicated that false information, pop-up ads while watching videos or playing games, unclear information, using personal data, and discriminatory ads are the main factors that annoy them about these ads. They explained that when the company hides information about its product, it means that the product is not as valuable as the company proposes, which annoys

them; as a result, they might engage in negative WOM against that company's ad. For example, one of the Indian respondents said:

> "I do not like to see pop-up ads on Facebook; they reduce work efficiency and disturb me."

Another one said:

> "Feeling that an ad offers biased information, or uses my personal information, made me feels uncomfortable and confused when I receive more ads from that company and similar companies."

In comparison, the Swedish participants focused on privacy and lack of security as the main aspects that annoyed them and made them feel deceived by ads on SNSs. They clarified that they feel that the medium does not secure their private information and keeps the door open for other to hack their accounts. For example, one of the Swedish participants said:

> "The neutral role of SNSs in safeguarding our private information from outsiders is disappointing to me and makes me feel confused when I get an ad."

Another one said:

> "I do not like to get irrelevant ads on Facebook, especially from an unknown source. That makes me feel unsafe."

4.6. Interactivity Value (INT)
The respondents were asked about what makes them feel that an ad on Facebook facilitates communication with the company, and how that communication can affect their assessment of ad value. The Indian participants described that interactive ads are more common in India. Companies use SNSs to distribute their ads and get reviews from customers so they can modify the product or even to decide which ad they should adopt in their campaigns. The Indian participants mentioned that companies need to be fast and honest while using that system, which helps to build trust and respect with their customers on SNSs. They see companies using efficient advertising approaches to interact with their customers and feel they are more successful in gaining customer loyalty. Companies that do not use those approaches or do not respond to their customers efficiently are not high quality, and they ignored their ads. For example, one of the Indian participants said:

> "In India, companies use SNSs to distribute information about their new products, or they even put out several ads to check consumer responses. The company uses most effective one in its campaigns."

Another participant said:

> "I had a claim against a service I had received from a travel agency, but they did not respond to me. I felt that the company did not respect me. I told my friends about my bad experience with that company and recommended that they not fly with them."

In comparison, the Swedish participants focused on the process of sharing interesting ads with members on the Facebook network as the only mean of interaction. They felt that Swedish companies use SNSs to encourage users to share ads with more people and not to create an atmosphere of direct interaction between the company and its potential or desired customers. The only interaction process they can see between specific brands and customers is through fan pages. Finally, when sharing ads on SNSs, they indicated that the value added and the attractiveness of the story behind the ad were the most important factors when it came to sharing an ad on their timeline. For example, one Swedish respondent said:

> "I see that most of the Swedish companies do not use Facebook to communicate with people; they use it to persuade us to buy their products."

Another one said:

> "I am a member of one of the internet service providers. The company I am using does not have a hotline to receive complaints. One time I had a delay in my internet service, so I searched on Facebook and found that the company has an official page. I messaged them, but they did not respond. Why do they have like a page if they are not active? Now I don't recommend that company to any of my friends."

4.7. Pre-Purchase Motivation (PPM)
The participants were asked about the effect of their motivation to buy a certain product on their assessment of ad value on SNSs, and how ads on Facebook help them in their purchase decisions. The Indian participants connected pre-purchase motivation to their needs for the advertised products. They explained that they gained a lot from these ads by gathering the information they needed before any purchase decision. After they see that the ad matches their purchasing needs, they go through the information the ad offers and compare it with the information on the company's web page personal reviews about that product on SNSs. That way they assess INF of that ad and decide either to purchase the product or to recommend it through their timeline. One of the Indian participants said:

> "If I feel the product is useful to me, I go to other sites to compare the information given, then I check reviews from other SNS users about that product and the company."

In comparison, the Swedish consumers confirmed that if they need to buy a product they prefer not to depend on SNSs to gather information. They usually go directly to the company's web page to gather the needed information or else use specific websites to compare the prices and specifications of the advertised product. Most of the respondents did not feel they depend on the other people's reviews. They clarified that people have different ways of assessing the products, and because of that concern they prefer to depend on their own assessment. One of the Swedish participants said:

> "If I need to buy a product I usually gather data from the brand website and do not depend on the Facebook. Why should I

depend on the views of others? Each person has their own way of evaluating anything, and I need to consider my own decision."

4.8. Social Influence (SOI)

The participants were asked about the effect of close friends and family members in enhancing their impression of an ad on Facebook. The Indian participants indicated that their assessment of a specific ad on Facebook may depend on other people's reviews the product and the brand. They clarified that if an ad has positive comments, it is a sign of the quality of the advertised product, and that encourages them to interact with it by sharing it on their timeline. Also, they indicated that their emotional needs help them to share good content with their friends and family members. However, they insist that this social influence effect is not valid if the ad is forwarded from unrelated users. One Indian participants said:

"I saw an ad about a telecommunications app in my Facebook timeline. I tried the app and I found it valuable. After that I referred that ad to my friends, and most of them are utilizing that app now."

Another one said:

"I do not click on an ad if I do not trust the source person or brand."

In comparison, the Swedish participants limited the effect of social influence on the closer, strong relationships between family members and friends. They clarified that because they feel less of a sense of credibility toward the medium, they could not trust any ad if they are not certain of its source. Also, they indicated that companies can arrange for a number of comments to encourage people to open the ad. However, direct conversation between people around the value of a specific ad can encourage them to respond to the ad after they are certain of the source of the ad. One of the Swedish participants said:

"When I see an ad on my timeline, the first thing I do is check the comments, shares, and emojis from the reviewers. If I see any sad or angry emojis, I prefer not to respond to that ad. That is just from known sources I trust."

Another participant added:

"One day, I got an ad from one of my close friends about advice on how to earn extra income. I clicked on the ad. Later, someone hacked into my account and forwarded that ad to all my friends. Because of that, I do not like to click on any ad on SNSs."

5. DISCUSSION

In general, this study found that the seven presented factors affect the assessment of ad value on Facebook to some extent. Interestingly, the two FGDs revealed variations in each group's interpretation of how each of those factors affects their assessment.

Concerning the frequency of comments and the specificity of the respondents, the Indian participants frequently presented the INF of ads as a focal factor for assessing the value of these ads. In comparison, the Swedish participants put more weight on feelings of credibility with respect to the source of the ad and the medium as a focal factor in their response to ads on SNSs, and in turn on their assessment of these ads. Concerning the emotions of participants, the Indian group seemed more comfortable with these ads, while the Swedish participants seemed more confused and deceived by them.

INF is one of the driving factors for assessing the value of ads on SNSs (Logan et al., 2012; Saxena and Khanna, 2013; Dao et al., 2014; Haida and Rahim, 2015; Martínez-Navarro and Bigné, 2017). Both FGDs showed that the relevance of the ad message is the main concern in responding to them to, confirm the findings of Kelly et al. (2010). However, the two groups followed different processes to investigate information accuracy. The Indians preferred to click on the ad and compare the information given with other sources, while the Swedes preferred to gather information from the company's official website, then search through other online official sites to compare the price and structure of the advertised products. In that regard, marketers need to give accurate and updated information in their ads on SNSs; otherwise, they will create negative noise around their brands, and in turn they will lose online consumers' trust.

Researchers found ENT to be a crucial construct for assessing the value of ads on SNSs (Logan et al., 2012; Saxena and Khanna, 2013; Dao et al., 2014; Dar et al., 2014; Deraz et al., 2015a; Haida and Rahim, 2015; Martínez-Navarro and Bigné, 2017). The participants in both FGDs confirmed the crucial role of ENT in assessing the value of ads on Facebook. However, they both reflected that most of these ads do not entertain them. They perceived most of them as more information-oriented. That may explain why the ENT of ads on SNSs did not influence ad value when the source of the ad message was marketers (Shareef et al., 2017), since most timeline ads are marketers' ads. In that regard, marketers need to focus on how to entertain SNS users if they want to produce ads that are more valuable and not just to produce informative ones. Moreover, brand fans who follow their brand on SNSs perceive those ads as entertaining if they fulfill their requirements for entertainment.

Scholars found that credibility had a positive effect on assessing the value of ads on SNSs (Dao et al., 2014; Deraz et al., 2015; Shareef et al., 2017; Martínez-Navarro and Bigné, 2017). This study confirmed that relationship. As an additional insight, the current study found that if SNS users feel that the source of ad, the medium, and the brand are credible, they will be more convinced to respond to the ad and will feel more comfortable while watching it. In turn, that will help them to assess the value of that ad. However, in the case of the Swedish participants, not feeling that the medium specifically and ads in general are credible prevented them from accepting these ads and made them feel more confused when they got them, which may affect their assessment negatively. As presented by Tran (2017), perceiving an ad on an SNS as credible reduces ad avoidance and ad skepticism and encourages favorable attitudes.

The relationship between IRR and ad value on SNSs was not consistent. Most researchers found that irritation had no effect on assessing the value of ads (Logan et al., 2012; Dar et al., 2014; Deraz et al., 2015a; Haida and Rahim, 2015). In contrast, some studies found it had a negative association with ad value on SNSs (Saxena and Khanna, 2013; Beuckels et al., 2017). Researchers could not give a clear explanation of this contradiction. This study offers an explanation that may cover this point. These findings show that SNS users are more likely to click on an ad if they perceive it as relevant to their needs and as coming from a credible source. Also, they mentioned that pop-up ads and sponsored stories irritate them, since they experience a problem with them. Currently, pop-up ads are not available on the user's homepage, which reduces one of the ad types that create irritation. Regarding sponsored stories, the participants felt that they are not relevant and they feel skeptical toward them, and they mostly do not respond to them. The remainder are timeline ads; by navigating to one's Facebook homepage, one can see the ads that are most relevant to the user or anyone on their contact list. Based on UGT, audiences have empathy, trust, and feelings of safety with their brand (Brodie et al., 2013). In that regard, they will feel less irritated toward the only ad type they engage with on SNSs, and that negative feeling will not affect their assessment of the ad's value. In sum, we can say that ad type and the relevance of the source can moderate the effect of irritation on assessing the value of ads on SNSs, causing it to increase for some ads and eliminating it for others. Another reason behind the contradictory findings is perhaps the variations that the two FGDs pointed to as the reasons for the respondents' feelings of being deceived and confused. For instance, the Indian participants focused on variation in information and discriminatory ads, while the Swedish participants focused on privacy concerns and irrelevant sources as reasons for feeling confused by these ads. That may be based on the cultural background of each group, or based on Indian participants' familiarity with engaging with these ads, which was identified in the Indian FGD more than in the Swedish FGD.

Previous quantitative studies showed that interactivity related significantly to online users' attitude toward Facebook ads (Yaakop et al., 2013), as the assessments of ad value on SNSs (Deraz et al., 2015). This study contributed by offering the mechanisms the SNS users used to explain the patterns of interaction with ads on SNSs. The Indian FGD revealed the interaction between users and companies as the main pattern for assessing INT. In comparison, the Swedish FGD revealed interaction between the users as the only pattern for assessing INT. Both FGDs reflected that companies in India and in Sweden use a different level of interaction in their communication with the SNS users. For instance, when the two groups were asked about how they perceive their level of interaction with companies on Facebook, the Indians perceived it as high, while the Swedes did not see that interaction as valuable. In turn, this may give two different levels of assessments of ad value.

Users' pre-purchase search motivation for using SNSs positively influences their attitudes toward ads on SNSs (Chu, 2013; Taylor et al., 2011; Mir, 2014). Mir (2014) explained pre-purchase search motivation as one of the main reasons for using those sites. In line with previous researchers, the current study identified pre-purchase search motivation as having different influences on users'

assessments of ad value on SNSs according to each FGD. For instance, in the Indian FGD participants were willing to collect reviews about advertised product using Facebook. But the Swedish FGD participants agreed that they did not use that option because they preferred to depend on their own opinion and they viewed those ads in general as less credible. In that regard, we can say that pre-purchase search motivation could affect Indian SNS users' assessments but that it might not work in the Swedish context, since they are not no motivated to use SNSs to gather information.

With respect to social influence, a recent study reflected the role of reference groups (associative vs. aspirational) on consumers' attitude toward ads on SNSs (Shareef et al., 2017). The authors found source derogation of an ad on Facebook is associated with developing ad value and forming a favorable attitude toward the ad. In that vein, the current study found that interpersonal relationships between SNS users can enhance Indian participants' impressions of an ad on Facebook, since they believed that positive reviews can give a sense of the quality of the advertised product. In contrast, Swedish participants limited such influence to strongly bonded users who were family members or close friends. In general, the Swedish FGD felt that social influence has no effect on their assessment of the ads.

Finally, concerning cultural effects, SNSs researchers have found that users from different cultural backgrounds have different attitudes toward online ads (Kamal and Chu, 2012; Kim et al., 2016). This study confirms the role of cultural differences in assessing the value of ads on SNSs. From the previous discussions, we find that one of the reasons for this variation is the patterns each group creates with respect to each of the six presented factors. Both FGD participants interpreted those factors and how they affect their assessment in different direction. Moreover, regarding the cultural content in these ads, both FGDs revealed that cultural content and avoiding conflict with their cultural beliefs is an essential component that attracts them to ads on SNSs.

6. CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has important implications for scholars and marketing managers alike. It contributes to the understanding of consumers' assessment of ads on SNSs based on their cultural background. It is the first study that has adapted the FGD approach to gather qualitative data about consumers' assessments of ad value on SNSs. Also, it introduces new factors for assessing the value of ads, such as INT, pre-purchase search motivation, and social influence, in addition to previously identified factors (INF, ENT, IRR, and CRE). This creates a better elaborated framework on the nature of SNSs and their users' needs. Interestingly, the two FGDs show variations in each group's interpretation of how each of these factors affects their assessment based on the cultural backgrounds of each group. The variations in the groups' interpretations can explain the effect of cultural background on SNS users' assessment of the value of ads on SNSs. In addition, this paper offers a number of valuable insights about how the presented factors affect consumers' assessment of these ads. These findings can be utilized by both researchers and marketers in order to understand how the addressed factors enhance

consumers' assessment of the value of ads on SNSs.

Concerning the practical implications of this article, it shows that SNS users' feelings of irritation hurt their assessment of ad value on SNSs, as do users' feelings of a lack of credibility in ad sources. This negatively affects the level of interaction between firms and their consumers. Thus, online marketers need to find ways to increase the trustworthiness of their ads, which might decrease the SNS users' feelings of irritation and encourage them to be more interactive with the ads.

Future researchers need to consider other ad types and different groups from different cultural backgrounds to better explain those relationships. This would further enhance the findings of this study. In addition, scholars need to explore the identified factors sequentially by carrying out quantitative studies to test the effects of the seven identified factors, when integrated together, on assessing the value of ads on SNSs.

7. LIMITATIONS

This study provides many contributions, but each study has its limitations, and this one is no exception. First, it focused on marketers' messages on SNSs rather than consumer-created content. This limitation mainly reduces the effect of ad types on the FGDs. Second, the FGDs were limited to two groups—Indians and Swedes. More groups from the different cultural backgrounds and different age categories might give more explanations about the effects of the presented factors.

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APPENDIX 1

The research purpose

To develop our understanding of how users of social networking sites assess the value of advertisements (ads) on SNSs.

The research questions are:

1. What are the main factors affecting consumers' assessment of ads on an SNS (Facebook)?
2. How could each of these factors predict the assessment of ads as perceived by SNS users?

Interview guide

Each focus group will start with the next open question to find out which factors each group mostly agree with in terms of the main factors that predict their assessment of ad value on Facebook.

1. Which factors do you think can affect your assessment of ads on your Facebook homepage or on other SNSs you use? (5 minute discussion among group members)

Suggested Factors for Each Group
A Questioning Route

1. How do you feel about ads on Facebook?
2. How can an ad get your attention? Could you explain further?
3. What is particularly helpful about ads on Facebook?
4. What is particularly frustrating about those ads? could you say more?
5. How do you evaluate ads on Facebook? Please describe what you mean.
6. When you see an ad on Facebook, what means that this ad offers valuable information? Can you clarify that? How do you think companies can improve that?

7. Think back to when you see an ad on Facebook: what makes you say this is an interesting and amazing ad? Can you give an example? How can this ad give you a bad impression? Explain?
8. When you see an ad on Facebook, what makes you say this is an accurate and believable ad? Would you explain further? How do you think companies can improve that?
9. What makes you feel deceived and annoyed when watching an ad on Facebook? Could you say more? Do you have any examples? Any further explanations? How do you think companies can reduce that?
10. Think back when you see an ad on Facebook: what makes you say this ad facilitates communication with the company? If you feel interested in an ad, what are your reactions? How can companies improve their communication with SNS users?
11. When you see an ad on Facebook, what makes you say this ad is useful and risk-free? How can that contribute to your evaluation of that ad? How about if the ad is from unrecognized resources? Could you say more?
12. If you are looking to buy a new product or service, how can ads on Facebook help you? What makes you say this ad offers information that is helpful to my purchasing decision? Can you give an example? How can that contribute to your assessment of those ads? Can you clarify your statement?
13. When a friend or one of your Facebook community members forwards an ad to you, can that affect your impression of that ad? If yes, how? How can your friends' comments on ads on Facebook influence you? What are your friends' actions in your comments about an ad on Facebook? Can you give an example?
14. Is there0 anything that we missed about the assessment of ads on Facebook? Is there anything you wanted to say that you did not get a chance to say?