

# The Impact of Consumer Perceptions of Social Media Advertisements on Impulse Buying Behavior: An Intercultural Investigation

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**ABSTRACT.** The objective of this study is to investigate the consumer perceptions of social media advertisements and their impacts on impulse buying behavior in a cross-cultural context. The data was collected from the samples of Turkish and Swedish consumers via survey research. The research results demonstrate that the perceptions of social media advertisements positively influence consumers' impulse buying behavior, and this influence significantly differs across national cultures. This study reveals that businesses that utilize social media advertising should pay particular attention to the socio-cultural structure, consumption patterns, and purchasing behaviors of the societies in which they do business.

**KEYWORDS.** Social media, impulse buying behavior, social media advertising perception, cross-cultural research, Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

## INTRODUCTION

Social media, which makes it possible to reach large masses over the Internet in a very short time and which is one of the most significant tools of communication and interaction today, has enabled users to exchange ideas with other users and generate new ideas (Hawkins & Vel, 2013; Rathore, Ilavarasan, & Dwivedi, 2016; Usher et al., 2014; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Zhu & Chen,

2015), and thus, has increased its influence in various fields (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017; Kapoor et al., 2017; Kim & Kim, 2018; Shareef, Mukerji, Dwivedi, Rana, & Islam, 2017; Ducoffe, 1996; Russell, Staffaroni, & Fox, 1994). One of these fields is advertising.

As the quality and functional differences among products become less distinguishable by consumers due to the increasing global competition, the concept of advertising has

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become one of the most significant factors that can positively influence consumer perceptions. Therefore, in order to reach consumers directly who are less influenced by traditional media advertisements, enterprises have started to heavily utilize social media platforms for their advertisements, and in turn, social media has become an essential part of their marketing strategies for over a decade.

Realizing the power of social media over consumers, businesses have started to view social media channels (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) as advertising platforms and focused on social media ads (Alalwan, 2018; Alalwan, Dwivedi, Rana, & Williams, 2016; Alalwan et al., 2017; Braojos-Gomez et al., 2015; Duffett, 2015; Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang, 2016; Kamboj et al., 2018; Amegbe, Owino, & Oeba, 2017; Shareef et al., 2017; Shareef, Mukerji, Alryalat, Wright, & Dwivedi, 2018; Zhu & Chang, 2016). For example, Internet advertising spending worldwide was USD 524.58 billion in 2016, according to results reported by Statista. This amount is estimated to reach approximately USD 650 billion by 2021. Spending on social media advertising, the second largest market for Internet advertising, is expected to reach USD 138.225 million in 2021 (Statista, 2020).

With social media advertising gaining more and more importance, businesses have started to worry about how to make their social media ads more effective and appealing to consumers (Alalwan, Rana, Algharabat, & Tarhini, 2016; Braojos-Gomez, Benitez-Amado, & Llorens-Montes, 2015; Kamboj, Sarmah, Gupta, & Dwivedi, 2018; Lin & Kim, 2016; Oh, Bellur, & Sundar, 2015; Duffett, 2015; Alalwan, 2018). Observing these concerns, researchers have focused on exploring the main dimensions of social media advertising that could affect the perception of social media ads and consumers' reactions (Oh et al., 2015; Alalwan, 2018). On the other hand, the constantly changing market conditions and trends have led to changes in consumers' buying considerations and

behavioral patterns. Consumers who would make their purchase decisions by pre-planning have started to make these decisions impulsively after they are exposed to a stimulus. The purchasing decisions which are made after the consumer's exposure to a stimulus are called as unplanned or reactive (impulsive) purchasing/buying decisions in the field of marketing (Rook, 1987).

A careful review of the relevant literature revealed that social media advertisements have a significant impact on consumer purchasing behavior (Boateng & Okoe, 2015; Çağlıyan, 2016; Alalwan, 2018; Hamouda, 2018). However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no research studies focusing on social media advertisements has explored the links among the perception of social media advertising, impulse buying behavior, and cultural values. Even though impulse buying behavior has been investigated in the online shopping context in recent years, the possible impact of the perception of social media advertisements on impulse buying behavior across national cultures has not been addressed. A comparative intercultural study that is conducted on this issue has the potential to make significant contributions to the relevant literature and to lead to findings that can be used in devising effective marketing strategies for businesses. Furthermore, researchers hold different or even opposing viewpoints on the cultural effects of Internet advertising. One view argues that it is very difficult for the Internet to serve as a global tool, while another claims that cultural values influence online advertising as well as traditional advertising (e.g., Durvasula & Lysonski, 2001; La Ferle, Edwards, & Lee, 2008; Wang & Sun, 2010). Hence, it is important to examine the effect of perceptions of social media advertising on impulse buying behavior in an intercultural context to address this contradiction in the literature.

The main objectives of this research study are two-fold: First, to investigate the effects of the perception of social media advertisements

on impulse buying behavior of consumers living in two distinct cultural settings (Turkey versus Sweden), and second, to identify possible differences in perceptions of social media advertising and impulse buying behavior that result from cross-cultural differences. In addition, it is aimed to minimize the aforementioned literature gaps and to utilize the study results to design successful marketing strategies for businesses operating in an international context.

### THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND MODEL HYPOTHESES

It is stated that the information and entertainment dimensions, which are included in the models proposed by both Ducoffe (1996) and

Wang et al. (2009), are important factors in shaping consumers' attitudes towards social media ads (Siau & Shen, 2003; Kayapınar et al., 2017; Unal et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2009; Haghirian et al., 2005; Petrovici et al., 2007; Shareef et al., 2018; Hamouda, 2018; Jung et al., 2016; Hassan et al., 2013; Dao et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2012; Platania et al., 2017; Law et al. 2016; Hoffman & Novak, 2012; Pollay & Mittal, 1993). It was also revealed that the dimensions of reliability and contributing to the economy are among the important factors that direct consumers to purchase a product (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Ling et al., 2010; Wang et al. 2009; Wolin et al., 2002). Table 1 includes some of the major studies on social media advertising.

Table 1. Past Studies on Social Media Advertising

Study	Research Variables	Advertising Medium
Park, Kee, & Valenzuela (2009)	Socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, information	Social networking sites (Facebook)
Wang & Sun (2010)	Information, entertainment, credibility, economy, value	Online advertising
Taylor et al. (2011)	Self-brand congruity, peer influence, informative, entertainment, quality of life, structure time, invasiveness, privacy concerns, and attitudes	Not identified
Mir (2012)	Attitudes toward social media advertising, information, entertainment, economy, value, ad-clicking, and buying	Social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn)
Logan et al. (2012)	Informativeness, irritation, and entertainment	Facebook versus Television
Yang et al. (2013)	User experience, attitudes toward mobile ads, acceptance of mobile technologies, technology-based evaluations, credibility, and emotion based evaluations	Mobile social media
Hassan et al. (2013)	Infotainment, credibility, irritation, personalized product content, personalized price content and personalized promotion content	Social networking sites advertisements
Dao et al. (2014)	Entertainment, informativeness, credibility, advertising value, attitude towards advertising, social networking sites, and content community websites	Social media advertising (Facebook and YouTube)
Boateng & Okoe (2015)	Corporate reputation, attitude toward social media advertising, and consumer response	Not identified

Duffett (2015)	Corporate reputation, attitude toward social media advertising, and consumer response	Social networking sites (Facebook)
Lin & Kim (2016)	Innovativeness concerns, privacy concern, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes toward ads, and purchase intention	Social networking sites (Facebook)
Murillo et al. (2016)	Informativeness, entertainment, irritation, credibility, advertising value, attitude towards advertising, and demographic variables	Social media advertising (Twitter)
Lee & Hong (2016)	Emotional appeal, informativeness, creativity, privacy concern, intention to express empathy, attitudes, subjective norms, and purchase intention	Social media advertising (Facebook)
Jung et al. (2016)	Perceived advertising value, informativeness, entertainment, promotional rewards, peer influence, invasiveness, privacy concern, attitude toward social network advertising, and behavioural intention	Social media advertising (Facebook)
Can & Kaya (2016)	Perceived ease of use, psychological dependence, and habit	Social media advertising (Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Google +, Flickr, Twitter, and YouTube)
Shareef et al. (2017)	Entertainment, informativeness, irritation, advertising value, and attitudes	Social networking sites (Facebook)
Kayapınar et al. (2017)	Information, entertainment, credibility, economy, and value	Not identified
Hamouda (2018)	Entertainment, informativeness, credibility, advertising value, attitude towards advertising, corporate reputation, and consumer responses	Social media advertising (Facebook)
Shareef et al. (2018)	Hedonic motivation, source derogation, self-concept, message informality, experiential message, and attitude toward advertisement	Social media advertising (Facebook)
He & Shao (2018)	Number of symbols, number of indexes, number of icons, social facilitation, social presence, and communication effect	Not identified

Drawing on the studies by Ducoffe (1996) and Wang et al. (2009), a theoretical model of the social media advertising perception and impulse buying behavior relationship was proposed to be tested in an international setting (Figure 1). The suggested model is based on the most important dimensions of the social media advertising perception including information provision, entertainment, reliability, and contribution to the economy (Dwivedi et al., 2017; Kapoor et al., 2017; Plume et al., 2016; Shareef et al., 2017). The irritation (Ducoffe, 1996) and value corruption

dimensions (Wang et al., 2009) were excluded from the model.

Advertising is inherently a sociocultural phenomenon. Consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards social media advertisements are affected by their cultural inclinations (Wang & Sun, 2010). Therefore, it would be meaningful to consider the topic in an intercultural context in order to broaden our perspective on social media advertising. Conceptually, individual attitudes and lifestyles are related to the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (2001), including power distance, individualism versus collectivism,

uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term orientation versus short-term orientation. Table 2 displays the

rankings on the cultural dimensions of Turkey and Sweden (Hofstede, 2001).

Figure 1. The Model of the Social Media Advertisement Perception and Impulse Buying Behavior Link

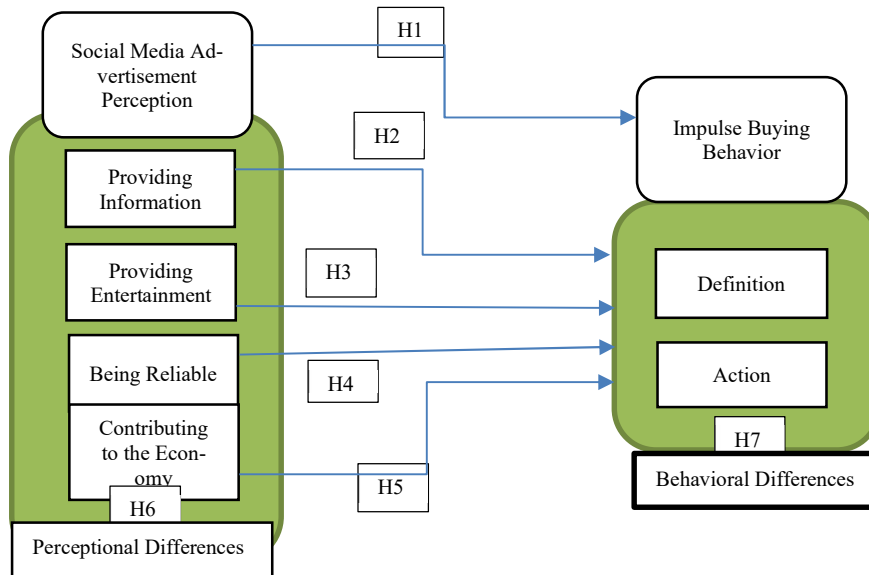


Table 2. Comparison of Cultural Dimensions of Turkey and Sweden

Country/Cultural Dimensions	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualism	Masculinity	Long-Term Orientation
Turkey	18	16	28	32	46
Sweden	47/48	49/50	10/11	53	53

Source: Hofstede, 2001

Turkey and Sweden were selected to test the research hypotheses of this study since these countries have significantly different cultures based on the Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. With regard to power distance, Sweden is seen as a society that has less power distance compared to Turkey. With respect to uncertainty avoidance, the Swedish consumers have less tendency to avoid uncertainty compared to their counterparts in Turkey. Further, Swedes seems to be more individualistic, and Turks have adopted a more collective way of life. In terms of masculinity versus femininity, the Turkish people seem to

adopt a more masculine way of life compared to the Swedish people. Turkey has a low value on the long-term orientation which indicates a normative community property. Sweden has an intermediate value, so it does not express a clear preference (Hofstede, 2001). Since the cultural values and attitudes of the Turkish and Swedish cultures are different from each other on the basis of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, the comparison of these countries would be meaningful in examining potential differences in perceptions of social media advertisements and impulse buying behavior.

### ***Social Media Advertisement Perception and Impulse Buying Behavior***

Rook (1987) describes impulse buying behavior as making purchases that are mostly not required during the course of purchase but are driven by an irresistible need to purchase something. In the impulse buying behavior that is based on hedonistic pleasures and contains various emotions such as self-respect and the desire for self-actualization, the consumer goes through and completes all of the phases of the purchase decision process within the store. While some studies focused on external factors affecting impulse buying behavior (e.g., Karbasivar & Yarahmadi, 2011; Tinne, 2011; Husnain et al., 2019; Mihić & Kursan, 2010), other studies investigated the effects of psychological factors (e.g., Saleh, 2012; Virvilaitė et al., 2011). In their study, Dawson & Kim (2009) explored the emotional and cognitive aspects of online purchasing behavior and found a relationship between the emotional and cognitive states of the consumer and online impulse buying behavior. In the research conducted by Kim & Eastin (2011), the effect of hedonic factors on online shopping behavior of consumers was examined, and it was shown that hedonic shopping was a predictor of heuristic information seeking and impulse buying behavior.

In Kim & Forsythe (2007), they stated that hedonic experiences on the web are more important than utilitarian experiences. In their study in Kim & Johnson (2016), they found that images or suggestions on social media lead consumers to instant purchasing behavior and help build a positive brand image. Similarly, many researchers have stated that marketers reach their target audiences through the Internet and that their marketing strategies (pictures, banners, and other advertising tools) can increase instant purchases (Koufaris, 2002; Koufaris, et al. 2001; Madharavan & Laverie 2004). Finally, Li et al. (2000) found that the online environment facilitates impulse buying behavior. From there, it was foreseen that ads

posted on social media could lead consumers to impulse buying behavior, and the related hypothesis was proposed as follows:

***H1: The perception of social media ads has a positive effect on the impulse buying behavior of the consumer.***

The perception of social media advertisements has four major components or dimensions: Providing information, providing entertainment, being reliable, and contributing to the economy. The perception of social media advertisements is expected to affect impulse buying behavior at the component level. The following research hypotheses address these potential relationships.

#### ***Providing Information***

When a product enters the market for the first time, informative advertisements are used for the purposes of attracting attention, providing information on the product's use and revealing the product's characteristics that distinguish it from other products. The information provided by advertisements about a product or service might have a positive or negative impact on consumer attitudes and purchase decisions related to that product or service. The dimension of providing information is defined as the ability of advertisements to present new and easily accessible information on time (Akkaya, 2019). In the study conducted by Schlosser, Shavitt, and Kanfer (1999), it was revealed that the informative dimension of online advertisements affects the purchasing decision of the consumers. Wang Sun, Lei, and Toncar (2009) stated that the information dimension plays an important role in shaping consumers' attitudes towards online advertising. A number of studies found a positive relationship between the informativeness of social media advertisements and consumer attitudes (e.g., Lee & Hong, 2016; Ducoffe, 1995; Dao et al., 2014; Hassan et al., 2013; Logan et al., 2012). Hence, the perception of the informative characteristic of a social media ad may lead to

more positive attitudes towards social media ads, and thus it affects impulse buying behavior. The hypothesis proposed is as follows:

**H2:** *The higher the consumer's perception of the informativeness of a social media ad, the higher the consumer's tendency to display the impulse buying behavior for the product that is the focus of the ad.*

### **Providing Entertainment**

Entertainment is an important factor that establishes an emotional bond between the consumer and the brand, and by this way, increases customer loyalty and positively influences the power of advertising (Amjad, 2015). In other words, entertaining advertisements play a significant role in the creation of favorable consumer responses to the company's messages (Liu et al., 2012).

In the study conducted by Ducoffe (1996), the effect of online ads on attitude was investigated, and it was revealed that the entertainment dimension has a positive effect on the perceived advertising value. Koufaris et al. (2001) emphasized that the fun of online advertisements is an important factor affecting the consumer's intention of impulse buying. Hedonic benefits are extremely important in persuading consumers (Hughes & Palen, 2009; Logan et al., 2012; Kuoppamäki et al., 2017; Platania et al., 2017; Law et al., 2016; Pietro & Pantano, 2012; Shareef et al., 2015; Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Shimp, 1981).

Entertainment, a dimension of perception of social media ads, may cause consumers to develop a positive attitude towards social media ads, and thus to exhibit impulsive purchasing behavior. Accordingly, the hypothesis proposed is as follows:

**H3:** *The entertainment aspect of social media ads has a positive effect on the impulse buying behavior of the consumer.*

### **Being Reliable**

The reliability of advertisements can be interpreted as the fact that consumers consider business advertisements as a reliable source of information. MacKenzie et al. (1989) named the perceptions of consumers about the accuracy and honesty of advertising as advertisement reliability. The ad reliability has an important role in social media, and in community building, information generation and information dissemination to individuals (Adali et al., 2012). In a research study conducted by Lafferty et al. (1999), it was revealed that presenting correct information about the product in advertisements positively affects the attitudes and behaviors of consumers. Similarly, Eighmey (1997) stated that advertising reliability and consumer attitudes are interrelated. Xu et al. (2008) revealed that the dimension of reliability affects consumers' attitudes towards mobile ads positively. Finally, Brackett and Carr (2001) argued that reliability is an important resource for consumers when evaluating online advertisements.

Accordingly, it can be argued that reliability may positively affect consumer ad perceptions, and in turn, lead to impulse buying behavior. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4:** *The reliability of social media ads has a positive effect on the impulse buying behavior of the consumer.*

### **Contributing to the Economy**

There are two different explanations on the contributions of advertisements to the economy. The first explanation is that when consumers are undecided about what brand of a service or a product they will buy, advertisements provide assistance to consumers in making a decision on a particular brand. The second explanation is that advertising is the most significant factor that influences consumer perceptions related to the recognition, price, and quality of a product

(Meral, 2006). Therefore, it can be argued that advertising creates positive value for the overall economy.

In the study conducted by Azeem and Haq in 2012, it was stated that the most critical factor affecting the attitudes of consumers is the contribution of social media ads to the economy. Wang and Sun (2010) pointed out that consumers who think that social media ads have positive effects on the development of the economy have a positive attitude towards social media ads.

In light of the above arguments, it can be concluded that the factor of contributing to the economy may have a positive effect on the impulse buying behavior of consumers and the following hypothesis can be proposed:

**H5:** *The consumer's perception that social media ads contribute to the economy has a positive effect on impulse buying behavior.*

### ***Do Dimensions of Social Media Advertisement Perception and Impulse Buying Behavior Vary Across National Cultures?***

Consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards social media ads are affected by their cultural predispositions (Wang & Sun, 2010). Therefore, social media advertising perceptions and impulse buying behavior can be expected to be affected by cultural values and norms. Culture plays a significant role in impulse buying behavior. Individualistic societies are more independent than collectivist societies, and individuals in these societies are more prone to make their decisions on their own. Therefore, the tendency to make impulsive purchases is much higher in individualistic societies like Sweden than in collectivist societies like Turkey. Individuals living in collectivist cultures such as the Turkish society are more likely to follow the norms of the society, and therefore, have much less tendency to make impulsive purchases (Hofstede, 2001). Kacen and Lee (2002) revealed that cultural values affect the impulse

buying behavior of consumers. Furthermore, higher power distance might play a more active role in persuading consumers and guiding them towards impulse buying behavior (Littrell & Valentin, 2005). On the other hand, the tendency to avoid uncertainty may make consumers more cautious about impulse buying (Marinov, Marinova, Manrai, & Manrai, 2001). Also, the long-term versus short-term thinking disposition can shape an individual's consumption and spending behaviors (Wang & Sun, 2010). Consequently, it can be argued that the mean values of the social media ad perception and impulse buying behavior may differ across national cultures. Accordingly, the related hypotheses are proposed as follows:

**H6:** *There are significant differences between the dimensions of social media ad perception across national cultures.*

**H7:** *There are significant differences between the dimensions of impulse buying behavior across national cultures.*

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This is a cross-cultural study that compares the social media ad perceptions and impulse buying behaviors of consumers from Turkey and Sweden. Since the cultural values and attitudes of consumers from these countries are expected to differ in terms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions of power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation, studying samples from these countries seemed to be an optimal choice for this study. A sample of consumers who are over 18 years of age and who reside either in Ankara, which is the capital city of Turkey and the second largest with a population of 5,503,985 (Turkish Statistical Institute), or in Gothenburg, which is one of the largest cities of Sweden with a population of 571,868 (Göteborgs Stad), were surveyed via face-to-face questioning. Due to the size of population in each city, and time and



financial constraints of this study, convenience sampling was used in sample selection. A total of 1,039 individuals (527 from Turkey and 512 from Sweden) participated in the survey. The number of usable responses was 502 for Turkey and 500 for Sweden. The data from Turkey was collected between February 10 and March 9, 2019, and from Sweden was collected between April 20 and May 18, 2019. Prior to deploying the actual survey, a pilot survey was conducted over a sample of 30 people from each country to test the validity and reliability of the survey instrument. Most of the respondents who participated in the pilot survey indicated that the language of the questionnaire was clear and understandable and the survey length was reasonable.

All of the measurement instruments that were used to assess the model constructs were borrowed from past research. The scale measuring the perception of social media advertisements was borrowed from Wang et al. (2009). The perception of social media advertisements was measured using 13 items. The 5-point Likert scale with the anchors of “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (5) was utilized.

The impulse buying behavior scale was formed on the basis of the scales borrowed from Torlak and Tiltay (2010); Rook and Fisher (1995); Weun, Jones, and Beatty (1998); Merdin (2010); and Oz and Mucuk (2015). This scale was measured by 13 items using the 5-point Likert scale with the anchors of “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (5).

**Sample Characteristics**

The representation of gender within and across the country samples is acceptable. In the Turkish sample, the participants are composed of 49.6% (249) men and 50.4% (253) women. In the Swedish sample, the participants are composed of 47.4% (237) men and 52.6% (263) women.

The examination of the frequency distribution of the age variable for each country sample revealed that the distribution of each age group across the samples is comparable. It was found that 62 (12.4%) of the Turkish participants are aged 20 and under; 141 (28.1%) are 21-30; 130 (25.9%) are 31-40; 88 (17.5%) are 41-50; and 81 (16.1%) are 51 years and older. For the Swedish sample, it was found that 42 (8.4%) of the participants are aged 20 and under; 177 (35.4%) are 21-30; 119 (23.8%) are 31-40; 91 (18.2%) are 41-50; and 71 (14.2%) are 51 years and older.

In terms of educational background, it was found that 11 (2.2%) of the Turkish participants are primary; 39 (7.8%) are secondary; 169 (8.9%) are high school; 103 (20.5%) are university; 140 (27.9%) are graduate; and 40 (8.0%) are doctorate graduates. For the Swedish sample, it was determined that 8 (1.6%) of the participants are primary; 41 (8.2%) are secondary; 149 (29.8%) are high school; 166 (33.2%) are university; 102 (20.4%) are graduate; and 34 (6.8%) are doctorate graduates.

Table 3. Weekly Social Media Usage in Turkey and Sweden

Weekly Social Media Usage	0-5 hrs	6-10 hrs	11-15 hrs	16-20 hrs	21-25 hrs	26-30 hrs	31 or more hrs
Turkey	133 (26.5%)	85 (16.9%)	91 (18.1%)	56 (11.2%)	50 (10.0%)	48 (9.6%)	39 (7%) 8
Sweden	68 (13.6%)	76 (15.2%)	97 (19.4%)	77 (15.4%)	72 (14.4%)	59 (11.8%)	51 (%) 10.2

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The data gathered for the research was analyzed using the SPSS and AMOS software packages. The analyses were conducted and

interpreted separately for both countries. First, the factor and reliability analyses were conducted.

The KMO value was calculated as 0.901 for the Turkish sample, and the Sphericity Bartlett

Test was found to be statistically significant. Similarly, the KMO value was determined as 0.901 for the Swedish sample. The Sphericity Bartlett Test was also found to be statistically significant. These results indicate that a factor analysis can be conducted for both of the country samples. As a result of the factor analysis conducted on the 13-item scale of

perception on social media advertisements, the scale items were aggregated under four dimensions (providing information, providing entertainment, being reliable, and contributing to the economy) as expected. The scales used to assess the dimensions of the social media ad perception were found to be reliable for both of the samples (Table 4).

Table 4. Results of Reliability and Factor Analyses of the Perception of Social Media Advertisements of the Turkish and Swedish Respondents

Constructs/ Scale Items	Turkey			Sweden		
	Factor Loadings	%	Cronbach Alpha	Factor Loadings	%	Cronbach Alpha
<b>Providing Information</b>		22.616	.74		25.030	.77
Social media ads are good sources of product / service information.	.821			.633		
Social media ads provide product / brand related information.	.826			.836		
Social media ads provide up-to-date information.	.611			.776		
<b>Providing Entertainment</b>		19.603	.90		16.915	.91
Social media ads are amusing.	.831			.833		
Social media ads are enjoyable.	.870			.858		
Social media ads are pleasing.	.734			.840		
Social media ads are interesting.	.612			.674		
<b>Being Reliable</b>		16.321	.85		16.338	.79
Social media ads are convincing.	.802			.598		
Social media ads are trusted.	.837			.808		
Social media ads are reasonable.	.720			.741		
<b>Contributing to the Economy</b>		15.385	.76		15.328	.73
Social media ads have positive effects on the economy.	.762			.695		
Social media ads raise our standards of living.	.627			.710		
Social media ads about public products have better results.	.765			.785		

For the impulse buying behavior scale, the KMO value for the Turkish sample was calculated as 0.874, and the Sphericity Bartlett Test was found to be meaningful. Similarly, the KMO value for the Swedish sample was 0.901, and the Sphericity Bartlett Test was also found to be meaningful. The scale items were aggregated under two dimensions: definitive and action (Table ). These results demonstrate that a factor analysis can be conducted for the analysis of the data for both of the country

samples. The thirteen items related to the impulse buying behavior scale were included in the first factor analysis, and, as a result, two factors were obtained. However, when the factor loadings for the items were examined closely, the following items were eliminated from further analyses since their factor loadings were less than 0.5: "Mostly, I can't subdue my desire to buy something even if I don't need," "Campaigns and discounts that the companies introduce persuade me to buy the

product and enjoy this situation,” and “Store design, music, colors, and employee interest are very important factors in making a decision to buy” (Yaşlıoğlu, 2017). Another factor analysis was conducted on the remaining ten

scale items (Table 5). The scale that is used to evaluate impulse buying behavior was found to be reliable for both of the country samples (Table 5).

Table 5. Results of Reliability and Factor Analyses of the Impulse Buying Behavior of the Turkish and Swedish Respondent

Constructs/ Scale Items	Turkey			Sweden		
	Factor loadings	%	Cronbach Alpha	Factor loadings	%	Cronbach Alpha
<b>Definitive</b>		35.747	.74		28.995	.83
'I saw and bought' is my shopping style.	.652			.741		
'Take it now, then think' expresses me very well.	.340			.587		
My shopping behavior is highly influenced by my current mood.	.828			.678		
Sometimes I feel strong emotions to buy something.	.785			.635		
Even if I do not need it most of the time, I cannot handle my desire to buy something.	.633			.652		
When I go out, I buy something without planning it.	.608			.605		
<b>Action</b>		22.111	.86		28.979	.83
I buy many products without any necessity, and this makes me very happy.	.853			.674		
I usually do shopping without thinking.	.823			.656		
Shopping is to get away from the stress of daily life.	.802			.873		
When I feel stressed, I go shopping more often.	.788			.858		

The correlation coefficients between the dimensions of social media ad perception and the dimensions of the impulse buying behavior were found to be significant for both countries (Table 6 and Table 7). For the Turkish sample, impulse buying behavior is positively correlated with providing information ( $r = 0.252$ ,  $n = 502$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), providing entertainment ( $r = 0.190$ ,  $n = 502$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), being reliable ( $r = 0.224$ ,  $n = 502$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and contributing to the economy ( $r = 0.257$ ,  $n = 502$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Likewise, for the Swedish sample, impulse buying behavior is positively correlated with providing information ( $r = 0.337$ ,  $n = 502$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), providing entertainment ( $r = 0.304$ ,  $n = 502$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ),

being reliable ( $r = 0.329$ ,  $n = 502$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and contributing to the economy ( $r = 0.332$ ,  $n = 502$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). When all dimensions are considered, it is seen that the correlations between variables are stronger for the Swedish sample.

### Results of Model Testing

The proposed model was tested using a path analysis, which is a type of structural equation model. This analysis was performed for each country separately (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Figure 2 demonstrates the impact of the perception of social media advertisements on impulse buying behavior for the Turkish sample.

Table 6. Correlation Analysis Results for the Turkish Sample

Construct	Providing Information	Providing Entertainment	Being Reliable	Contributing to the Economy	Definition	Action	Social Media Advertisements	Impulse Buying Behavior
Providing Information	1							
Providing Entertainment	0.544*	1						
Being Reliable	0.419*	0.665*	1					
Contributing to the Economy	0.491*	0.614*	0.636*	1				
Definition	0.234*	0.137*	0.147*	0.219*	1			
Action	0.211*	0.204*	0.257*	0.238*	0.573*	1		
Social Media Advertisements	0.727*	0.891*	0.830*	0.823*	0.217*	0.273*	1	
Impulse Buying Behavior	0.252*	0.190*	0.224*	0.257*	0.900*	0.873*	0.274*	1

\*P<0.05

Table 7. Correlation Analysis Results for the Swedish Sample

Construct	Providing Information	Providing Entertainment	Being Reliable	Contributing to the Economy	Definition	Action	Social Media Advertisements	Impulse Buying Behavior
Providing Information	1							
Providing Entertainment	0.562*	1						
Being Reliable	0.555*	0.672*	1					
Contributing to the Economy	0.543*	0.515*	0.580*	1				
Definition	0.360*	0.283*	0.322*	0.327*	1			
Action	0.215*	0.258*	0.253*	0.254*	0.593*	1		
Social Media Advertisements	0.800*	0.865*	0.839*	0.784*	0.387*	0.298*	1	
Impulse Buying Behavior	0.337*	0.304*	0.329*	0.332*	0.934*	0.841*	0.392*	1

\*P<0.05

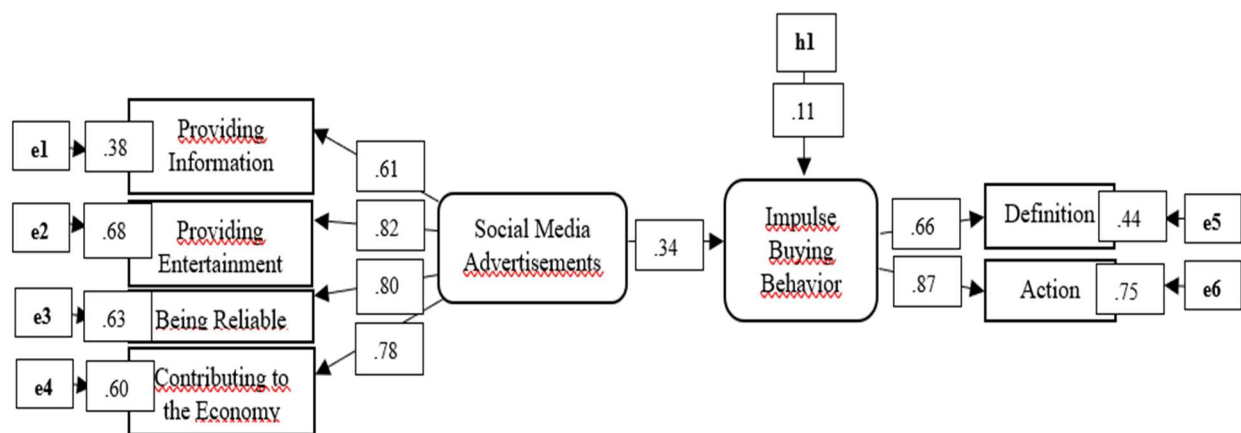
Table 8 displays the values of the goodness-of-fit indices related to the model for the Turkish sample. The Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) Index takes the value of 1,075.704, and the ratio of  $\chi^2/sd$  is 4.992, which is less than 5. Thus, it can be suggested that Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) Index indicates the good fit for the model. The GFI value is acceptable with a goodness of fit of 0.97. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is 0.089. According to Browne and Cudeck (1993), a RMSEA value less than or equal to 0.05 is considered a good

fit, between 0.05 and 0.08 is a satisfactory fit, between 0.08 and 0.10 is a moderate fit, and the values greater than 0.10 are a poor fit. Similarly, according to MacCallum et al. (1996), the values between 0.05 and 0.10 indicate a moderate fit, and the values greater than 0.10 are interpreted as poor representation models. Therefore, the RMSEA value is acceptable as a moderate fit with a 90% confidence range. In addition to these measures, the value of TLI is 0.94, and the value of NFI is 0.96, which are considered as acceptable goodness-of-fit values. The CFI

value is acceptable with a goodness of fit of 0.97. The AGFI value is 0.93 and the IFI value is 0.97. Both of these indices indicate

acceptable goodness of fit. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the model of the structural

Figure 2. Structural Equation Model for the Turkish Sample Related to the Link between the Perception of Social Media Advertisements and Impulse Buying Behavior



equation for the Turkish sample can be evaluated. Figure 3 displays the impact of the perception of social media advertisements on impulse buying behavior for the Swedish sample. Table 8 presents the values of the goodness-of-fit indices related to the model for the Swedish sample.

For the Swedish sample, the Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) Index takes the value of 1,115.902, and the ratio of  $\chi^2/df$  is 3.590, which is less than 5. From this point of view, it can be suggested that the model is appropriate. The GFI value is acceptable with a goodness-of-fit of 0.98. The RMSEA is 0.072, which is acceptable. The TLI value of 0.96 and the NFI value of 0.97 both indicate a good fit. The CFI value is acceptable with a goodness-of-fit of 0.98. The AGFI value is 0.95, and the IFI value is 0.98. Both of these indices are found to be acceptable. All of these values suggest that the structural equation model for the Swedish sample can be evaluated. Based on the findings related to the models, it can be concluded that the perception of social media advertisements

in Turkey and Sweden affects impulse buying behavior ( $p < 0.05$ ).

### Results of Hypothesis Testing

All of the hypotheses related to the model relationships (H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5) were supported by the data from the Turkish and Swedish samples at the significance level of 95% (Table 9 and Table 10). According to the results, the perception of social media ads has a significant positive impact on impulse buying behavior for the both Turkish and Swedish cultures. At the component level, all the components of the perception of social media ads, including providing information, providing entertainment, being reliable, and contributing to the economy, have significant positive effects on impulse buying behavior for both cultures (Table 9 and Table 10). The strengths of these effects are greater for the Swedish sample than for the Turkish sample. Also, providing information and contributing to the economy have stronger influences on impulse buying behavior for both country samples compared to the other components or

dimensions of the perception of social media advertisements.

**Comparison of the Perception of Social Media Ads and Impulse Buying Behavior Across Cultures**

It was examined whether the mean responses pertinent to four dimensions of social media ad perception (providing information, providing entertainment, being reliable, and contributing to the economy) and two

dimensions of impulse buying behavior (definition and action) vary across two national cultures (Table 11). The hypotheses related to these differences, H6 and H7, were supported by the data from both Turkish and Swedish samples (Table 11). It was concluded that the perception dimensions of social media advertisements significantly differed across these two national cultures ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Figure 3. Structural Equation Model for the Swedish Sample Related to Link between the Perception of Social Media Advertisements and Impulse Buying Behavior

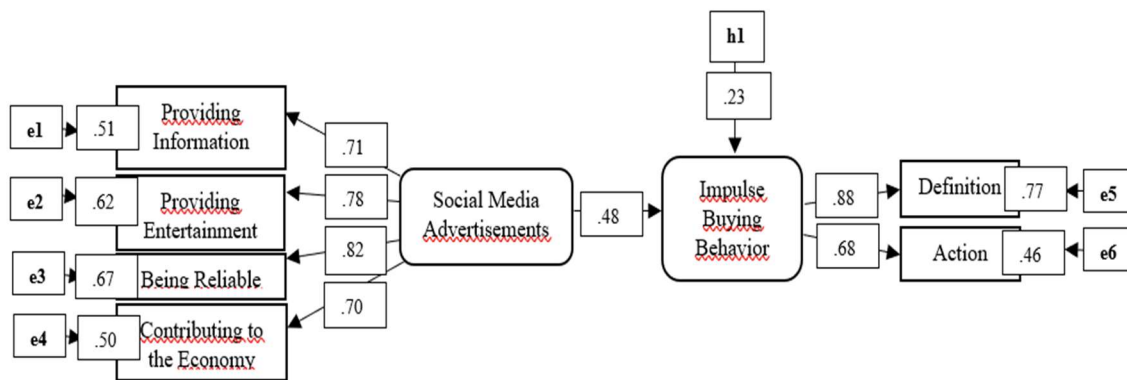


Table 8. Model Fit Indices for the Turkish and Swedish samples

Country	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2/sd$	P	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	NNFI/TLI	GFI	AGFI	IFI
Turkey	1,075.704	4.992	0.000	0.089	0.97	0.96	0.94	0.97	0.93	0.97
Sweden	1,115.902	3.590	0.000	0.072	0.98	0.97	0.96	0.98	0.95	0.98
<b>Ideal Value</b>		<5		$\leq 0.10$	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.95$	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.80$	$> 0.90$

Table 9. The Results of Hypothesis Testing for the Turkish Sample

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	H	B	SD	$\beta$	t	p	Result
Perception of Social Media Ads →	Impulse Buying Behavior	H1	0.282	0.045	0.272	6.313	<b>0.000*</b>	Supported
Providing Information →		H2	0.226	0.040	0.245	5.648	<b>0.000*</b>	Supported
Providing Entertainment →		H3	0.155	0.036	0.189	4.315	<b>0.000*</b>	Supported
Being Reliable →		H4	0.188	0.036	0.225	5.156	<b>0.000*</b>	Supported
Contributing to the Economy →		H5	0.223	0.038	0.254	5.880	<b>0.000*</b>	Supported

(\*)  $p < 0.05$

Similarly, the dimensions of impulse buying behavior (definition and action) varied

across these cultures. The conclusion reached from these findings is that the perceptions of

social media ads are affected by cultural tendencies. These results are consistent with those of other intercultural studies in the literature (e.g., Wang & Sun, 2010; Wang et al.,

2009; Durvasula & Lysonski, 2001; La Ferle et al., 2008; Pollay & Mittal, 1993; Petrovici & Marinov, 2007).

Table 10. The Results of Hypothesis Testing for the Swedish Sample

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	H	B	SD	$\beta$	t	p	Result
Perception of Social Media Ads →	Impulse Buying Behavior	H1	0.412	0.044	0.387	9.369	<b>0.000*</b>	Supported
Providing Information →		H2	0.290	0.036	0.340	8.080	<b>0.000*</b>	Supported
Providing Entertainment →		H3	0.257	0.036	0.303	7.096	<b>0.000*</b>	Supported
Being Reliable →		H4	0.305	0.041	0.318	7.475	<b>0.000*</b>	Supported
Contributing to the Economy →		H5	0.284	0.037	0.323	7.604	<b>0.000*</b>	Supported
(*) p<0.05								

Table 11. Comparison of Differences in the Mean Values of Social Media Advertisement Perceptions and Impulse Buying Behavior Across the Turkish and Swedish Samples

Construct	Country	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Providing Information	Sweden	2.9707	0.79440	-3.03	<b>0.001*</b>
	Turkey	3.1375	0.80413		
Providing Entertainment	Sweden	2.2660	0.79876	-6.75	<b>0.000*</b>
	Turkey	2.6300	0.90472		
Being Reliable	Sweden	2.2333	0.70545	-4.24	<b>0.000*</b>
	Turkey	2.4482	0.88498		
Contributing to the Economy	Sweden	2.4773	0.76739	-4.27	<b>0.000*</b>
	Turkey	2.6952	0.84339		
Definition	Sweden	2.5537	0.74711	-3.87	<b>0.000*</b>
	Turkey	2.7334	0.71979		
Action	Sweden	1.9930	0.73962	-7.79	<b>0.000*</b>
	Turkey	2.4163	0.96352		
(*) p<0.05					

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the main dimensions of the perception of the social media ads and their effects on impulse buying behavior over the samples of consumers from two different national cultures, namely Turkish and Swedish, and to find out whether there are any differences in perceptions and behaviors that may occur due to distinct cultural values. In recent years, businesses have started to view social media channels as advertising platforms and have made considerable investments in this area. Hence, businesses try to ensure that

social media advertisements for which they allocate considerable amounts of funds are effective in reaching and influencing consumers. For this purpose, Shareef et al. (2017) and Dwivedi et al. (2017) state that social media ads should be designed and organized in a way that can attract the attention of consumers. Based on the literature review, it was deemed necessary to explore four main dimensions of the social media advertisement perception and find out if these dimensions differ in an intercultural context. The findings of the study revealed that the dimensions of social media ad perception and impulse buying

behavior by the Turkish and Swedish consumers differed significantly. The study showed that these two cultures that are substantially different from each other with regard to Hofstede's cultural dimensions exhibited different attitudes, social media advertising perceptions, and impulse buying behaviors.

The Turkish consumers reported more positive attitudes towards social media ads than their Swedish counterparts. Turks think that social media ads are more reliable, informative, entertaining, and economical compared to Swedes. A further analysis of the sample data revealed that even though Swedes compared to Turks spend more time on social media, and thus they are exposed to more social media ads, they have less positive attitudes towards social media advertisements. As a result, based on the findings, it was noted that the social media usage time and social media advertisement perceptions could be unrelated. The main determinant here may be cultural differences between these societies, webpages, and the content followed on social media (e.g., news, fashion, and magazine). In addition, the social media advertising in Sweden is much older and more developed compared to that in Turkey. In countries where social media advertising is newly focused on and is under development, people generally focus on the positive aspects of advertising (Wang & Sun, 2010). Therefore, Turks are expected to show more positive attitudes towards social media ads compared to Swedes.

When the dimensions of social media ad perception are examined separately, it is seen that presenting information is the most perceived dimension. This result is similar to the findings of the past research and means that consumers see social media advertisements as an important source of information (e.g. Ducoffe, 1996; Jung et al., 2016; Wolin et al., 2002; Lee & Hong, 2016; Pavlou et al., 2007; Rathore et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2011). In other words, consumers see social media

platforms that they visit as a valuable source of information during the research phase of purchasing products or services (Alawan, 2018). In addition, social media ads provide more detailed and up-to-date information (Logan et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2011).

The study also revealed that the contributing to the economy is the second most perceived dimension of social media ad perception. Businesses state that advertising is the lifeblood of the business world since it informs consumers about products or services, increases their living standards, and encourages competition (Belch & Belch, 2009; Wang & Sun, 2010; Koch, 1971; Jones, 1985; Swerdlow & Blessios, 1993; Altıntaş et al., 2018; Wang & Sun, 2010). A study by Altıntaş et al. (2018) showed that the impact of the advertising sector on economic growth was remarkable.

Entertainment, on the other hand, was found to be an important factor affecting consumers to develop a positive attitude towards social media ads by establishing an emotional bond between consumers and social media ads, and thus influencing their purchasing behavior (Mir, 2012; Wang & Sun, 2010; Liu, Sinkovics, Pezderka, & Haghirian, 2012). Finally, reliability is defined as the general perception of consumers regarding the accuracy and honesty of an advertisement (Ling, Piew, & Chai, 2010). The reliability of social media ads has a positive effect on consumers' attitudes towards advertisements (Ponte et al., 2015). Therefore, consumers' trust in advertisements is an important factor that drives them to purchase goods and services (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Wolin et al., 2002; Wang & Sun, 2010).

When the effect of social media ad perception on impulse buying behavior is examined at the component level, it is seen that the dimension of contributing to the economy has the highest impact on impulse buying behavior in Turkey, while in Sweden, the most important dimension that leads to impulse buying behavior is presenting information.



This difference can be explained by the “individuality and collectivism” dimension of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Individualistic societies focus on “me” more; they give importance to individual choices; they prioritize their own interests rather than the interests of society; and their source of information is the media. Collectivist societies, on the other hand, are “us” oriented; they keep the interests of the society before their own interests; and the sources of obtaining information are mostly their social environment (Hofstede, 2001). Turkey has a collective society that focuses more on social benefits of social media ads and thinks that those ads contribute to the economy. This leads them to have positive attitudes toward social media advertising and engage in impulsive purchasing behavior. On the other hand, since Sweden has the characteristics of an individual society, they focus on the individual benefits of social media advertisements and think that these advertisements are a source of information from which they can learn about the qualities of products or services. Therefore, the Swedes’ belief that social media ads provide information leads them to impulse buying behavior.

Another important finding of this study is that the perception of social media ads positively affects impulse buying behavior. The strength of this relationship is greater for Sweden. This result shows that individuals living in Sweden are affected by social media advertisements and shop more impulsively. This difference in the strengths of the relationship can be explained by the “uncertainty avoidance” dimension of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Countries with a low tendency to avoid uncertainty are open to change and innovation, and their use of the Internet is greater (Hofstede, 2001). Sweden has less tendency to avoid uncertainty compared to Turkey and is more open to innovation and change. Therefore, Swedes are affected by social media ads more and want to

try products. On the other hand, another cultural dimensions suggested by Hofstede, “individualism and collectivism,” may also play a role in the formation of this difference. Individualistic societies are more independent than collective societies, and these societies tend to make their own decisions. Therefore, there is a higher tendency for impulse shopping in individualistic societies such as Sweden than in collective societies. Individuals living in collectivist cultures, such as in Turkey, adhere to the norms of the society, and therefore, have much less tendency to make impulse purchases (Hofstede, 2001). Besides, individuals from Sweden spend more time on social media, and thus, they are exposed to more advertisements compared to those in Turkey.

### ***Theoretical Contributions***

This study proposed a theoretical model of social media advertisement perceptions and impulse buying behavior based on the studies by Ducoffe (1996) and Wang et al. (2009). This proposed model was created by taking into account several critical factors, and it is predicted that it will make an important theoretical contribution to the literature in this respect. This study examined the effects of social media advertisement perception on impulse buying behavior at the component level and unveiled the new relationships between these variables and expanded research on social media advertisement perceptions to an intercultural setting.

### ***Practical Implications***

The results of the study provide important information about the main issues that businesses are interested in social media advertising should focus on in their global marketing efforts. For example, businesses should take cultural differences into consideration when determining their marketing strategies and should not apply the same strategy in every culture. According to the results of this study, businesses that

advertise in social media environments should take into account the socio-cultural structure, consumption habits, and purchasing behavior of different national cultures.

In line with the results of this research, marketers have to emphasize the features of the product, the price of the product, discounts, and distribution tools while determining the advertising strategy to be applied in Sweden, which has the traits of an individualistic society. On the other hand, social values should be brought to the forefront more in Turkey, which has the characteristics of a collectivist society. In addition to these special differences, social media ads in both countries are viewed as reliable (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Wolin et al., 2002; Wang & Sun, 2010) and entertaining (Mir, 2012; Wang & Sun, 2010; Liu, Sinkovics, Pezderka, & Haghirian, 2012). What marketers need to do at this stage is to pay attention to the accuracy and honesty of the information given about the product or service in the advertisements offered on social media. If marketers want to increase the efficiency of their ads, they should design their advertisements on social media in more fun, creative, and innovative ways. All these results are very important for businesses aiming to achieve both local and global success.

#### ***Limitations and Future Research Directions***

As in many studies, the most important constraint of this study is that the research was carried out by assuming that the participants gave correct answers to the questions asked in the survey. Second, the study results reflect the situation when the questionnaire was administered to the participants. Consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards social media ads may vary over time (Karson et al., 2006). A longitudinal study can capture a more accurate picture of the model relationships. Another limitation is that the potential impacts of demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, income level, and education level) on the model variables were not explored. In future

studies, the influences of demographic factors can also be examined, and thus, the scope of research can be expanded. Finally, the data was collected from only one province of Sweden and Turkey. Therefore, the research might pose a problem in terms of generalizing the results to the country populations. Despite these constraints, the sizes of the study samples ( $n = 502$  for Turkey and  $n = 500$  for Sweden) are sufficiently large for analysis at the 95% significance level (Bal, 2001).

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