User Intention to Click on Facebook Advertising

A Cross-national Comparison between Danish and Italian students

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Abstract

Facebook Advertising (FBA) brings in the near totality of the revenue of Facebook, the most important and profitable social networking website in the world. In addition, it has become an indispensable part of the marketing strategy for advertisers around the world. In spite of that, FBA is a relatively new technology and there is still little academic literature dedicated to it. In particular, there is a gap in the research as to how users' approach towards FBA is attributable to national culture. This study is intended to take the first steps towards filling this gap by comparing samples of student population of two European countries, Denmark and Italy. The proposed model includes Hofstede's dimensions of national culture in conjunction with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and it was adapted from previous research about the cross-national acceptance of e-commerce.

The main research question in about investigating the differences in the intention to click on FBA across the two countries. The answer is sought by analysing the Danish and Italian perspectives in light of a TAM-derived model including advertisement trust and Hofstede's dimensions in a questionnaire distributed both online and in printed copies. The collected responses were gathered into a dataset for each country and the data was examined using multiple linear regression analysis.

The results indicate that both for the Danish and the Italian datasets, trust in the FB platform (Platform Trust, PT) is a significant antecedent of trust in the ad itself (Ad Trust, AT). Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) though, emerges as a significant antecedent of AT only for the Danish dataset. For both countries, AT is the only significant antecedent of intention to click on FB Ads. Contrary to the expectations, the Hofstede cultural values did not show a significant influence on Click Intention. The compared means show that the Danish sample is more likely to click on FB Ads than the Italian sample.

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List of Abbreviations

AT	Ad trust
CI	Click Intention
FB	Facebook
FBA	Facebook Advertising
IT	Information Technology
IU	Intention to Use
MAS	Masculinity Index
NA	Native Advertising
PDI	Power Distance Index
PEU	Perceived Ease of Use
PT	Platform Trust
PU	Perceived Usefulness
SA	Sponsored Advertising
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
UAI	Uncertainty Avoidance Index

1.Introduction

1.1 General setting

In the past few years we have seen Sponsored Advertising (SA) grow to become an important part of the revenue models for print media and become largely used in other kinds of media, especially online (Matteo and Da Zotto, 2015). SA is a form of paid advertising that often appears in form of native advertising (NA) on social media websites, like Facebook (FB). The definition of NA is applied to ads that "present the same visual characteristic and graphic format as the regular content published or posted on the platform" (Matteo and Da Zotto, 2015).

FB has emerged as one of the most important websites worldwide and nowadays it is the most popular social network in the world (Maurer and Wiegmann, 2015), counting over 2 billion users globally (statista.com, 2018). SA on FB goes by the name of Facebook Advertising (FBA), a form of NA introduced by the popular social networking website in 2007 and exponentially grown in popularity ever since. Global investment by companies in FBA has been growing steadily through the years to the point that FBA is considered one of the most important tools available for web marketers nowadays (Maurer and Wiegmann, 2015).

Social networks offer advertisers the possibility to access demographic, personal and behavioral information about their target consumers, and this allows marketers to reach and communicate their users and potential customers with ads that are relevant and that have a higher degree of personalization (Yaakop, Anuar and Omar, 2013), from which the definition of *personalized advertising* is derived. FB has seen a steady and continuous growth in users and revenue ever since it was founded in 2004. FB's business model relies on ads as its major source of revenue. The magazine Fortune defined it an "almost advertising-only" business model (fortune.com, 2017), which makes sense as the numbers show that the near totality of the world's most famous social network's revenue comes from advertising. In 2017 for instance, ads accounted for 98 percent of FB's global revenue, corresponding to $ 39.9 billion (statista.com, 2018. See Fig. 1).
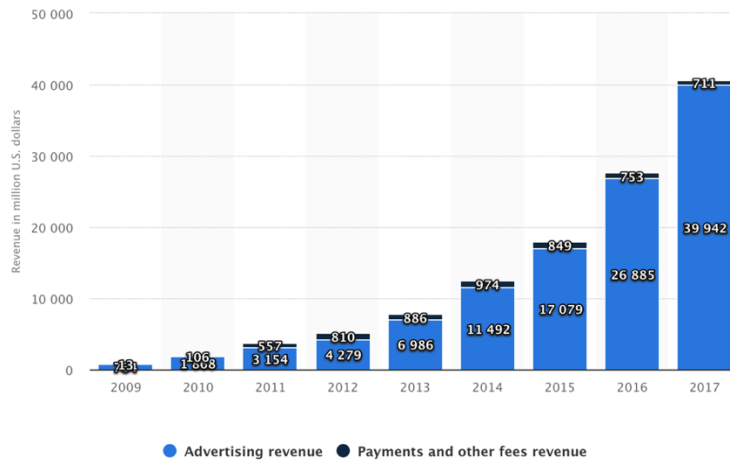
Figure 1: Composition of FB's revenue 2009-2017. Source: statista.com

In spite of this, too little is known about perceptions and attitudes of consumers towards social network advertising (Luna-Nevarez and Torres, 2015) in general. This paper will explore the case of SA of FB, FBA. To be more specific, the objective of this paper is to dig deeper into the cross-cultural differences in consumer approach and intention to click on FBA.

Different points of view have emerged about cross-cultural advertising from the past academic research. On one hand, some scholars have built on the assumption that, except for the obvious language difference, the basic needs of consumers are pretty much the same all around the world. It follows that using standardized advertising strategies and tools works, especially for online advertising over the internet, where advertising can be spread rapidly (Daechun, 2007). On the other hand, many other researchers have argued that user approach and interaction with online advertising is influenced by the cultural peculiarities of their various consumer groups (Capece, 2013), especially in case the cultures are highly differentiated (Brettel and Spilker-Attig, 2010). This paper proposes to test the latter point of view because it is supported by a considerable body of work that will be reviewed in a specific section of this paper. For that reason, this Thesis will set to explore the cross-cultural dimension of attitude towards FBA.

This work aims at casting some light on possible differences in the intention to interact with FBA by users belonging to different national cultures, and it looks to do so by taking two specific European countries as terms of comparison, namely Denmark and Italy. The reason for the choice of these two countries lies in the fact that this thesis was written in collaboration with Dedoles.sk, an eco-product e-shop based in Slovakia. The company currently operates in 7 countries within the European Union (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Austria, Germany, Romania, Poland, Hungary) and it's currently evaluating whether to expand its operations to Italy and to the Scandinavian countries, including Denmark.

Research questions:
What are the cross-national differences and influencing factors of the intention to click on Facebook Ads among Danish and Italian students?

Cross-national culture differences will be measured according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, while the intention to click on FBAs is explained resorting to an adaptation of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Since SA on FB is a relatively new information technology (IT) that presents a degree of innovation as an interactive advertising venue (Lin and Kim, 2016), the author deemed TAM as a good starting point to build a research model for the present paper.

1.2 About FB Ads

For the sake of completeness, it's worth to briefly describe what exactly FBA is and how it works. One of the most important characteristics of this type of ads is that advertisers can customize them based on each single user's on-site and online previous behavior and his/her search history. This allows marketers and advertisers for a very more reliable consumer targeting (Lin and Kim, 2016). When a user clicks on the ad, he/she is directed to a website or to site within Facebook.

At the moment of writing this paper, FBA are displayed to FB users in two possible ways (Facebook © 2018).

1) The first is in form of a sponsored post that appears within the individual user's news feed. This type of ad seamlessly blends within the context of the user experience on the platform. This can lead us to assert that it is to be considered as NA. According to the website Smart Insights in fact, the definition of NA is, "Online content that is created for paid promotion of a brand on a media site which doesn't use a traditional ad format such as a banner ad, but it includes editorial content such as a blog post or infographic". The news feed type of ad is the costlier on the advertiser, since it gets more chances to be noticed by the targeted user due to its favorable position.

2) The second FA type is in form of a banner that appears on the right sidebar of the FB's page interface. This second type of ad is cheaper than the first as it appears in a comparatively less favorable position.

One more possibility of FBA placement is actually available for advertisers, namely the possibility of displaying the ad on in "placements beyond Facebook; on Instagram, Audience Network and Messenger" (Facebook © 2018), being these other social platforms that have been acquired by FB through the years and are now part of its ecosystem. However, this type of ad won't be taken into consideration in the scope of this study, as it is the author's intention to focus the research solely on the FB webpage user interface.

The different elements that compose every FBA are listed below (also see Appendix):

- Body. It's text that appears right below the icon and name of the advertiser's profile within the sponsored post. The usual length is one to two lines. It's the main description of the offered product or service the ad aims at promoting.
- Image. Below the body a picture is found. There are several limitations imposed by FB to the image choice, the most important being that text of any type can appear on the image only up to a 20% of the total picture surface (Facebook © 2018). There are 5 different types of visual content advertisers can choose from: Single image, single video, *carousel* (2 – 10 scrollable

images or videos), slideshow (looping video ad with up to 10 images) and canvas (combination of images and videos into an interactive experience).

- Headline. Below the picture is the main headline, which serves as a title for the ad. Because of this function, it's usually 2 to 6 words long (*adespresso.com*), and the font size is bigger compared to the other text elements within the ad.

- Link text and link. A further short description introducing the advertiser's website link which is found in the bottom-left corner of the ad.

- Button. In the bottom-right corner of the advertisement, we see the button with the specific call-to-action.

FBA's system is based on the possibility to target the exact audience marketers are interested to reach (Maurer and Wiegmann, 2015), thanks to its very precise segmentation algorithms. Marketers can implement various filters directly in the FBA console. These filters are a tool for targeting "country, state, city, gender, age, any interest keywords, educational status, workplace, relationship status and interested in" (Facebook © 2018). All the information needed in order for the filters to work is voluntarily provided by each FB user when they fill in their personal info or status details, except for the location filter, which is based on the IP address used for the most recent log in (Maurer and Wiegmann, 2015). A very important concept is *retargeting*. Ads are tailored to individual consumers who had already been targeted by previous campaigns. The retargeting process is performed based on the consumers' recent behavior, which includes any kind of consumers interactions with the ads and the products (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015) on the online platform. These behaviors are recorded at each visit and stored in individual profiles using by means of a clickstream data technology.

1.3 Paper Structure

This section will outline the structure of the sections in present paper. The next section (number 2) contains a review of the previous relevant literature dedicated to the concepts that this study encompasses. In this part, after reviewing how other scholars approached cross-cultural and

cross-national comparisons of the approach towards advertising, we'll illustrate the state of the art of the research about social media advertising, as well as the theoretical structures and elements the study will be built around. In particular, it will be shown how the *technology acceptance model* (TAM) has been used in past research to explain user acceptance towards various types of IT and different types of advertising, including online advertising and social media advertising. We will also review several academic studies in which TAM was implemented in combination with *Hofstede's cultural dimensions*, a tool used for cross-national comparisons.

Subsequently, section 3 will focus on the development of the research model, together with the hypothesis development. All the constructs of the model will be outlined and a series of hypotheses based on the proposed model will be described. The fourth section is dedicated to the methodology used for this study, and it includes information about research design, target population sample, data collection and reliability of the items that constitute the questionnaire. Section 5 includes the results of statistical analysis, whereas in section 6 these results will be discussed in light of the hypotheses. Limitations and implications of the study are also discussed in this section. Finally, the seventh and last section consists of a conclusion in which we illustrate processes, findings and insights of the paper.

2. Literature Review

This section will review the previous academic literature relevant for study. Since the topic of this paper is part of a relatively young and not extensively explored research field, the author has taken concepts from a wide array of study areas, ranging from attitude towards advertising (both online and offline) to research users' attitude and usage of online social networking platforms including FB. Previous research concerning other concepts relevant to this work, like for instance trust in advertising and trust in websites, will be reviewed in this section. All these various concepts will be later on combined organically in order to support the theoretical

foundation of the study. Furthermore, this section will go through the relevant academic literature dedicated to the previous theoretical models used in this paper, and their application and adaptation to the scope of the present research. In particular, a lot of attention will be given to previous academic articles that applied these theoretical foundations (namely, TAM, trust in advertisements and Hofstede's cultural values) to cross-national comparison researches.

2.1 Attitude towards advertising

2.1.1 Attitude towards advertising in general

Scholars and researchers in the field of consumer behavior define *attitude* as a " general evaluation of people, objects, advertisements, or issues" (de Mooij and Hofstede, 2011). The attitudes towards advertising can be summed up to the concepts of *avoidance* and *acceptance*, as examined in a seminal study conducted by Pollay and Mittal (1993) about consumers' personal beliefs towards different types of advertisements. Talking about avoidance, there are several reasons why people avoid watching advertising or interacting with it. It could be that they perceive a certain ad as intrusive or annoying, or it could be that they have a pre-existing negative attitude toward advertising in general (Rojas-Méndez, Davies and Madran, 2009). Negative beliefs derive from thinking that an advertisement is somewhat misleading or deceptive, it represents a distortion of the consumer's values or it promotes values that are not shared by them (Pollay and Mittal, 1993). On the other hand, positive perceptions of advertising have been shown to decrease avoidance (Rojas-Méndez and Davies, 2005). These include the notions that advertising can be informative, entertaining or it might reduce future search time (Heyder et al., 1992). Users avoid advertising by different means, be these cognitive, behavioral or mechanical (Speck and Elliott, 1997).

A typical user exposed to ads is constantly evaluating alternatives where to redirect his/her attention. This behavior leads to the formation of processing habits and patterns that eventually come to form the general attitude towards advertising (Speck and Elliott, 1997). This is also

confirmed by Corritore et al. (2005) who, based on a previous theoretical model of online trust also proposed by Corritore's et. al. (2003), demonstrated that the antecedents identified by extensive previous research as valid for offline advertising, may also be applicable in the online environment.

An extensive body of previous academic literature has investigated the multidimensional and faceted nature of consumers' attitude towards advertising in general. In particular, it is worth mentioning a seminal study by Pollay and Mittal's (1993), who presented a model based on seven belief factors constituting consumers' beliefs towards advertisements, all of which they grouped up in two distinct categories. The first category, labeled *personal use*, includes factors in like personal usefulness, the hedonic dimension and the social value of an ad, while the second, labeled social effect, includes more values like the materialistic advantage that can derive from the ad or the possible corruption/falsity involved in it (Pollay and Mittal's 1993). A seminal study conducted by Ducoffe (1996) identified all the main factors influencing consumer attitude towards advertising. The positive influencing constructs are respectively informativeness and entertainment, whereas the negative influencing one is irritation. Ducoffe's (1996) findings have later been cited, followed and elaborated on by many other scholars (Mehta, 2000; Liu et al., 2012; Boateng and Okoe, 2015).

Lutz (1985) defined the general attitude towards the ad as a predisposition to reaction (positive or negative) based on the advertisements shown. With the rapid and powerful rise of the internet and its consequent massive use as a medium for advertising, the research on the field has naturally extended to embrace the online environment as its object of study. Many studies have shown that Attitude toward a specific ad is the key factor in determining ad acceptance (Lutz, McKenzie and Belch, 1983; Muehling, 1987; MacKenzie and Lutz 1989; Mehta, 2000). The attitudes and behavioral intentions of consumers to online advertising often follow similar patterns of those for offline advertising (Brettel and Spilker-Attig, 2010).

2.1.2 Cross-cultural attitude towards advertising

Previous research has shown that attitude towards advertising in general as well as towards digital advertising (including social media platforms) varies from country to country. The impact of advertising on societies and cultures have been the object of study of scholars from various research fields. International marketing researchers and practitioners have shown a lot of interest in the influence of culture on advertising (Wang and Sun, 2010). In the past, several studies have focused on investigating cross-national differences in consumer attitude towards advertisements. Dianoux, Linhart & Ogjanov (2012) have shown how attitudes towards advertising in general diverge significantly across two European countries, France and Czech Republic. Measurements, carried out by finding perceived negativity/positivity with a seven-point scale survey, showed that French consumers tend to see advertising in a more favorable way than the Czech. Dianoux, Linhart & Vnoučková (2014) carried out a similar study choosing their sample population among University student from three different countries, US, Ukraine and Germany. These countries were admittedly chosen specifically because of their different economic and cultural backgrounds. The study shows how belonging to a different culture groups can correspond to very different views on the perception of advertising. For example, German respondents appeared more pessimistic and less willing to consider advertisements trustworthy when compared to US respondents (Dianoux, Linhart & Vnoučková, 2014).

2.1.3 Social Network ads and FBA

Following Luna-Nevarez and Torres (2015), the definition of intention to interact with advertising on social networking websites is "a predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to advertising content on social networking services". As social network advertising in general and FBA in particular are still in their infancy (Duffett, 2014), many social network users have just started to familiarize with the characteristics of this type of online marketing tool. In general, it's safe to say that many consumers have just started to develop their first impressions of this type of advertising (Luna-Nevarez and Torres, 2015).

The young age of this field of research appears confirmed also in the academic world. After reviewing the relevant literature in fact, it emerges that relatively little academic research has so far been dedicated to analyzing behavioral intention toward social network ads. This is even more true for FBA specifically. Social Network advertising in general, and FBA in particular, are characterized by a high level of targeting precision. One negative consequence of this increased targeting, compared to more traditional types of advertising, is that the number of ads a user is daily exposed to may increase dramatically (Johnson, 2013), as marketing campaigns on social media are relatively cheap for advertisers and definitely affordable for firms of any size (Duffett, 2014). If not contained and limited to an optimal level, this "noise" could turn out to be bad for consumers, influencing badly also their attitude towards advertising (Johnson, 2013).

Yaakop, Anuar and Omar (2013) focused specifically on the online factors that affect consumer attitude towards FBA. They worked with a sample of 350 people in total and their results show how perceived advertising avoidance and the perceived issue of privacy and trust are the most significant elements able to predict consumer perception of FBA. The researchers' expectations about the positive influences of trust and credibility confirmed the key role of these two factors in predicting the users' response towards SA on FB (Yaakop, Anuar and Omar, 2013). Zeng, Huang and Dou (2009) focused on FBA acceptance from a social perspective, including the analysis of aspects such as social identity and group norms. They noticed how these factors tend to have an impact of social network users' acceptance of the advertisements that appear on social network platforms and subsequently with their intention to interact with them (Luna-Nevarez and Torres, 2015).

A study by Bannister (2013) proposed to explore the intention to click on FBA of young American citizens belonging to the so-called Generation Y (people aged 18 to 30). Results give the picture of a largely negative or indifferent attitude, with survey respondents generally not willing to click on ads (Bannister, 2013). In addition to this, the study highlighted the connection between the attitude towards the online environment in which the ad is displayed (the FB web platform in this specific case) and the attitude towards the ad itself. According to the results

provided by the study, the more positive a user's attitude towards the FB platform, the more likely that user would respond in a positive way to advertisements (Bannister, 2013).

2.2 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was first introduced in 1989 by Davies, Bagozzi, and Warshaw and ever since it has been widely used by scholars and researchers to explain user or consumer acceptance of various types of information technology. Through the years, the model has been applied to a variety of research fields, including the acceptance of e-commerce, mobile advertising, social media usage and newly-introduced digital services in general. TAM evolved from the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), and it is a framework for predicting and explaining consumers' adoption of Information Technology (Davis, 1989). It postulates that user acceptance of a new system is determined by the users' *intention to use* (IU) the technology, which is influenced by the users' beliefs about the system's *perceived usefulness* (PU) and *perceived ease of use* (PEU). More precisely, the TAM model states that:

1) External variables will influence PEU and usefulness of a technology;
2) PEU of a technology will have a direct effect on its PU;
3) PU and PEU will impact attitude toward the technology;
4) PU and attitude toward the technology is expected to influence IU;
5) Technology IU, along with perceived technology usefulness, can lead to its use.

Previous studies have applied TAM to different types of information technologies, trying to predict and explain consumers' intention to use them. In recent years, researchers have started to apply the TAM to explore the elements that have an influence on the general adoption of social media and their multiple features, including ads. For example, past academic studies show that PEU directly impacts the intention toward social media use (Shipps & Phillips, 2013). Even if a considerable body of previous TAM-based research has mainly dealt with the acceptance of information technologies in the context of activities related to work in organizations, the model

has been successfully adopted also in non-organizational scenarios (Davis et al., 1989, Gefen et al., 2003).

Adopting TAM in order to investigate advertising is an approach that has not been used very often in past research, but it has nevertheless been validated by the studies which did. A study by Bamoriya (2012) attempted at testing the validity of TAM in explaining the intention to click online advertising in India. The model was testes by means of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Findings indicated that specified TAM model contributed to 81.8% of variance in the intention to click. This result was taken as a confirmation that TAM can be deemed a valid model to explain acceptance of advertising (Bamoriya, 2012). The study results also showed PU as the best predictor of consumer attitude towards advertising. PU was measured as a far better predictor than PEU and perceived trust (Bamoriya, 2012). Zhang and Mao (2008) conducted a similar research about web advertising among Chinese consumers and their results also appear to validate the adoption of TAM for the investigation of advertising.
Only recently TAM has been used more specifically in connection to FBA, in a research by Lin and Kim (2016) that is among the first to apply it in explaining consumer response to social media as advertising platforms. In this article, statistical analysis shows a moderately positive PU and PEU influence and good significance levels associated with the intention to use FBA on the side of consumers. On the other hand, consumers' attitude toward FBA is moderately negative, just like the one towards trust issues like *privacy* and *intrusiveness* (Lin and Kim, 2016).

The few previous academic articles about these topics have often yielded contrasting results. A 2011 case study by Maurer and Wiegmann focuses on the effectiveness of FBA in Austria by means of TAM, investigating factors such as ad awareness on FB and ad influence on purchase behavior. The researchers' conclusion is that the majority of surveyed sample was not aware of ads and neither influenced in their purchase behavior (Maurer and Wiegmann, 2011). A study conducted in 2013 by Dehghani and Tumer on a sample of undergraduate students in Cyprus, shows how the impact of PU and PEU result in a significant change in the intention to click on the ads (Dehghani and Tumer, 2013).

Lin and Kim (2016) utilized a research model derived from TAM to study user response to SA on social media. Their work focuses on the constructs of *intrusiveness* and *privacy*, postulating that they may influence users' beliefs and attitudes toward FBA and other social media SAs. The results suggest that both constructs have a significant influence on PU but neither has on PEU (Lin and Kim, 2016). In virtue of this proven effectiveness of TAM in explaining factors of perception and adoption of a vast range of digital innovations including social media ads, the author deemed TAM as a valid model to start from to explain and analyze consumer behavioral intention towards FBA.

2.3 Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Many previous studies about the attitude towards advertising and its acceptance or avoidance modes have been carried out within a single culture. However, attitude towards ads has been shown to vary substantially across cultures because of social norms, traditions, self-regulation and differences in information processing and style of communication (Rojas-Méndez, Davies and Madran, 2009). A widely accepted tool to map and measure cultural differences is undoubtedly Hofstede's cultural dimensions

- *Power distance index* (PDI) represents the degree to which power asymmetry and strong hierarchical bonds are accepted in a culture. It can be described as the acceptance of the hierarchical distance from the low to the high ranks of an organization or a society

- *Uncertainty avoidance index* (UAI) measures the degree to which people tend to avoid situations that are uncertain, ambiguous. The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these (Hofstede Insights ©, 2018)

- *Individualism* (IDV) stresses the importance of individual success and personal achievements. A high score on this dimension defines an individualistic society, whereas a low score defines

a collectivistic culture, where the importance is shifted towards group achievements and group loyalty

- *Masculinity* (MAS) represents the values of a culture characterized by social achievements, driven by competition and success and where success is defined as being the winner/ best in the field. A low score on masculinity defines a feminine culture, which puts the emphasis on quality of life as an indicator of success, and where standing out from the crowd is not considered a positive value.

- *Long-term orientation* (LTO) is about orientation towards future rewards, perseverance and thrift; on the contrary, short-term orientation is about respect for tradition and for social obligations (Hofstede, 2001).

An additional dimension called *Indulgence* was later on introduced by Hofstede, but it won't be taken into consideration here, since it wasn't in any of the studies reviewed in this section. Despite the criticism it has drawn through the years for allegedly not being accurate and for lacking data reliability (Fang, 2003; Bird and Stevens, 2003), there is evidence of how Hofstede's theoretical foundation is able to provide researchers and managers with a comprehensive and well-developed tool that can be used to investigate the interaction between Web and e-commerce characteristics and cultural characteristics (Soares, Farhangmehr and Shoham, 2007).

Scholars focused on the impact of Hofstede's cultural dimensions in research areas very close to the object of the present study, like perception and behavior towards advertising. Wang and Sun (2010) for instance developed a comparison of the attitudes and beliefs about online advertising between Romania and USA, based on Hofstede's dimensions. They conducted a survey among a total of about 600 people across the two countries, focusing on the two cultural dimensions of PDI and UAI. They argue that a high PDI may lead consumers in a certain country to be more easily persuaded by marketing communication messages (Wang and Sun, 2010). They also postulate that for a relatively new phenomenon such as online advertising, the higher the score on UAI, the more users' attitude towards online advertising is likely to be negative. They then

proceed to link the findings to the customer willingness to shop online. Their results confirmed the hypotheses built around PDI and UAI. This way, significant differences between Romanian and American cultures where demonstrated about attitude towards online ads. Compared with Americans, Romanians (higher PDI and UAI) exhibited a more favorable attitude in general and they tended to perceive online ads as more informative, credible and beneficial but also to have a more cautious and risk-conscious behavior towards online shopping in general (Wang and Sun, 2010). These findings suggesting that Internet shopping adoption rates are higher for countries that score lower on UAI are in line with earlier studies about the subject (Kim, Leung, Sia and Lee, 2004).

Several studies have taken into consideration all of the five of dimensions suggested by Hofstede. Ju (2012) utilized them to explore the relationships between culture and online advertising effectiveness, measured with parameters including the intention to interact with advertisements in an online setting. In this case the focus is specifically directed to banner ads and, for the sake of completeness, the three utilized measurements are attitudes towards banner ads, ability to recall banner ads and intention to click banner ads (Ju, 2012). The hypotheses suggest that each of the variables consisting of the five dimensions impacts to some extent the three measurements listed above and the results confirmed that (Ju, 2012). The cross-cultural comparison encompasses two countries, China and the UK.

2.4 TAM and Hofstede's Dimensions combined

Some past research has also combined TAM with the national cultural values proposed by Hofstede, using the latter as moderating variables affecting the constructs of TAM.
Yoon (2009) proposed an e-commerce acceptance model consisting of the influence of cultural differences on perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust, and intention to use. Hofstede's cultural dimensions appear in the model with the role of moderators. The results showed a moderate effects of uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation on the relation between consumer trust and intention to use and that masculinity also had a moderate effect on the

relationship between perceived usefulness and intention to use and the relationship between perceived ease of use and intention to use. PDI and individualism did not appear to have a significant effect (Yoon, 2009).

Following the exact same research model proposed by Yoon, Capece (2013) proposes to demonstrate the necessity and utility of culturally adapted Websites and e-commerce sites analyzing a sample of Italian consumers. The study showed that PDI and IDV are the values of Italian culture impact acceptance of e-commerce the most. According to the author, Italy's high score on PDI and IDV negatively influences trust in the process of online purchasing, thus decreasing the IU the technology of e-commerce (Capece, 2013).

Building on the two above reviewed articles, a more recent study conducted by Kima, Urunovb and Kima (2016) has faced the same research problem focusing on the perspective of a different national culture, Russia. This paper closely follows Yoon's research model and it also includes Hofstede's values as moderators in an extended version of TAM. The results however slightly diverge, since all of the moderators exhibit an effect over the constructs of TAM to some extent (Kima, Urunovb and Kima, 2016). Wahlberg (2015) also utilized the same model to carry out an analysis of the acceptance of e-commerce in Sweden.

Different studies agree on positing that the relationship between PU and IU and the relationship between PEU and IU is moderated by the cultural dimension of MAS (Yoon, 2009; Capece, 2013; Srite 1999), in the context of research models incorporating cultural values into TAM. The same consistency is found about the dimension of PDI, shown by these studies to have a negative relationship with trust in technology (Srite, 1999; Yoon, 2009) and also with the willingness to innovate (Srite, 1999), meaning the higher the PDI score is, the lower trust in technology and willingness to innovate are going to be. This is explained by the assumption that users belonging to high-PDI cultures tend to believe that a service provider is more likely to behave unfairly or incorrectly than users from low-PDI national cultures (Yoon, 2009).

2.5 Trust

From a psychological point of view, trust is defined as an individual's willingness to expose himself to the risk of being exploited by some other actor and suffer some loss within any type of transaction or relationship (Wahlberg, 2015). It's been proposed that trust is a link that can connect the analysis at the national level with the analysis at the individual level, and that the way individuals build trust is indeed affected by social norms and values (Kim, Leung, Sia and Lee, 2004). According to Gefen et al. (2003) two different streams of conceptualizations of trust can be found in previous academic research. The first defines trust as a set of specific beliefs about the other party or platform involved in the interaction or transaction, whereas the second views it as a general belief that the other party is trustworthy. Gefen et al.'s (2003) model relies on the first definition in order to describe the role of trust in the acceptance of e-commerce. The present study relies on adaptation of the model proposed by Yoon (2009) and Capece (2013), who in their turn adopted and developed Gefen's model. Consequently, for the present paper the first definition of trust — trust as a specific set of beliefs — will be adopted.

A large body of research has dealt with the formation of trust at various levels (Kim, 2012; Gefen et al, 2003; Gefen et al, 2002; McKnight et al., 2002; Zucker, 1986), identifying 5 different types of trust:

1) *Experience-based trust* is related to the previous experience the truster has had with the trustee, either direct and personal or from first hand sources.
2) *Economic-based trust* is the result of a calculative process put in place by the truster and aimed at evaluating costs and benefits in a rational way and based on his/her own interest.
3) *Cognition-based trust* is built on non-rational elements such as impressions, perceptions, stereotypes or prejudices. It is of course the trust base most closely related to first impression and thus arguably the one with the most important role in determining initial trust (Kim, 2012). it is quickly triggered by cognitive cues rather than built over time through repeated interactions. Models including cognition-based trust (sometimes also referred to as affect-

based trust) have often been implemented in order to investigate social and cultural factors with regards to online customer behavior (Hwang and Lee, 2012).

4) *Institution-based trust* is at play when the individual believes that the necessary impersonal structures are there to guarantee that the result of their interaction with a trustee will be in line with their expectations and possibly risk free (Koufari and Hampton-Sosa, 2004). This type of trust is triggered when the trustor feels the interaction fits a common standard. It may be considered a source of initial trust in the case that the trustee shows sign of this compliance with significant standards already at the time of the first impression (Kim, 2012).

5) *Personality-based trust* depends on the personal disposition of each individual towards trustees in a range of different situations (Li, Hess and Valacich, 2008), and it's normally quite stable over time. This type of trust serves as a base for the formation of initial trust in a trustee (Gefen et al, 2002).

All the existing academic research revolving around the issue of trust in social media advertising and personalized advertising in general primarily focuses on two concepts, *privacy* and *intrusiveness* (Lin and Kim, 2016; Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015; Yaakop, Anuar and Omar, 2013; Abdelkader, 2013; Hwang and Lee, 2012). This is especially true in the case of FB, which is the most investigated social platform by scholars studying social media. Privacy is defined as the extent to which an individual is able to control the terms of acquisition and use of personal information about them (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015). The fact that an ad may prompt privacy concerns depends how specific the sensitive user information involved is. The level of ad personalization is revealing about the amount of knowledge the advertiser has gained about a user. Consequently, at the same time it is an indicator of the level of vulnerability of the consumer towards the advertiser (Taylor, Davis and Jillapalli, 2009). Research has shown that some consumers find advertising generally annoying and perceived the perfecting of targeting tools as an element of possible further violation of their privacy (Johnson, 2013). This shows how important is the role of trust in advertising.

2.6 The research gap

No cross-national study has been previously carried out on the specific subject of FBA. As shown in this chapter, previous cross-national studies have focused on the acceptance of advertising in general and on e-commerce (Yoon, 2009; Capece, 2013; Kima, Urunovb and Kima, 2016).

Previous research has revolved around attitudes towards advertising on social media and in some quite rare cases also specifically about FBA, but never from a cross-national perspective. This paper proposes to compare the perceptions and attitude towards advertisements on FB in the two examined countries, Italy and Denmark. It has been put forward that some theory-based research on consumer perception of FBA is still needed (Lin and Kim, 2016) and this paper is intended as a step forward on the way to filling up this research gap.

3. Research Model and Hypotheses

The starting point for building the research model for this study was TAM. The model for this paper relies on an adaptation of a model first proposed by Yoon (2009) and subsequently adopted by several other scholars (Capece, 2013; Wahlberg, 2015; Kima, Urunovb and Kima, 2016) as shown in the previous section. Yoon's original model is based on TAM and it integrates the variables that were present in the original TAM model with a new one called *Trust*. Yoon develops this trust construct starting from early e-commerce research suggesting anxiety about security, trust in the vendor, and privacy issues as antecedents of acceptance of e-commerce (Gefen et al. 2003; Gefen et al., 2000; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). The focus is thus placed on trust as a multi-dimensional belief and as an antecedent of IU within the TAM model. Yoon in his turn developed his model starting from the one proposed by Gefen et al. in 2000 (Yoon, 2009).
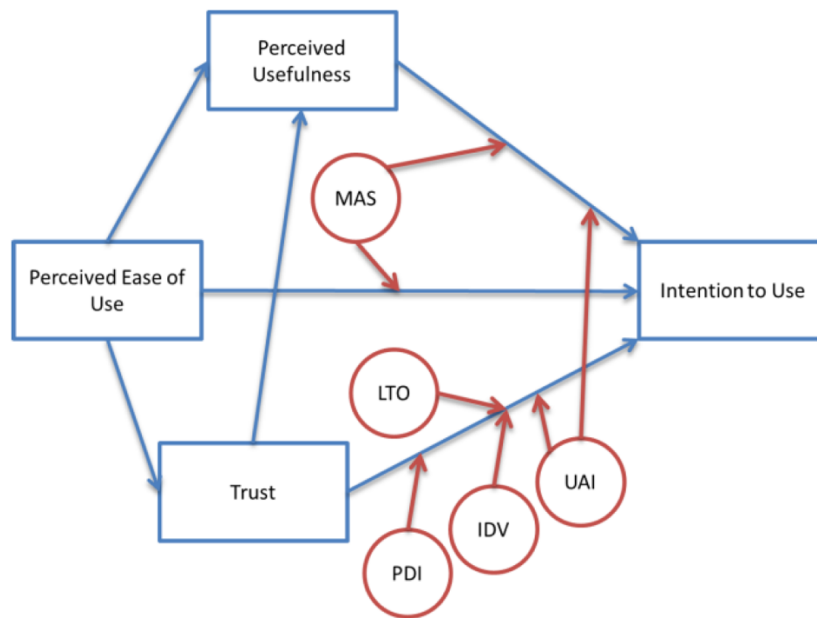
Figure 2: Research model by Yoon (2009)

Yoon's framework was followed and adopted by other scholars who further tested the model in different situations, very often with cross-national settings (Capece, 2013; Wahlberg, 2015; Kima, Urunovb and Kima, 2016). A common trait of all these research articles is that they all focus on consumers' IU in the context of a specific technology, e-commerce. It is thus safe to say that the model was used by different scholars specifically to investigate e-commerce and the acceptance of technologies finalized to complete online purchases. This paper proposes to start from this model and to adapt it to the investigation of a different technology, namely FBA. We argue that it makes sense to apply this model for the technology of FBA, for the following reason. The model, just as other models representing adaptations of TAM combined with cultural dimensions, was first set up to investigate the early adoption stages of e-commerce. The intent of the author of the present paper is to apply this model to the analysis of the intention towards FBA. FBA is in fact a relatively new IT and as such it is suitable for a TAM analysis.

In order to serve the purpose of the present research, the model was simplified and rearranged. Click Intention (CI) is the dependent variable, an adaptation of IU. CI has Ad Trust (AT) and PEU as antecedents. AT represents the users' trust in the specific ad they get in contact with.

Two cultural dimensions, PDI and UAI, mediate this correlation. AT in its turn has two antecedents, one of which is again PEU and the other is Platform Trust (PT). The latter variable was developed after Yoon's *trust* construct. It represents the users' general trust in the platform where the ads appear, FB in this case. Following Corritore et al. (2005), we postulate that trust in a website and trust in elements that are imbedded within the website's interface are connected. Figure 3 below shows the proposed research model.
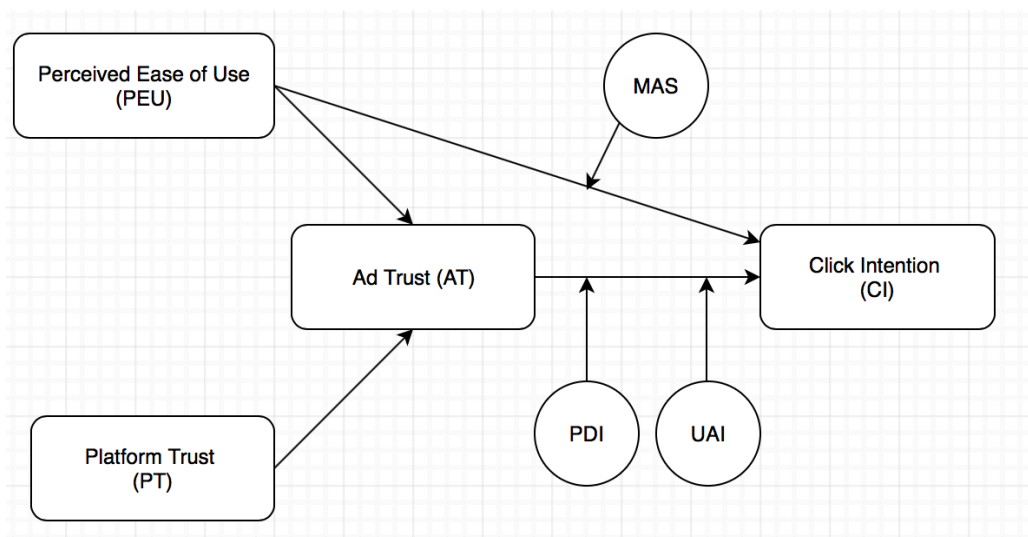
Figure 3: The proposed research model.

3.1 Linking Platform Trust to Ad Trust/Credibility

User acceptance of ads and their perception of ad trustworhiness is strongly related to trust in the platform where the ad is displayed. In a study carried out by Celebi (2015) it is reported how participants that have favorable and positive opinions about FB tend to use and interact with all of the features available on FB, including advertising. We argue that general trust in the FB website as a social media platform determines the level of trust in the specific ad. The correlation between PT and AT precisely follows this line of thought. If an ad conforms to the ad standard

consumer the consumer expects, this relationship is even stronger. This expected ad standard could be described as the advertising type that user has in mind when navigating a specific platform (Dianoux, Linhart, Vnoučková 2014). This further reinforces the relationship between platform and ad.

The majority of academic articles published around the topic of trust focus on the building of trust as an evolving process made up of repeated interactions between the two parties involved. It's important to say, though, that the attention of some researchers was also dedicated to the initial beliefs that are formed in consumers with regards to their first moment of contact with a company happening through a FB ad (Kim, 2012). Following these findings, we may establish a connection between a previously formed knowledge about the platform and one element embedded in the platform — such as the ad — that presents not only some familiar characteristics, but also unknown ones. The former would be its design, coherent with the rest of the platform, while the latter would be for example the advertiser's brand and logo in case of an unknown advertiser.

To further support this hypothesis, Mangold and Faulds (2009) found out that social media as platforms exert an influence on every single stage of the consumer decision-making process. The social media platform also influences the formation of consumer's beliefs and attitude towards the elements included and embedded in it like for example SAs (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). In summary, we postulate that users' trust in the social media platform FB, derived from a familiarity built through reiterated interactions, will have an impact on the perceived trustworthiness and credibility of a sponsored advertisement appearing within the platform.

H1. PT is positively correlated to AT

3.2 Linking PEU and Ad Trust

As we have seen, two constructs related to trust are used in the present study:

1) PT, as we have seen, defines the user's trust in FB as a social networking platform. It includes a set of beliefs about the website based on concepts like *credibility*, *privacy concerns*, and *perceived intrusiveness*. These appear to be the main concerns for consumers regarding their attitude towards advertising on social media platforms, and those actually determining their trust or lack of trust (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015).

2) AT defines the consumer's trust in a specific given ad he/she is presented with while navigating the FB interface. Trust in the ad is made up of beliefs about the trustworthiness of the ad and the willingness to use and elaborate on information conveyed by the ad.

Corritore et al. (2005) developed and tested a model in which PEU is one of the three factors directly impacting the user's decision to trust elements in an online environment. For the sake of completeness, the remaining two factors included are perceived credibility and perceived risk. This approach highlights a relationship between PEU and trust, more precisely providing us with a confirmation of the fact that PEU can be considered a key antecedent of trust. Research about consumer trust and website perception in the context of online shopping also shows that PEU is a significant antecedent of initial trust (Koufari and Hampton-Sosa, 2004). In light of these findings we argue the following.

H2. PEU is positively correlated to AT

3.3 Linking PEU and Click Intention

Other streams of past TAM-based research has extensively shown that PU impacts the intention to adopt IT, but the same cannot be said PEU, which many studies have rejected as an antecedent

of intention (Veiga, Floyd and Dechant, 2001; Rauniar et al, 2014). On the other hand, several other studies support the influence of PEU on IU. PEU is based on the assessment of the intrinsic features of a given IT, like for instance the interface clarity, the ease of interaction and the flexibility that it allows on the user (Gefen and Straub, 2000; Corritore et. al, 2003). All these elements have a positive effect on user experience. Researchers hypothesized two distinct cases. The first describes the instance of websites where users purchase products directly — sites where the full transaction can be completed including the actual purchase and payment, like for instance in the case of an e-commerce website or platform. In this case PEU doesn't affect IT adoption because IT ease-of-use is not an inherent quality of the purchased product. Contrarily, the second case describes situations in which the consumer uses the website as a tool to inquire about products. In this instance PEU does influence intention to adopt the IT (Corritore et al., 2005).

The information the user is looking for is actually embedded in the IT and this makes the quality of the information to a certain extent dependent of the IT ease of use. In the case of FB ads, in the moment the website visitor is presented with an ad, the ad's image, headline and description are all elements that provide the user with information about the product. For this reason, the website's function is arguably consistent with the latter case of the two outlined above. Therefore, we propose that in the context of the present study PEU is directly related to Click Intention.

Another important aspect is the hedonic nature of the use of FB and social media in general. The entertaining nature of an information system is transferred to ads in form of entertainment belief about online advertising and social media advertising (Wang and Sun, 2010). TAM based research has shown that in the presence of such hedonic element, the otherwise dominant value of prediction of IU normally held by PU decreases, whereas the predicted value of PEU increases (Van der Heijden 2004). By virtue of what was illustrated in this subsection, we hypothesize a connection between PEU and Click intention, as summed up in hypothesis number 3:

H3. PEU is positively correlated to Click intention

3.4 Linking Ad Trust to Click intention

Based on the information conveyed by the ad, the user considers whether taking action towards it or not (Soh, Reid and King, 2009). Intention to use is a combination of both consumers' assessments of the IT itself (FBA in this case) and their trust in the platform or platforms involved in making the technology available to them (Yoon, 2009). According to Corritore et al., 2003, the trust in an object is given by its credibility and both these concepts are related to the extent to which the author or co-author of the object in question are recognized as experts or authorities in that regard. In this sense, credibility is a positive element that is very closely intertwined with the degree of trustworthiness of the object itself (Corritore et al., 2003). In other words, if the users trusts the object, they will likely interact with it.

In terms of online advertising, it's been posited that since SAs are an arguably a less invasive form of commercial message compared to traditional advertising and they seem to have become virtually ubiquitous and unavoidable in the internet landscape (on search engines, social media and websites), it makes sense to assume that users form specific attitudes about their trustwothiness (Gauzente, 2010). It was shown that positive determinants of a favorable attitude towards sponsored posts and links with a commercial purpose, leads to a greater intention to click (Jung et al., 2016; Gauzente, 2010). In line with these results, we also postulate that the perceived trustworthiness in a given sponsored ad on FB — here simply called AT — has a positive influence on the user's intention to interact with that ad and click on it. This is summed up in hypothesis 4.

H4. Ad Trust is positively related to Click intention

3.5 Hofstede's dimensions as moderating variables

Setting up a comparison of Denmark and Italy according to Hofstede's dimensions, we get the results shown below in figure 4.
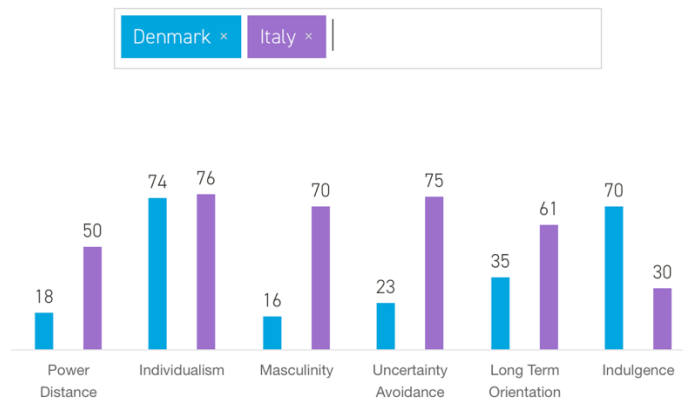

Figure 4: Denmark-Italy compared scores on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Source: hofstede-insights.com

The table was generated on the official Hofstede database website, where it's possible to access the scores of any country on each of the cultural dimensions and also to compare with each other in real time any country in light of the proposed values. By taking a look at the table, the very large difference between Denmark and Italy in the PDI, MAS, UAI and Indulgence scores is immediately noticeable. A smaller but still quite significant discrepancy is seen on the LTO dimension (35 and 61 respectively), while the two countries score basically the same points (74 and 76 respectively) in the IDV dimension.

In order to keep the research model as clean as possible, for the purpose of this study we will consider only those Hofstede dimensions in which the two analyzed countries differ more clearly. Being the present paper a comparative cross-national study between two different cultures, it makes sense to focus solely on testing the impact of the dimensions that constitute a difference. Focusing only on some of the cultural values within the formulation of the research model is a practice that has been validated by the existence of several past studies that did so in the past (Wang and Sun, 2010; Kim, Leung, Sia and Lee, 2004). These dimensions are:

- Power Distance (PDI)
- Masculinity (MAS)
- Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)

We can say that this study focuses specifically on the influence of these three moderating variables. The author chose not to take into consideration the additional dimension of *Indulgence*, because it has not been dealt with by previous literature in correlation to TAM. In light of these considerations and of the findings illustrated in the relevant sub-section of the 'Literature review' chapter, the following three hypotheses were formulated.

H5. The relationship between Ad Trust (AT) and Click intention (CI) will become weaker with increasing Power Distance (PDI)

H6. The relationship between AT and CI will become weaker with increasing Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)

H7. The relationship between PEU and Intention to click will become stronger with increasing Masculinity (MAS)

The results that will be analyzed later on in the specific section keeping in mind the different scores of the two countries in the considered Hofstede cultural values. For instance, since Italy scores higher than Denmark in PDI, the relationship between AT and CI in the Italian dataset is expected to be weaker than the equivalent relationship in the Danish dataset, in virtue of what expressed in *H5*. The same applies to the case of what is stated in *H6* and *H7*.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research design

It can be stated that the present research follows a traditional methodology in the realm of the positivist social science research, because the hypotheses were formulated starting from previously existing theories concerning consumer intention and approach towards websites, information systems in general, online advertising and social media advertising. This means that deductive research approach was used for the research at hand. In the deductive approach, the starting point is a theoretical model and data is then gathered and used to confirm or reject the theory. This approach is distinguished from the inductive approach, which works quite the opposite way. Data is collected first, and a theoretical model is consequently developed starting from an analysis of that data. Adopting the deductive approach implies that the chosen constructs and the developed hypotheses must be implemented in a way that allows for quantitative measurement. Another important aspect worth mentioning is that a deduction *per se* implies a generalization (Saunders et al. 2007), thus it is meant as an effort aimed at generalizing the behavior of e.g. a population sample.

Research studies also typically have another characteristic, in that the answers they provide primarily have an exploratory, descriptive or explanatory character. The purpose of a study may be either be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory, but the three features are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A research study may contain elements typical of two or even all of the three classifications, but it is more often primarily focused on just one of them (Saunders et al. 2007). This study is exploratory in its nature, in the sense that its purpose is to find out whether the application of the research model to a cross-national approach will actually yield different results for the two countries taken into consideration. It also has an explanatory element to it, because it aims at explaining the relationships between a set of variables within the proposed research model.

As discussed earlier in this section, a study of this type needs to rely on quantitative data to be used in order to perform statistical analysis. Data derived from the use of structured survey or questionnaires is particularly suitable for studies like the present one. A self-administered internet-mediated questionnaire was deemed to be the appropriate data collection technique. A self-administered questionnaire, also refer to as SAQ, is defined as a questionnaire or survey designed specifically to be filled in autonomously by respondents, without any type of intervention from the researchers (Saunders et al. 2007). It is opposed to interviewer-administered surveys, in which there is a presence and an intervention of the researcher in the moment that the questions are answered. Some advantages self-administered questionnaires are for example the possibility to avoid the so-called researcher bias, meaning the fact that respondent may be less likely to provide certain answers or to provide genuine responses because they are socially influenced by the experimenter's presence. This way they may tend to give answers that they consider to be more socially desirable rather than expressing their actual opinion (Saunders et al. 2007). The fact that the questionnaire was self-administered and completely anonymous arguably represents a solution to some bias risk, including the social desirability bias which is mentioned as a possible limitation or source of inconsistency in similar previous studies (Yoon, 2009; Capece, 2013).

The questionnaire was set up in English, since all the literature reviewed for the present study was written in this language and thus so were the relevant questions taken and adapted from other scholars. The questionnaire was then translated to both Danish and Italian. For this operation two professional bilingual translators were contacted and hired. The questionnaire was then distributed through two different channels, online and offline. The online questionnaire was created and published by means of the free online survey tool *Google Forms* and it was distributed by sharing the correspondent link through private messages, via e-mail and on the messaging platform *Messenger*. The questionnaire link was also posted on several FB groups for students. The recipients were also encouraged to share the link for the questionnaire among their contacts and connections on their social media wall/pages, on private conversation groups they are part of or simply by forwarding the message to their acquaintances.

The offline version of the questionnaire, consisting of the same exact questions of the online one, was printed out on paper and handed out by the researcher himself to students in several University campuses. As far as Denmark is concerned, the distribution of the printed questionnaires took place in the city of Copenhagen, at the CBS and KU campuses, in the first week of April 2018. In the case of Italy, the distribution happened in the second week of the month of April 2018 in two different cities. In the first city, Verona, the questionnaire was distributed at the main campus of *Università di Verona*, whereas *in* the second city, Milan, it was handed out to students at the *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*. The author deliberately chose University campuses as data collection places in order to obtain data from the population sample set as focus for the present research, namely students. In both Italy and Denmark, students were approached personally by the researcher and asked for a few minutes of their time in order to fill in the form. All the printed forms were filled out anonymously.

A pilot test of each of the two questionnaire versions (the one in Danish and the one in Italian) was administered to 10 people of each nationality involved in the study, in order to refine the wording of the selected items. The practice of pilot-testing surveys and questionnaires before actual data collection is highly recommended by scholars and practitioners (Saunders et al., 2007). Saunders et al. (2007) recommend pilot-testing a survey or questionnaire on minimum ten individuals, in the case of a student research. The questionnaire consists of a brief introduction and of 21 multiple choice questions. The introduction section is aimed at obtaining some demographic information about the individual respondent, like nationality, age and gender and occupation. The main purpose of this part is to make sure the population sample was relevant with methodology choices later explained in this section. The question section has the purpose of testing the theoretical constructs of the research model.

4.2 Sampling

In order to ensure the validity of each response, the following criteria were adopted: 1) The questionnaire had to be completed in its each and every part and each and every question was

required to be answered. 2) Questionnaires filled in by non-Danish or non-Italian people were immediately discarded as non-relevant to the sample chosen as research focus. 3) Only responses coming from students were accepted as valid. This third point will be extensively explained in the following paragraphs of this very section of the paper, illustrating why the author chose to focus solely on a student sample for the present research. The data originated from the online distributed questionnaire was exported from Google Forms into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, and then manually cleaned up leaving out all the responses deemed as invalid according to the three criteria illustrated above.

The online questionnaire in Danish language was completed and sent back by a total of 78 people. Of these, 59 responses were accepted as valid. An 'all answers required' function was activated on the online questionnaire, so only complete questionnaires were collected in the first place through Google Forms. The discarded responses were not considered because filled in by non-Danish or non-student participants. 60 copies of the printed-out paper questionnaire were distributed and collected back. Of these, 50 were regarded as valid and 10 were discarded because not entirely filled in or because completed by non-Danish respondents.

Altogether, a total of 108 valid answers in Danish were collected across the online and the offline collection methods. Concerning the questionnaire in Italian, the online data collection on Google Forms originated a total of 79 responses, of which 52 were considered valid because coming from students. Also, in this case, 60 copies of the questionnaire were printed out and physically distributed, yielding a total of 51 valid responses. The remaining 9 were discarded because not filled in completely. In total, 103 valid answers in Italian were gathered across the online and the offline collection methods. The data illustrated in this paragraph is summed up in Table 1 next page.

	Denmark	**Italy**
Online Collected	78	79
Online valid	**59**	**52**
Paper collected	60	60
Paper valid	**50**	**51**
Total valid	**108**	**103**
Total valid (across countries)	**211**	

Table 1: Sample size data

As hinted earlier in this section, for validity reasons of the present study, some factors were left out or kept constant throughout the experiment. The possible experimental bias derived from a sample with non-homogeneous age, education and income level was solved by having only students participating in the questionnaire. Student samples are often used especially in cross-national studies, just because they offer a very interesting homogeneity (Durvasula et al., 1993) and because a student sample allows to hold several factors constant or close to constant. Age, income level and education level have been shown to have an effect on the attitude towards online advertising in terms of acceptance or avoidance (Rojas-Méndez, Davies and Madran, 2009), or even further to be the best demographic predictors across media (Speck and Elliott, 1997). Choosing a student population sample allows the researcher to exclude or to control to a good extent these factors, thus providing more reliable and unbiased results, even though limited and narrowed down to a certain segment of the population as a whole, in this case just people in the middle of their education.

Another very important factor at play in the context of social media usage and approach to online advertising is the so-called *e-lifestyle,* defined as "a personal lifestyle largely developed through adopting the Internet, and Internet services, as a means of meeting job and life needs" (Yu,

2011). This factor is largely determined by variables like age and type of occupation, so working with a student sample is useful also for controlling the homogeneity of the population sample in this sense (Koshksaray, Franklin and Hanzaee, 2015). Choosing a sample of people within the same age range and with the same type of occupation arguably increases the chances of working with a population with a homogenous e-lifestyle, which in turn will arguably lead to a more uniform attitude of the interviewed people towards the very object of the present study, FBA.

Potential differences in prior knowledge of the FB interface are also a factor to be taken into consideration when choosing a population sample for a research involving the use of social media platforms. Prior knowledge is defined as ''the amount of accurate information held in memory and the self-perception of this accumulated knowledge'' (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987) and it has been considered an important aspect of the attitude towards an IT platform or a specific form of advertising. In both Denmark and Italy, the 15 to 29 years old age group is the one with the highest penetration of FB use, with 89.6% in Denmark and 81.4% in Italy (Statista.com, 2018). A student sample is very consistent with this age group, thus choosing students as a population sample for this study arguably ensures a diffused prior knowledge of the FB interface across the sample. This sample uniformity in of course sought in order to be able to observe the cross-national differences emerge from a more even and thus more reliable playing field, by reducing the number of all the other variables at play.

Tables with the demographical characteristics of the two samples is reported below.

DK	Gender	ITA
56 (51.85%)	Female	53 (50.97%)
52 (48.15%)	Male	51 (49.03%)

	Age	ITA
DK		
78 (72.22%)	18-24	63 (60.58%)
27 (25%)	25-30	39 (37.50%)
3 (2.78%)	30+	2 (1.92%)

Table 3: Sample gender information   *Table 4: Sample age information*

4.3 Measurements

4.3.1 Independent variables measurement
4.3.1.1 Perceive ease of use (PEU)

This concept was measured resorting to four measurement items, assessed on a 5-point Likert scale. These items were taken from a 2005 study conducted by Corritore et al. which seeks to develop the research model and the concepts proposed in a previous research paper by the same authors (Corritore et al., 2003). Both these studies aim at measuring consumer trust in websites based on a combination of the perceived factors of *credibility*, *ease of use* and *risk*. A key dimension of the model proposed by these scholars is that online trust is an experience that depends on perceptual elements of external factors. These in turn give rise to individual differences in trust (Corritore et. al, 2005). In that study, it is explained that the items were specifically constructed to capture a glimpse of the accessibility of the display ad elements embedded in the website system. This approach slightly but importantly differs from the more common approach focused on the general use of websites or the site platform that is often found in previous literature (Jung et al., 2016; Soh, Reid and King, 2009). This differentiation makes the research conducted by Corritore et al. (2005) more relevant for the purpose of the present paper, as it offers a better reliability. Its scope, in fact, specifically includes "ad elements embedded in the website system" (Corritore et. al, 2005).

PEU is measured with a four-item scale that directly investigates the simplicity of use of the FB website from the user's standpoint. The items consist of the four statements "Learning to operate the website was easy for me", "I found it easy to get the website to do what I wanted it to do", "I found it easy for me to become skillful at using the (Facebook) site", and "I found the website easy to use". The questionnaire participants were asked to rank each of the statements with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The questions were adapted to the relevant research scope and purpose in the sense that an explicit reference to FB as the central object of the questions was included, in addition to the general terminology "the website" found on the original study. This reference was included in the first question and then assumed as implicit for the remaining ones.

This variable was also adapted from the same study by Corritore et al.'s (2005), specifically from a concept that the authors of the study simply called *trust*. The study consists of an investigation of an individual's general trust in a given website, and the focus is specified to be on person-to-website trust situations, including whether the user feels safe and risk free while navigating the website (Corritore et al., 2003). This makes the trust element proposed by Corritore et al. especially suitable for the present analysis. The items investigate the perceived trustworthiness of the social networking platform and the perceived riskiness involved with navigating and using it.

This variable was measured by means of the four items proposed by Corritore et al. and by using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The items are "I expect the website will not take advantage of me", "I believe the website is trustworthy", "I believe the website will not act in a way that harms me" and "I trust the website". These four statements included in the original study by Corritore et al. were kept unmodified, assuming that the early reference of the questionnaire being about FB implied that the social networking website was the object of the statements.

4.3.1.3 Ad Trust

First of all, it has to be said that AT is both an independent variable (on the path to CI) and a dependent variable (on the path from PT and PEU). AT was developed to indicate the consumer's trust in an object embedded in a social media platform, specifically an ad object. The construct was measured by adapting three items from a study conducted by Boateng and Okoe (2015) specifically focused on consumer attitude towards advertising elements embedded into social media platforms. In the research context for the study, the construct actually goes by the name of *credibility*.

The construct was adapted to "Ad trust" in the context of the present paper, on the grounds that in the phrasing of the statement of the first item, there is an explicit reference to trust and more

precisely to trusting advertisements on social media ("I trust social media advertisements"). Furthermore, previous research in the field of user trust in websites and online platforms has relied on the assumption that the concept of credibility is closely and indissolubly interconnected to the one of trust. In fact, if an object enjoys credibility (for example because its author is recognized as an expert figure), that automatically involves a high level of trust in the object itself (Corritore et al., 2003). The phrasing of three items utilized to measure Ad trust was slightly adapted to fit the purpose of the present research and keep it relevant to the specific object of this research, namely sponsored advertisement of FB. In order to achieve this, the phrasing "sponsored ads on social media" was adopted each time in place of the more generic reference to "social media advertisements" found in the original study. In virtue of this adaptation, the three items utilized to measure the Ad trust concept in the present paper are "I trust sponsored advertisements on social media", "I use sponsored advertising on social media as a reference for purchasing" and "I believe that sponsored advertisements on social media are credible". Just as in the original study by Boateng and Okoe (2015), these three items were measured with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

4.3.3 Moderating variables measurement

The measurement scale for the three moderating variables MAS, UAI and PDI included in the research model for the present study were taken from Yoon (2009), which in turn adapted them from a previous study conducted by Srite and Karahanna and Shin et al.' (2007). Both these studies consist of investigations of the cultural factors influencing the intention to use e-commerce websites in a specific county, in this case China. The items were developed in order to measure the influence of Hofstede's cultural values on the intention to adopt such an IT technology in the specific context of the Asian country. The very same items were also implemented in later studies following the example and the research model proposed by Yoon (2009) but also seeking to compare the intention of adoption of e-commerce across two different national cultures (Capece, 2013; Wahlberg, 2015). As previously explained in section 3 of this paper, the present study follows in the footsteps of this stream of previous research, as far as the

type of research model and the cross-national comparative character is concerned. The three cultural dimensions considered were measured with three items each, as follows.

PDI:

Subordinates are afraid to express disagreement with their superiors (dropped).

"Subordinates should follow their superior's decisions unconditionally"

"Managers should make most decisions by themselves"

"Subordinates should not question their superior's decisions"

UAI:

"When starting a new job, I fear doing it"

"I fear uncertainty about the future"

"I fear ambiguous situations and unfamiliar adventures"

"*It is risky to do something that has never been done before (dropped)*"

MAS:

"The fulfilment of tasks is more important than caring for others"

"A job with high earnings is better than a job with quality of life"

"A man should be strong and a woman should be tender"

4.3.4 Dependent variable measurement: Click Intention

This variable was measured by means of single-item scale adapted from a study conducted by Gauzente (2010) which specifically deals with the users' intention to click on SA. Single-item measurement scales in social sciences are often discouraged, in spite of the fact that they are used frequently in social sciences, especially to assess to measure constructs involving respondent satisfaction or intention, like for example overall job satisfaction, intention to quit, intention to hire/promote and the like (Wanous and Hudy, 2001).

There are two main arguments against the usage of such a type of measure. The first has to do with the issue of reliability. Multiple-item constructs are often considered more reliable because measurement error is reduced by aggregating more different items on the scale. The second argument revolves around the amount of information that can be assessed by using single-item scales. In fact, it may be a one-item measure carries less information than a multiple-item measure (Bergkvist and Rossiter, 2007). In the case of the first argument, it can be refuted in light of the fact that in the majority of multiple-item scales, the formulation and the wording of each item differs only slightly from the others, since they are supposed to measure the same construct. Thus, in general, one 'good' item may allow a valid and reliable measurement just as multiple items (Christophersen and Konradt, 2011). The second argument may also be countered by noticing how oftentimes constructs within research models do not actually present different facets and, thus, adding up items would not improve measurement because no additional information would be obtained (Drolet and Morrison, 2001). In the case of the present study, a construct like the intention whether to click or not on a FB ad (CI) is by its nature very suitable to be measured with a single, direct question.

The reliability of single-scale items has been supported by previous research (Bergkvist and Rossiter, 2007; Rossiter, 2002; Wanous and Hudy, 2001, 1996). The results of a 2007 study conducted by Bergkvist and Rossiter suggest that the validity of single-item measurements is comparable to the validity of multi-item measurements. The study drew several criticisms, including the one stating that the study used concurrent validity as criterion rather than predictive validity (Kamakura, 2014). These claim and others were rejected by a re-analysis of the data from the original study. In this case the re-analysis showed that the predicting delayed measures rather than concurrent measures yielded virtually identical results as in the original study, thus confirming the recommendations and conclusions about the validity of single-item scales made by Bergkvist and Rossiter (Bergkvist, 2015).

The single-item scale utilized in the present study in order to measure the dependent variable click intention was taken from Gauzente (2010) and adapted in order to fit the research purpose. The original phrasing "What are the chances that you will click on sponsored results in the

future?" was adapted to "What are the chances that you will click on sponsored ads on social media in the future?". The study which the item was adapted from consists of an investigation of user intention to click on sponsored advertisings in general, thus including both in-website ads and search engine sponsored results in the context of search engine marketing (SEM) as opposed to organic results. The item was adapted to fit specifically the context of SAs on social media in general and FB in particular. As in the original study, the construct was measured with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very improbable) to 5 (Very probable).

5. Results

In this section, the results of the descriptive statistical analysis are interpreted in order to provide an overview of the collected data. Subsequently we present the results of the statistical analysis to show the scale reliability of the variables and the validity of the model. Finally, a description of how multiple linear regression was used to analyze the proposed research model will be presented. The results will be illustrated in different sub-sections, covering different parts of the statistical analysis. For each of these sub-sections, results relative to the Danish dataset and results relative to the Italian dataset will be reported one after the other. This way, it will be easier to later on discuss the comparison between the two countries.

5.1 Descriptive statistics

First of all, key descriptive statistics are shown to provide an overview of the regression data. The table below shows this type of data for of all the variables included in the research model. This represents a useful summary of the data.

DK

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
PEU	108	2.75	2.25	5.00	496.00	4.5926	.04962	.51563	.266
PT	108	4.00	1.00	5.00	316.00	2.9259	.08966	.93182	.868
AT	108	3.67	1.00	4.67	261.00	2.4167	.07685	.79866	.638
CI	108	4.00	1.00	5.00	270.00	2.5000	.11581	1.20358	1.449
PDI	108	5.00	1.00	6.00	334.67	3.0988	.11319	1.17631	1.384
UAI	108	6.00	1.00	7.00	387.67	3.5895	.13123	1.36383	1.860
MAS	108	6.00	1.00	7.00	289.33	2.6790	.10358	1.07644	1.159
Valid N (listwise)	108								

ITA

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
PEU	103	2.00	3.00	5.00	452.00	4.3883	.04983	.50576	.256
PT	103	3.50	1.00	4.50	306.50	2.9757	.07885	.80021	.640
AT	103	3.67	1.00	4.67	259.33	2.5178	.07976	.80943	.655
CI	103	4.00	1.00	5.00	220.00	2.1359	.10692	1.08509	1.177
PDI	103	5.33	1.00	6.33	350.00	3.3981	.12341	1.25250	1.569
UAI	103	6.00	1.00	7.00	471.00	4.5728	.11783	1.19587	1.430
MAS	103	4.67	1.00	5.67	313.67	3.0453	.11726	1.19005	1.416
Valid N (listwise)	103								

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for the Danish and the Italian dataset

By carrying out this type of statistical analysis only, several issues concerning the reliability and the validity of the independent variables could emerge. This is due to the fact that the underlying collinearity may cause misleading interpretations. This is especially true in the case of a model structured like the one developed for this study, in which two independent variables, PEU and PT, are connected to a mediating variable (AT), which in turn is predicted to influence the independent variable CI together with PEU itself. For these reasons, it is very important to perform a test of the reliability and goodness of the fit of the model before moving on to performing the regression analysis.

5.2 Scale reliability

In order to assess whether the utilized measurements reflect the measured construct, a reliability analysis was conducted on both datasets. The author chose to use Cronbach's Alpha (also referred to as Coefficient Alpha) to perform this scale reliability test. Cronbach's Alpha is a measurement of the internal consistency associated with the scores that can be derived from a scale or a composite score. For instance, a '*x*' percentage value means that '*x*' percent in the score can be considered true score variance or internally consistent reliable variance.

The construct CI was measured with a single-item scale. Since Cronbach's alpha is an indicator of internal consistency, it does not make sense to use it as a reliability measure for CI. In fact, it's not possible to assess the consistency between a single response and itself; the consistency has to be measured against at least one more item. All the other constructs were measured by means of an analysis of the Coefficient Alpha indicator. The values for both the Danish and the Italian datasets were computed by using the software IBM SPSS and the results are reported in the table below.

DK

	PEU	PT	AT	CI	PDI	UAI	MAS
Cronbach's Alpha	.884	.843	.751	--	.718	.783	.559

ITA

	PEU	PT	AT	CI	PDI	UAI	MAS
Cronbach's Alpha	.776	.776	.744	--	.755	.757	.690

Table 6: Scale reliability measurements for both datasets

The Cronbach's Alpha of the scales used to measure the constructs PEU, PT, AT, PDI, UAI all generally lie between .7 and .8. The only exception is the case of MAS, which sets on a value lower than that both in the Danish and the Italian datasets. The accepted threshold to consider the scale reliable is set at .7, as asserted in a seminal 1978 study by Nunnally and commonly adopted

as a quasi-standard value afterwards (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). Optimal values expected to range from .7 to .95. A low alpha value could be due to poor inter-relatedness or to a high degree of heterogeneity across the items in the construct. An excessively high alpha value may be due to the fact that some items are redundant, for example because they are actually testing the same question just in a slightly different guise (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). Looking at the values reported above in the tables, we can thus state that our results show a good scale reliability values according to the aforementioned reliability threshold and range of optimal values.

As mentioned, the only value that lies below the .7 acceptability threshold is the one for MAS, α=.559 in the Danish dataset and α=.690 in the Italian dataset, the latter very close to the threshold but still below it. In light of these result, it was decided to conduct some further analysis in order to find an explanation for such a low value. The correlation between the third item of the scale and the total score of the questionnaire presents a value of .188. This low value indicates that there is probably a weak correlation between the third item and the scale measuring MAS. This insight finds a confirmation in the 'Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted' values. In case the third item was deleted, the coefficient Alpha would increase to .623 for the Danish dataset and it would remain at .690 for the Italian dataset. Conversely, the 'Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted' for the remaining two items would mark a drop to percentages just slightly above .5 in both datasets.

As said earlier, the dependent variable CI was measured by means of a single-item scale. In presence of one-item scales there is no way to test internal scale reliability, as the one item available cannot be measured against anything else, since it's the only one there. A way to get data about the reliability of this kind of construct would be test-retest reliability. This operation consists of administering the same single item scale to the same sample at two different points in time and correlate the scores for an estimate (Christophersen and Konradt, 2011). Due to time constraints, it was not possible to perform such an operation for this study. This reliability issue will be mentioned later in the 'Limitations' section of this paper.

5.3 Testing the model fit

The next step of this section will be testing the fit of the model, in order to find out whether the theoretical model we developed and proposed for the paper is an appropriate fit for the data collected with the questionnaires. In order to measure the adequacy of a model, we start out by calculating the sum of squared differences by the equation below.

$$deviation= \Sigma \ (observed - model)^2$$

This equation allows us to calculate the difference between the actually observed values and the values predicted by a certain predictive model. The equation is first applied to the mean, which represents the most basic and thus less accurate predictive model, thus obtaining the total sum of squares (SS_T). Then, it is applied to the model called line of best fit, defined as the best possible straight line that fits the data on a scatter plot (Fields, 2009), like the data obtained from the questionnaires. With this second operation we obtain the model sum of squares (SS_M). We then proceed to find a ratio between these two values, as seen in the equation below.

$$R^2= SS_M \ /SS_T$$

R^2 gives us the ratio of the variations in the predicted outcome of the two considered models. When there are more independent variables we have to look at multiple correlation coefficient (Multiple R). Multiple R represents the correlation between the observed values of Y (independent variable) and the values of Y predicted by the multiple regression model. Thus, large values of the multiple R indicate a strong correlation between the predicted values and the observed outcome. However, it is the Adjusted R square value that is used as an indicator to assess the model's goodness of fit. The reason for that is that by adding more variables into a model, R-square increases, so that the value needs to be adjusted for the number of predictors in the model. A big difference in R 2 and adjusted R square may suggest that some independent variable in the model is redundant (Sirkin, 2005).

Due to the nature of the research model's structure, the test of the goodness of the model was split into two steps. First, the subdivision consisting of PT and PU as independent variables of AT. Second, AT and PEU as independent variables of CI. The results have been conveniently summed up in the table below which contains all the relevant data for the two datasets.

Country	Model	R square	Adjusted R square
Denmark	Predictors: (Constant), PT, PEU Dependent variable: AT	.232	.215
	Predictors: (Constant), AT, PEU Dependent variable: CI	.310	.295
Italy	Predictors: (Constant), PT, PEU Dependent variable: AT	.277	.260
	Predictors: (Constant), AT, PEU Dependent variable: CI	.310	.295

Table 7: Goodness of model fit data

The difference between the R square values and the Adjusted R square values is low, meaning there are no redundant variables in the model. The results show Adjusted R square values that range between .215 and .295 across the two datasets. According to the scale of values for R^2 that measure the strength of model fit (0.9 -1.0 Very strong, 0.7 -0.9 Strong, 0.4-0.6 Moderate, 0.1-0,3 Weak, 0.0 -0.1 Zero) proposed by Fields (2009), the proposed models have a weak goodness of fit. Generally speaking, a high R-square value (.60 or above) is required for studies in the realm of the exact sciences or the so-called pure science field, while lower values like those emerging from this research are normally acceptable in the field of social sciences, because of the intrinsic difficulty of predicting human behaviour in an accurate way (Sirkin, 2005). Nonetheless, the obtained values are still quite low for this type of research. A possible

explanation is that some meaningful variable was not included in the research model. This could be a result of the choice of simplifying the model by including in it the dimension of Perceived Usefulness (PU) present in the original version of TAM. This choice was explained in more detail in section 3 of this paper.

5.4 Hypotheses Testing: Regression Analysis

After assessing scale reliability and model fit, the following sub-section describes the regression analysis that was conducted on the data. The purpose of regression analysis is to predict a dependent variable starting from one independent variable (simple regression) or from multiple independent variables (multiple regression). The proposed research model for this study presents quite a complex structure in which the two independent variables PEU and PT are supposed to predict AT. Then AT in its turn, in combination PEU, together serve as independent variables to predict the dependent variable CI. As mentioned earlier in this work, there are then three mediating variables within the model (Hofstede's dimensions), two of which mediate the influence of AT on CI (PDI and UAI), one mediating the influence of PEU over CI (MAS). In such a scenario of multiple regressions characterised by variables acting in turn both as dependent and as independent, it was necessary to split the model in steps and to perform regression analysis on each of them. All linear regression analyses were performed by using the software IMB SPSS Statistics 24.

5.4.1 PEU and PT correlated to AT

First, linear regression was performed considering PEU and PT as independent variables both correlated to AT as a dependent variable. Results for the Danish and Italian datasets are shown and interpreted below.

DK

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.116	.667		.174	.862
	PEU	.366	.142	.237	2.579	.011
	PT	.211	.079	.247	2.689	.008

a. Dependent Variable: AT

Table 8: Multiple linear regression data, PEU and PT influencing AT in the Danish dataset

The values of the regression coefficient β represent the change in outcome that occurs in the dependent variable resulting from a one unit change in the independent variable. In other words, for a 1 unit change in the independent variable (e.g. PEU), the dependent variable will increase by B (e.g. 0.366, see the DK table above for instance), holding all other independent variables fixed. Thus, if the value is different from zero, it means that there is a correlation between the two variables that allows us to significantly predict that outcome.

Moving on to the significance value, its function is to test the null hypothesis and whether it is to be accepted or rejected. The null hypothesis is by default that the proposed model has no explanatory power at all. A significance lower than 0.05 indicates that the null hypothesis can be rejected, which equals to say that the model does have predictive power at least to some extent. In this case, s Sig. equals .011 for PEU and .008 for PT, we can infer that both these two independent variables have a highly significant relationship with the dependent variable AT. We can thus state that both variables make a significant contribution to the prediction of AT.

ITA

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.890	.671		1.327	.188
	PEU	.090	.146	.056	.613	.541
	PT	.415	.092	.410	4.485	.000

a. Dependent Variable: AT

Table 8: Multiple linear regression data, PEU and PT influencing AT in the Italian dataset

Coefficient β values are all positive in the case of the Italian dataset as well. What we immediately notice is that PEU displays a very low significance value, .541. We conclude that PEU is not significantly correlated to AT in the case of the Italian dataset. On the other hand, PT displays a significance value of .000, meaning its correlation to AT is highly significant.

5.4.2 PEU and AT correlated to CI

The second step of our linear regression was to analyse PEU and AT as independent variables correlated to CI as a dependent variable. Results for the Danish and Italian datasets are shown and interpreted below.

DK

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	−.314	.938		−.335	.738
	PEU	.288	.210	.124	1.372	.173
	AT	.617	.136	.409	4.544	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CI

ITA

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.357	.874		1.552	.124
	PEU	−.167	.193	−.078	−.866	.388
	AT	.601	.121	.448	4.982	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CI

Table 9: Multiple linear regression data, PEU and AT influencing CI in both datasets.

Concerning the Danish dataset, PEU shows a low significance value (.173) and thus its correlation with the dependent variable CI must be considered non-significant. On the contrary, AT displays a highly significant correlation with CI (.000). The situation is very similar for the Italian dataset, with a low significance of PEU and a high significance of AT. To be noticed also that PEU's Coefficient β is a negative value, meaning that a one-unit increase in PEU will determine a decrease in CI corresponding to the value itself.

5.4.3 Moderating variables regression analysis

Linear regression was performed to analyse the moderating variables implemented in the research model. In the hypothesis development phase, the two Hofstede cultural values of Power Distance (PDI) and Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) were hypothesised to exert a mediating effect over the correlation between AT and CI. Another Hofstede cultural value, Masculinity (MAS) was hypothesises to mediate the relationship between PEU and CI. The regression analysis was conducted on IMB SPSS Statistics 24 as follows: first of all, an interaction variable connecting the relevant independent variable and the relevant moderating variable was computed. This operation was performed by multiplying the independent variable times the moderating variable. For instance, the interaction variable *trustXpdi* was computed by multiplying Ad Trust (AT) times PDI. Subsequently, multiple linear regression analysis was performed by taking AT, PDI and the newly computed interaction variable *trustXpdi* as three independent variables, and CI as the dependent variable. The results of the measurements of the impact of the three moderating variables for each of the two datasets are illustrated below.

DK

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	−.300	.839		−.358	.721
	AT	1.000	.337	.663	2.967	.004
	trustXpdi	−.120	.102	−.417	−1.176	.242
	PDI	.421	.264	.411	1.592	.114

a. Dependent Variable: CI

ITA

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.711	.818		.870	.387
	AT	.744	.295	.555	2.526	.013
	PDI	−.049	.239	−.057	−.207	.836
	trustXpdi	−.032	.081	−.147	−.395	.694

a. Dependent Variable: CI

Table 10: Multiple linear regression data testing PDI in both datasets.

We notice how the Coefficient B for the two variables are negative, meaning they are both negatively related to CI, which appears to be in line with what was postulated in H5. However, as we can infer from the low significance levels, in neither dataset the moderating variable PDI and the interaction effect represented by the interaction variable *trustXpdi* are significant. Their significant values are far below the significance threshold of .05, with .836 and .694 respectively. The same analysis was then carried out on both datasets on the UAI moderating variable, yielding the following results.

DK

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.432	.865		.500	.618
	AT	.711	.339	.472	2.101	.038
	trustXuai	−.013	.087	−.047	−.144	.886
	UAI	.127	.222	.144	.573	.568

a. Dependent Variable: CI

ITA

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.607	1.136		1.415	.160
	AT	.364	.403	.272	.904	.368
	UAI	−.212	.248	−.233	−.853	.396
	trustXuai	.051	.089	.217	.565	.573

a. Dependent Variable: CI

Table 11: Multiple linear regression data testing UAI in both datasets.

5.4.4 Hypotheses overview

Lastly, an overview of all the hypotheses is provided in form of a table that sums up all the results and shows whether each hypothesis is to be supported or rejected according to the outcome of the statistical analysis. The Coefficient β and the Significance value are here reported for each one of the hypotheses formulated. These results are shown in a two-part table that shows first the hypothesis overview for the Danish dataset data and then for the Italian one. H7 was not tested because in either of the two datasets, because in neither case a significant relationship between PEU and CI was noticed, thus making the moderating effect of MAS redundant.

DK

Hypothesis	Coefficient	Significance	Result
H1. PT is positively correlated to AT	.211	.008	SUPPORTED
H2. PEU is positively correlated to AT	.366	.011	SUPPORTED
H3. PEU is positively correlated to CI	.288	.173	REJECTED
H4. AT is positively related to CI	.617	.000	SUPPORTED
H5. The relationship between AT and CI will become weaker with increasing PDI	.421	.114	REJECTED
H6. The relationship between AT and CI will become weaker with increasing UAI	.127	.568	REJECTED
H7. The relationship between PEU and CI will become stronger with increasing MAS	--	--	--

ITA

Hypothesis	Coefficient	Significance	Result
H1. PT is positively correlated to AT	.415	.000	SUPPORTED
H2. PEU is positively correlated to AT	.090	.541	REJECTED
H3. PEU is positively correlated to CI	-.167	.388	REJECTED
H4. AT is positively related to CI	.601	.000	SUPPORTED
H5. The relationship between AT and CI will become weaker with increasing PDI	-.049	.836	REJECTED
H6. The relationship between AT and CI will become weaker with increasing UAI	.212	.396	REJECTED
H7. The relationship between PEU and CI will become stronger with increasing MAS	--	--	--

Table 12: Overview of all the hypotheses for both datasets

6. Discussion

6.1 Hypotheses discussion

The following section provides a discussion and various interpretations of the results obtained with statistical analysis from both the Danish and the Italian dataset.

6.1.1 PEU and PT correlated to AT

Concerning the Danish dataset, the results from multiple linear regression show that both PT and PEU have an impact over AT, therefore supporting *H1* and *H2*. The influence of PEU in particular strong, supporting the claim that a user-friendly and easy to navigate platform interface influences users' trust in the advertising elements embedded in it. The same cannot be said for the Italian dataset, for which the results show that the impact of PEU on AT is far from significant, thus leading to the rejection of *H2*. An interpretation of this insight is that the Danish population sample tends to give more weight to effortlessly interacting with a clean and easy-to-use interface in the process of building trust towards advertising elements embedded into the interface itself. On the other hand, this does not appear to be a significant requirement for the considered Italian sample.

Regarding the influence of PT, as in the Danish dataset the Italian data show that PT plays a very important role in determining AT, thus supporting *H1*. The proposition that trust in the FB platform is translated into trust in the ad elements embedded in it appears to be confirmed for both countries. This notion was encountered numerous times in the reviewed literature, both in research specifically dedicated to FBA and in studies about other types of online advertising; thus, we can affirm that in this respect the findings of this study are in line with those of previous literature. For the Italian sample PT is the only significant antecedent of AT, as we saw in the previous paragraph that the hypotheses of an influence of PEU in this sense was discarded.

The results about PEU across the two datasets confirm the contradictory findings about the impact of this variable that emerged from our review of the past relevant academic literature. In fact, some past studies indicate that PEU can be considered a key antecedent of trust (Corritore et al., 2003, 2005), whereas some other studies show that the construct has no relevant significance in that sense (Hsu et al. 2014). The former point is confirmed indeed by our findings in the present study, but only as far as the Danish sample is concerned. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, this was not the case for the Italian dataset, for which the hypothesis of a significant correlation between PEU and AT was rejected. This means that for Italian students the ease of use of the interface where the ad appears is not a relevant in influencing their trust in the ad itself.

6.1.2 PEU and AT correlated to CI

Regarding the influence of PEU and AT con CI, results of multiple linear regression analysis yield a similar outcome for the two datasets. In both cases, in fact, *H3* claiming PEU as positive correlated to CI was rejected as non-significant, whereas *H4* stating AT is positive correlated to CI was supported. The significance and Coefficient B values relative to *H3* exhibit a remarkable consistency across the two datasets, showing that in both cases trust in the ad itself is the key factor that leads to CI. The relevant values across the two datasets are very similar. The rejection of *H4* indicates that ease of use, meaning an effortless, clear and easy interaction with the FB system, does not influence the intention to interact with advertising elements that are part of that system. This finding is in contradiction with the few specific examples of TAM-based models applied to FBA that were found in previous literature, in which statistical analysis showed a moderately positive PEU influence and good significance associated with consumer intention to use FBA (Lin and Kim, 2016).

Results thus show that the user's trust in the advertisement itself is the key predictor of user intention to click on SA on FB. This indirectly confirms the assumption encountered in previous literature that many of the dynamics of traditional offline advertising also hold valid for online

advertising. In fact, numerous studies conducted on traditional offline advertising show that attitude toward a specific ad is the key factor in determining its acceptance (Lutz, McKenzie and Belch, 1983; Muehling, 1987; MacKenzie and Lutz 1989; Mehta, 2000). Results on the present study appear to confirm the findings of this stream of past research, thus confirming a parallel between offline and online advertising.

Mean CI in Denmark higher than in Italy (mean 2.50, SD .115 as opposed to mean 2.13, SD .106). The interpretation of these data is that for this study Danish people are more likely to click on FBA than Italian people. There's quite a strong tendency towards a neutral response in both cases as conformed by the low standard deviation value, but the value is still higher for Denmark.

6.1.3 The effect of Moderating Variables

Some of Hofstede's cultural dimensions are implemented into the research model as moderating variables. The results show that *H5* and *H6,* claiming PDI and UAI have a moderating effect over the correlation of AT and CI, are to be rejected. *H7* involves the moderating influence of MAS on the correlation between PEU and CI. However, since this correlation was computed as non-significant in the multiple linear regression analysis, analysing a supposed moderating effect of MAS on it became redundant. Overall, we can say that all the three hypotheses involving the cultural dimensions of Hofstede were rejected for the present research.

It's interpret the possible reasons for such an outcome. Following Duffett (2014), one explanation could be that the level of digital education and familiarity with the internet of young people is by now comparable across different countries around the world. This is especially true for countries within the same geographical area or continent, thus not separated by a very large geographical distance, as arguably in the case of Denmark and Italy. To support this view, it's useful to notice that the Danish and the Italian sample are constituted for the major part of young people aged between 18 and 24 years old (72.22% for the Danish sample, 60.58% for the Italian sample). This is surely a natural consequence of the fact that the target sample for the present study is the student population of the two countries considered, but nonetheless it backs up the

interpretation of the comparable cross-national level of familiarity with the FB platform and FBA. To sum it up, the lack of influence of Hofstede's national culture dimensions that emerged may be attributable to a certain degree of standardization of the perception and intentions towards online advertising, in line with the stream of research that claims that standardized advertising strategies and tools works pretty much as well across countries and cultures (Daechun, 2007; Duffett, 2014).

It also possible that the chosen sample is not representative of the cultural differences. By taking a look at the values for the questionnaire scores of the items relative to the cultural dimensions, we notice some incongruencies compared to the original Hofstede results used in the hypothesis development phase for the present study. Based on Hofstede's scores for PDI, UAI and MAS, the expected cross-national differences across the two countries were much larger than what results actually indicate in this study. Comparing the mean values of the three constructs across datasets, we see that the differences across Denmark and Italy are much smaller than those indicated on the Hofstede website. The reported PDI index scores, for instance, are 50 for Italy and 18 for Denmark, a large difference that is not echoed by the small difference in mean scores for this research, 3.09 and 3.34 respectively. The same goes for the means calculated for the other two variables; neither of them shows the large discrepancy of the indexes reported by Hofstede. As mentioned earlier, the sample may not have been representative in this sense, because of the young age and homogeneous characteristics of the participants.

In summary, the results of this study show that the users' intention to interact with ads on FB by clicking them is not influenced by cultural differences measurable with Hofstede's national cultural dimensions.

6.2 Limitations

Several past papers have considered the intention to interact as a mediating variable on the path towards purchase intention (Lin and Kim, 2016; Duffett, 2014; Dehghani and Tumer, 2013),

whereas the focus of the present paper is limited to testing intention to click (CI) on a FB ad as a dependent variable within the theoretical construct. The present study is not about KPIs and it does not include precise numerical measurements like the click-through rate (CTR) based on real-life data measured through FB metric interface and tools. It proposes a theoretical framework to investigate consumer intention to interact with FBA with data obtained by means of a questionnaire and not through KPIs measuring 'on the field' online behavior.

Possible intention differences across devices like desktop/mobile were not considered. The study is limited to the general consumer intention to interact with FBA across the two considered cultures, regardless the type of device the access is made with. The type of device used could be relevant as it could arguably be influencing some of the variables in the proposed theoretical model. The fact that the user normally accesses FB through a laptop, a smartphone or a tablet, could cause variations, for example, in the PEU of the platform. Nevertheless, we chose not to consider it as a variable for this study.

It is important to notice that there are several technologies and mechanisms currently in use in the online environment to promote trust and that have not been taken into consideration for the scope of the present research. These mechanisms may have an influence over AT. To name the most important, trusted third parties and online reputation systems (peer reviews) are worth mentioning (Koufari and Hampton-Sosa, 2004). The former is used on FB in connection with FBA in the form of *suggested post ads*. FB alerts the user whether the advertiser's page on the social network is currently liked by one or multiple friends of his/her. This friend recommendation appears right above the post, and they have been shown to exert a positive influence on attitude towards FBA (socialmediaexaminer.com). As said, the eventuality of *suggested post ads* was not included in the present study.

The model was developed and adapted from TAM. PU is a key construct of TAM but was not included in the model for this study. In a number of previous studies, PU has been shown to have a direct influence on the Intention to Use (IU) an IT, or even better, to be the most influential antecedent of it (Veiga, Floyd and Dechant, 2001; Purnawirawana et. al, 2012; Luna-Nevarez

and Torres, 2015). However, in the previously proposed research models mentioned in the Literature Review section that include both PU and trust, the former is never shown to have a connection with the latter. The author's choice was to narrow the research focus down to trust dynamics in connection with FBA, and their influence on the intention to click. Therefore, the PU construct, was left out of the equation. This study proposes to investigate the key role of AT as a variable towards intention click on the ad itself. It does not propose to be an exhaustive analysis of all the factors and variables that lead to intention to click on an advert. That is why it was decided not to take PU, of every other possible factor, into consideration.

The population sample for this research is not large enough to be representative. Furthermore, it could be argued that conducting a round of in-depth interviews in the literature research stage could have enhanced the understanding of the topic in the phase preceding the distribution of the questionnaire (Saunders et al. 2007). Lastly, the CI variable was measured with a single-item scale, a type of measurement for which it's not possible to conduct an internal scale reliability calculation. This problem was also described earlier in the *Scale reliability* section of this paper (Section 5.2). The theoretical reliability of such a type was scale was extensively illustrated in the same section, but anyway it has to be accepted that it's not possible to perform an internal scale reliability test yielding a Cronbach's Alpha value on a single item scale.

6.3 Contribution and future research

Nowadays more than ever, advertisers are faced with the need of gaining an understanding of the explicit or latent reasons that bring consumers to Internet advertising acceptance or avoidance, in order to develop more and more efficient strategies to get their message to their target (Koshksaray, Franklin and Hanzaee, 2015). This study is among the first to apply a TAM-derived research model in order to explain the response of consumers to social media as advertising platforms, by investigating their intention to click on SA of FA. In particular, the cross-national comparison character of this study represents quite an original approach that has not been deepened before by previous literature.

The proposed model exhibits not very high goodness of fit values, meaning it could be refined by future research on the subject. This usually means that some important variable might have been omitted (Field, 2009). Specifically, this could be the case of PU, a variable that is part of the original TAM model design. PU was left out of the research model developed for this study, in an attempt at simplifying the research design by focusing on lesser elements. The low values on goodness of model fit may be a result of this exclusion. The author would thus recommend the inclusion of the PU variable for future TAM-based research around the topic of cross-national differences in approach to FBA.

By comparing the mean values for the CI item measured with a 5-point Likert scale, the Danish student sample is more likely to click on FBA than the Italian sample. This could be a useful insight for marketing managers in the decision-making process for a marketing campaign. Budget allocation choices involved in FBA campaigns may take into account cross-national differentiations in the rate of CI, in order to take decisions on the amount of resources to be spent in FBA or whether to use FBA or some other tools in a certain country. As mentioned earlier, this paper represents one of the first steps in proposing to provide a theoretical foundation for this type of insights. Other possible future research developments may include cross-national investigation about other popular social media (like for instance Instagram, Twitter and the like) to determine which one may give the best results in a given country. Also, such a research approach may help determine which social network marketing works best in a specific national framework. The results showing that for Danish students PEU of the platform is a significant antecedent of AT but for Italian students it's not, may be very relevant in trying to gain such an insight.

7. Conclusion

This research aims at filling the research gap concerning the cross-cultural analysis of users' approach to clicking on Facebook Ads (FBA). The purpose of the present study is to explore cross-national differences in the intention to click on Sponsored Ads (SA) that appear Facebook (FB) and to identify the factors that influence ad click intention (CI). This purpose was sought by means of a theoretical framework derived from TAM and including Hofstede's cultural dimensions as moderating variables. The study is a two-country comparison between a Danish and an Italian student sample. The author chose to work with student samples to ensure homogeneity in the cross-national comparison. In light of all these concepts, the addressed research question is *"What are the cross-national differences and influencing factors of the intention to click on Facebook Ads between Danish and Italian students?"*. To answer this question past academic literature was reviewed. Since such a cross-national comparison approach regarding FBA was never proposed before, literature from diverse study fields was reviewed in order to find an appropriate theoretical framework for the study.

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted on the data collected. The results revealed important similarities and several differences between the Danish and the Italian student datasets. For both the considered samples, trust in the ad (Ad Trust, AT) appears as a significant influencing factor of CI but Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), does not. PEU is defined as the degree of ease and effortlessness in using and navigating the system or platform. The conclusion is that PEU does not have an impact on the users' intention to interact with SA on FB by clicking on them.

The hypotheses relative to the influence of Hofstede's cultural dimensions were all rejected, meaning that the cross differences across the two databases inferred from the results are not relatable to Hofstede's national culture dimensions. In summary, AT appears to be the influencing factor of CI, with no significant moderating influence from any national culture Hofstede dimension, nor PDI neither UAI. PEU is not a significant influencing factor of CI. Regarding the antecedents of AT itself, the results yield an incongruency between the two

datasets, as PEU is significantly correlated to AT in the Danish dataset, but it's not in the Italian one.

This study provides useful implications for researchers, marketers and managers. The results provide indications of cross-national differences in behavioural intention towards FBA and in the importance of the antecedents of this intention. Such insights may provide useful information to marketing managers and social media managers engaging in international marketing campaigns involving FBA. Furthermore, this study may pave the way for further cross-national research about user interaction with FBA or with SA on other social networks.

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9. Appendices

9.1 Parts of a FB Ad

1 - Body

2 - Image

3 - Headline

4 - Link text and Link

5 - Button

9.2 Questionnaire (English version)

Facebook Ads questionnaire

A questionnaire about Facebook and sponsored advertisements on Facebook (Facebook Ads).
The questionnaire's purpose is to gather data for a Master Thesis project at the Copenhagen Business School (CBS).
The Thesis project consists of an investigation of the users' intention to interact with Facebook Ads. It is a cross-national comparison between Danish and Italian users.
Participation to this questionnaire is completely anonymous. Respondents are required to answer all the questions.

Nationality: ....   **Gender**: Female ☐   Male ☐

Age: 18-24 ☐   25-30 ☐   30+ ☐

Occupation: Student ☐   0-3 years work experience ☐   3+ years work experience ☐   Other ☐

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Learning to operate the Facebook website was easy for me					
I found it easy to get the website to do what I wanted it to do.					
I found it easy for me to become skilful at using the site.					
I found the website easy to use.					
I expect the website will not take advantage of me.					
I believe the website is trustworthy.					
I believe the website will not act in a way that harms me.					
I trust the website.					
I trust social media advertisements					
I use social social media advertisements as a reference for purchasing.					
I believe that social media advertisements are credible					

	Very likely	Likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Unlikely	Very unlikely
What are the chances you will click on sponsored ads on social media in the future?					

	Stongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Subordinates should follow their superior's decisions unconditionally.							
Managers should make most decisions by themselves.							
Subordinates should not question their superior's decisions.							
When starting a new job, I fear doing it.							
I fear uncertainty about the future.							
I fear ambiguous situations and unfamiliar adventures.							
The fulfilment of tasks is more important than caring for others.							
A job with high earnings is better than a job with quality of life.							
A man should be strong and a woman should be tender.							