

**BRAND PERCEPTIONS BASED ON  
VISUALS AND MESSAGE APPEALS:  
COMMUNICATING A FINNISH LUXURY BRAND  
ON INSTAGRAM**

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## ABSTRACT

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Luxury brands' social media communication has been an important topic in the field of marketing research. While the topic is important for academics, it is also crucial for the businesses to understand what kind of content they should publish in order to project a brand image of luxury. However, marketing research has not yet shown how the Finnish consumer views the Finnish luxury brands on social media platforms. The Finnish people hold a rather peculiar, even a slightly negative attitude toward luxury, and therefore, marketing research ought to be conducted in this context. The starting point of this study was rather practical: what kind of social media content a Finnish luxury brand should create in order to be perceived as luxurious but yet fitting to the social media world?</p> <p>Thus, the purpose of this study was to discover how the Finnish consumer perceives the brands behind social media posts based on mere visual and textual content. To start the exploration to the topic, it was important to identify what kind of content is currently posted by Finnish luxury brands. After this, a set of interviews were conducted to answer the main research objective: to discover the brand perceptions a Finnish consumer receives from certain type of visual and message appeals displayed in a social media post. The study results confirmed some previous research findings: Finnish consumers connect simple, low visual complexity images with classical luxury brands, however the complexity of the visual did not matter for the luxuriousness of brand. For the content itself, resonance appeal which describes what is occurring in the visual, was discovered to be an important component in Instagram content, linking it to easy information processing. Also, the Finnish consumer perceives international luxury brands more luxurious than Finnish ones and separates these two types of luxury brands, the international and Finnish, to two completely different categories, which produce different kind of Instagram content.</p>	
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## TIIVISTELMÄ

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<p><b>Tiivistelmä</b></p> <p>Luksusbrändien viestintä sosiaalisessa mediassa on ollut tärkeä aihe markkinointitutkimuksissa. Aihe on tärkeä myös yrityksille, jotta he ymmärtävät millaista sisältöä heidän pitäisi julkaista viestiäkseen luksusbrändikuva. Suomen kontekstissa tällaista tutkimusta ei ole tehty: miten suomalaiset, joilla on erilainen, jopa hieman negatiivinen asenne luksusta kohtaan, kokevat luksusbrändit sosiaalisessa mediassa? Tutkimus aloitettiin käytännöllinen pohdinta mielessä: millaista sosiaalisen median sisältöä suomalaisen luksusbrändin pitäisi julkaista, jotta brändistä välittyy luksusbrändikuva.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tutkia miten suomalainen kuluttaja näkee luksusbrändit, kun hänellä on tiedossaan vain sosiaalisen median julkaisut, eli tekstuaalinen ja visuaalinen sisältö. Aluksi oli tärkeää selvittää millaista sisältöä suomalaiset luksusbrändit tällä hetkellä julkaisevat. Sitten toteutettiin haastatteluja, joiden avulla yritettiin selvittää vastaus tutkimuksen päätavoitteeseen: millaisia brändimielikuvia suomalainen kuluttaja saa eri tyyppisistä visuaalisista ja viestinnällisistä tehokeinoista, joita käytetään sosiaalisen median julkaisuissa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset varmistivat joitakin aiempien tutkimusten löytöjä, kuten suomalaisen kuluttajat yhdistävät vähemmän kompleksisen kuvan klassisiin luksusbrändeihin myöskin. Erona löytyi, että kuvan kompleksisuus ei ylipäättäänkaan vaikuttanut brändin luksuksen tasoon. Tekstisisällön merkittävin löydös oli resonanssi tehokeinoon käytön tärkeys kuluttajille, eli tekstin toivottiin kuvailevan tai muuten viittaavaan visuaaliseen sisältöön. Viimeisenä löytönä suomalainen kuluttaja kokee luksuksen tason olevan korkeampi kansainvälisisissä luksusbrändeissä verrattuna suomalaisiin. Suomalaiset luksusbrändit kuuluivat selkeästi eri kategoriaan kuin kansainväliset brändit ja näiltä odotetaan erilaista Instagram-sisältöä.</p>	
<p><b>Asiasanat</b></p> <p>Sosiaalinen media, luksus brändäys, Instagram, brändi käsitys, viestinnän tehokeino, sisältö</p>	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

It is increasingly difficult to catch consumers' attention on social media, filled with variety of content and other stimuli. Brands ought to spark the interest of the consumer to a degree that they will stop, look at the social media post and perhaps even like it. Describing the task in this way sounds easy, whereas in reality brands are struggling to create entertaining content that fits their brand communications, but is not too repetitive (Pulizzi, 2012; Romão, Moro, Rita, & Ramos, 2019). The globality of the marketplace, the rapidly changing social media trends, and the thousands of stimuli that consumers face daily are all complicating the social media marketing efforts of brands.

For luxury brands operating in Finland the above mentioned 'task' is even more challenging. Firstly, luxury brands have a certain way of branding and communicating about themselves. The luxury brands need to create an atmosphere of luxury in social media (Okonkwo, 2009), such as described in below:

*"great comfort, especially as provided by expensive and beautiful things;  
something expensive that is pleasant to have but is not necessary"*  
(Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.)

The concepts surrounding luxury brands are *expensive* – luxury is considered to be of the premium price category (Park, Im, & Kim, 2015; Jin, 2012; Dubois, Laurent, & Czellar, 2001); *beautiful* – luxury is a design product and usually the head designers of luxury fashion houses are called artists (Makkonen, 2012; Lahtinen, 2014; Dubois, Laurent, & Czellar, 2001); and *pleasant but unnecessary* – having a luxury item is not crucial for survival, but it is something extra to have in one's life (Dubois, Laurent, & Czellar, 2001). The concept of the premium price factor creates other features that are important for luxury. It is considered to be of higher quality than a standard product (Lahtinen, 2014; Jin, 2012; Dubois, Laurent, & Czellar, 2001). Also, it is believed to carry a so-called scarcity effect or uniqueness to it, meaning not everyone can have the product, but rather only a few can obtain it (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018; Park, Im, & Kim, 2015; Dubois, Laurent, & Czellar, 2001). In theory, when four of these aspects, that is premium price, design, high quality, and limited supply are communicated, a luxurious brand image could be created. However, luxury brands cannot only rely on rational brand messages. Luxury products are hedonic products – this means emotion has more influence in the purchase decision than the information of the product (Jin, 2012). While communicating scarcity can help in creation of an exclusive feeling which might add admiration for the brand (Räty, 2018), it is not enough to incite the consumer to follow the brand on social media nor to purchase a product from them. Thus, a compelling story ought to be told, which still communicates the core aspects of luxury brands in order the consumers to acknowledge them as luxury, but also a story that draws to the consumers' emotions to differentiate from the competitors and to provide that feeling of pleasure

that it is crucial for luxury brands (Latvala, 2013). While social media are the perfect platform for luxury brands (Romão, Moro, Rita, & Ramos, 2019), it is a challenging task to communicate luxury values, maintain a luxury brand image, and draw to the emotional side of the consumers. One manner of achieving these objectives could be by content marketing.

The concept of content marketing is defined as follows by the Content Marketing Institute (n.d.):

*“Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience – and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”*

This marketing approach focuses on creation and distribution of content, which is valuable and relevant, in order to attract a certain audience. What is even more important, the primary purpose of content marketing is not to sell – but to provide added value through content to the customer, such as entertainment or useful information (Pulizzi, 2012; Harad, 2013; Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019). Merging social media with content marketing could be defined as

*Creating and distributing relevant content, which primary purpose is not to sell, but to provide certain added value to the target audience in social media platforms.*

But why is social media content marketing important for luxury brands? It is considered first and foremost as a brand building tool (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Godey, et al., 2016) and it is an important communication means to enhance brand awareness, increase behavioural intentions, create loyal brand communities, and so forth (Choi, Seo, Wagner, & Yoon, 2018; Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019). In fact, 75% of the consumers of luxury brands use social media (Choi, Seo, Wagner, & Yoon, 2018). Overall, social media communication efforts have a great effect to the brand image (Godey, et al., 2016) and even more so, a positive effect in brand perceptions, loyalty and purchase intentions (Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019). Thus, social media content marketing is an important way of communicating a certain brand image, such as a luxury brand image.

Besides these considerations of luxury brands and social media, it is important to consider the context, in this case the Finnish marketplace where these brands operate. Finnish people hold a peculiar attitude towards luxury, which cannot be replicated. The Finnish culture appreciates traits of equality and modesty (Latvala, 2013). Therefore, owning luxury goods can seem like one is above the others or “boasting with money” (Nelskylä, 2018). This does create complexities for luxury brands, but the Finnish are also able to see luxury in unexpected situations, such as admiring a beautiful view of nature or having a calm moment in the midst of a busy schedule (Latvala, 2013; Korhonen, 2015). Certainly, the attitudes and views have developed to a more understanding and appreciative direction, but it is still considered rude to talk about money or even to show one’s wealth (Latvala, 2013), for instance by owning and wearing luxury goods. All in all, the perception of luxury goods is rather “non-special” and even slightly negative (Latvala, 2013; Nelskylä, 2018). This creates additional challenges for luxury brands operating in Finland - how to overcome this negativity?

This study attempts to provide solutions or options on how to overcome the challenges of standing out in social media for luxury brands in the Finnish marketplace. For this purpose, social media content plays a crucial role. In this study, social media content is viewed in two segments: the visual and the text. The visual element carries plenty of responsibility – its job is to deliver the initial brand perception to the viewer, to communicate the values of the brand, and to be attractive and appealing to the viewer in order to stop the viewer’s thumb scroll on the phone’s screen (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018; Romão, Moro, Rita, & Ramos, 2019). Also, visual communication methods, especially video, has been gaining popularity amongst consumers – it has been claimed to become the main method of communication between the brand and the consumer (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). However, the text is equally important: if the user has already stopped by the visual, the text is read with more cognitive resources, which might have a more lasting effect on the brand perception (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). Message appeal in the text is an important feature. In its simplest terms the message appeal draws either to the rational or to the emotional side of consumers (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). However, as the world is not as black and white either, more advanced message appeals have been defined. For example, the appeal of user image, which draws to the user’s own perception of themselves and matches it with the brand, such as “you are worth it” (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

For the purposes of this study, these two concepts, namely the visual and the textual appeal are combined and described as creative strategies. Ashley and Tuten (2015) described creative strategies as bridging “the gap between what the marketer wants to say and what the consumer needs to hear”. Creative strategies consists of both the content and the actual execution, and the ultimate objective is to increase the probability of a desired effect occurring in the consumer group after being exposed to the creative strategy (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). It is important to realise that both the visual and the textual appeal carry a certain role, but together they can create more powerful means of communication (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018), thus both are important, separately and together.

## **1.1 Research motivation**

The idea for this thesis sparked during a business meeting with a Finnish luxury business owner. The business owner discussed a practical problem of theirs: what kind of content should a Finnish luxury brand publish in social media in order to create a luxurious brand image? The problem arose from fitting the two different worlds together: luxury brands are inherently exclusive and want to appear scarce and premium, and social media in turn are inclusive, transparent, and all-welcoming. How a luxury brand should produce content that is fitting to the social media world, but still communicates luxury to the users? Thus, the investigation begun: if a brand wants to achieve a luxurious brand image, it is important to discover what kind of perceptions, images, and thoughts about a brand are

retrieved from viewing the social media content. Before understanding what kind of brand perceptions are received from the social media content, how the luxury brands could produce and publish content that communicates a luxurious brand image? Besides this, producing suitable content for social media by luxury brands has not been studied in the context of Finland, a small domestic market, where the consumers hold a rather peculiar attitude towards luxury goods.

The above reflection provided the starting point for the research. At first, it was realised it is unknown how and what kind of content is produced by luxury brands in Finland. But finding out the mere content type would not reveal the most important aspect: the perception of the consumers and the ideas they receive about the brand by looking at the content alone in social media. Therefore, the research was divided in two parts. The first part aims to find out the current situation of luxury brands' social media content marketing and the second examining the perceptions of the consumers in terms of the brand images they receive from viewing social media content.

The scope is in Finland, since it is unknown how the brands conduct their social media content marketing and publish content. And the scope applies also to the consumers, thus Finnish consumers' perceptions are studied. The decision to focus only in Finnish brands and consumers is due to the peculiar attitudes towards luxury, which cannot be replicated by studies in other countries and which brings more knowledge to this field.

To further narrow down the scope of the research, a few strategic decisions were made. First, it was decided to focus on one social media platform, Instagram. It is a social media platform that focuses on visual content and it has been gaining popularity over its inception 10 years ago (Aslam, 2020). Due to its visual aspects, it is also suitable for luxury brands which in general rely on high aesthetic standards (Romão, Moro, Rita, & Ramos, 2019). The platform provides excellent setup for visual storytelling practises from the brand to the consumers, which conforms luxury brands' marketing communications (Romão, Moro, Rita, & Ramos, 2019). It is also a lucrative social media platform for businesses: Over 200 million Instagram-users from the 1 billion active users visit at least one business profile daily, meaning 20% of all the active users (Aslam, 2020). Second, the concept of luxury is vast: many product categories can be luxury and luxury product could be made of almost anything. A niche category was chosen - jewellery. It is one of the products, alongside to perfume, that is most often associated with luxury (Dubois, Laurent, & Czellar, 2001). This is due to its characteristics of 'superfluousness', which is a term coined by Dubois, Laurent, and Czellar (2001), meaning that luxury products are not necessary for survival, but provide something else to the consumers. For example, a car, luxury or not, is a necessary product for many, whereas jewellery is not. Therefore, jewellery industry seemed like a suitable option since it displays several core elements of luxury.

## 1.2 Commencing the research

The following section provides details on what are the objectives, research questions and methods for this study.

### 1.2.1 Research objectives

The research is divided into two parts and thus has two research objectives and questions. The first objective is detecting what creative strategies are currently in use on Instagram by Finnish luxury jewellery brands. The current state of the social media practices by Finnish luxury jewellery brands is unknown, especially what message appeals or visual appeals are used by them. This knowledge is crucial before moving on to the explore the brand perceptions of the consumers. Thus, the second research objective and also the main objective for this study, is to explore the Finnish consumers brand perceptions in terms of Finnish luxury jewellery brands. Especially, it was the aim to understand how a mere social media post influences the brand perceptions. In more complex terms, how the textual appeal and the visual appeal together and separately shape the type of brand image that the consumer obtains from the post. And what kind of brand image is obtained from a certain creative strategy.

<b>Main objective</b>	To explore what brand perceptions a Finnish consumer receives from certain type of creative strategies displayed in a social media post.
<b>Secondary objective</b>	To find out the creative strategies used on Instagram by Finnish luxury brands currently.

### 1.2.2 Research questions

1. What different creative strategies are used by Finnish luxury jewellery brands on Instagram?
  - a. What kind of message appeals are used?
  - b. What kind of visual appeals are used?
  - c. What level of design complexity is used in the visuals?
2. How does the Finnish consumer perceive a luxury jewellery brand after being exposed to different message and visual appeals in a social media post?

### 1.2.3 Research methods

A qualitative approach was chosen in order to gain rich, in-depth interpretations from the data (Staller, 2012). Deeper insights rather than numbers are more valuable when the main themes of the study revolve around abstract concepts such as luxury and brand perceptions. The qualitative approach suits this study, since the purpose is to explore how the target group understands and creates meaning, which is usually the focus of qualitative studies (Staller, 2012).

The first part of the data collection is an in-depth, yet small-scale content analysis. This method was chosen, since the materials used are exclusively from the Instagram feeds and the analysis focuses on interpreting the meaning of the post (Krippendorff, 2012), namely trying to detect the appeal used. This part aims to answer the first research question, which is necessary to know before moving on to the next phase since it provides the needed background information and knowledge of the reality of the situation.

The second part of the research aimed to reveal insights of how the different creative strategies used on Instagram influences the Finnish consumers' perceptions of the brand image. This part aims to answer the second research question, and thus meet the main objective of the study. The method chosen for this part is interviews, since the motivation is to find out what the target group perceives. To analyse the interview data, a thematic analysis is chosen as it suits well together with the semi-structured interviews (Ayres, 2012).

## 1.3 Structure of the study

This master's thesis is structured as follows. In the first chapter, different relevant literature is examined, starting with social media content, continuing to luxury branding and eventually reviewing previous studies that investigated how these two function together. A few frameworks in regards of message and visual appeals are reviewed to choose the most suitable one for the purposes of this study. The second chapter presents the methodology of collecting and analysing the data for the research. A content analysis of social media content on Instagram by a selected few Finnish luxury brands and semi-structured interviews utilising a projective technique with the selected target audience. The selection criteria and the processes of both of the methods are discussed in detail. In the third chapter, the results are presented. The results of the content analysis show the most used message and visual appeal used by the Finnish luxury jewellery brands from the test week, and thus reveal the answer to the first research question. The interview data is presented in six different categories, the same categories of the thematic analysis: brand perception, visual appeals, message appeals, Finnish luxury, qualities of luxury, and perceived level of luxury. The fourth chapter, discussion examines and presents possible answers to the main research question. It is examined which message appeal is important to the target group and what kind of

content they wish from luxury brands. Also, it is discussed whether a Finnish brand is too different from international luxury brands in the eyes of the Finnish consumer. The last chapter, conclusion is presented summarising the study, including limitations and future recommendations for these topics.

## 2 LUXURY BRANDS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Before a deeper exploration to the Finnish luxury jewellery brands' Instagram content and the brand perceptions of the target group, it is important to investigate what has been written and studied about the topic to this date. Some specific concepts and themes are covered. Firstly, social media content marketing is explored. Instagram as a social media content platform is discussed as well as past research on creative strategies and aesthetically appealing visual content. Then, the topic of luxury branding is examined. It is explored on a wider scale as well as in terms of the Finnish market. After these two main sections, namely social media content and luxury branding, the two are examined together, such as discussing a previous study on how a luxury brand should create visual content to social media. Following the literature, the methodology of the research is introduced.

### 2.1 Social media content marketing

One could state that as long as there has been marketing, there has been content marketing (Pulizzi, 2012). Content marketing suits the needs and wants of a modern day consumer, since the primary motivation is not to directly sell, but to educate, expose to opinions or entertain the audience (Harad, 2013; Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019) and thus retaining and attracting customers (Pulizzi, 2012). Some of the goals of content marketing are to build a certain brand image, develop and maintain brand communities, and create engaging content that consumers want to interact with (Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019; Pulizzi, 2012).

Content marketing can take many different formats, such as magazines, blogs, podcasts, videos, and other offline or, as currently is more prominent, online media content (Pulizzi, 2012; Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019). The benefits of content marketing on digital platforms are varied, but a few of them are generating electronic word-of-mouth, building trust and credibility, reaching large audiences, and shaping brand communities (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011; Lou, et al., 2019). However, content marketing is not a simple task. Marketers struggle with creating appealing and engaging content that tells the brand story, which attracts the right target audience, while not repeating themselves (Pulizzi, 2012).

Part of the content marketing mix is branded social media content. Social media content plays an important role on telling the brand story, building the brand image, and shaping brand communities (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019; Godey, et al., 2016). Repeated exposure to branded social media content increases positive attitudes towards the brand (Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim,



2019; Godey, et al., 2016), which makes it a powerful brand building tool. Even more, most marketers consider social media as brand building tools first and foremost (Ashley & Tuten, 2015), and therefore, its importance should not be dismissed by brands.

Moreover, brands use several social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, to share their brand stories to appeal to the current customers and to attract prospective customers. This master's thesis focuses on one of these social media, namely Instagram, which is an exceptionally lucrative space for brands to create content and engage with their audience. 53 per cent of Instagram users follow their favourite brands on the platform, which is more than on any other social media platform (Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). Up to one-third of the most viewed Instagram stories are published by businesses and seven out of ten hashtags are branded, meaning Instagram content by brands keeps gaining popularity (Aslam, 2020), and thus ought to be acknowledged and well-maintained part of the social media marketing communications of brands.

To have a well-maintained social media marketing communications, a strategy should be considered. The content marketing strategies created especially for social media might differ from the general ones. Ashley and Tuten (2015) propose three different types. The strategy could be either a part of the whole corporate communication strategy and function as a part of customer relationship management, or they could be part of the integrated marketing communications and support larger marketing campaigns, or they can be applied as "micro-campaigns" to gain online exposure (Ashley & Tuten, 2015), which is common in social media. Besides these strategy considerations, aan 't Goor (2012) discovered two different marketing strategies being used by brands on Instagram. First, emotion strategy, which tries to influence affective beliefs of brands. This could be used by brands, which raise emotions while the customers use the product, such as hedonic products provided by luxury brands (aan 't Goor, 2012; Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). And second, symbolism strategy, which communicates a certain lifestyle and brand attributes brands (aan 't Goor, 2012; Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016), which is also a prominent marketing technique in the luxury world. Luxury brands provide feelings of pleasure to their customers (Latvala, 2013), thus it is important to bring these aspects forward in the marketing communications and branded social media content. But, it is not known whether these kind of strategies are currently employed by the Finnish luxury brands. Additionally, aan 't Goor (2012) proposed an interesting question on whether the traditional marketing strategies, such as the aforementioned emotion or symbolism strategies would even function as wished on social media, or whether more current tactics should be employed, such as presenting exclusive content or increasing brand awareness through tagging or contests (aan 't Goor, 2012). These considerations are still valid in the fast-paced social media world, perhaps some different marketing tactics are currently more effective than the traditional ones.

Moreover, aan 't Goor's (2012) study established that brands should clearly convey their brand identity by placing the brand name, their products, or their logo visibly in the photographs or videos. However, if the brand or product name is in the text of the visual, decrease in likes is apparent (aan 't Goor, 2012). While the study by aan 't Goor provides valid information and knowledge on Instagram content and marketing strategies, it must be realised that in eight years, which are between this study and aan 't Goor's, the social media have already changed as well as the preferred content types. For example, the Instagram Stories-feature was launched in 2016 (Instagram, 2016), and it is now one of the most popular features (Aslam, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to find out what are the preferred strategies or content types by the Finnish consumers, but before that it is important to find out if any of these strategies utilised by Finnish luxury brands.

The discussion about the social media information flood and how to break through it has been a topic in the academic world too. It is known that especially Instagram-users scroll the content feed at a rapid pace (Romão, Moro, Rita, & Ramos, 2019), which further hampers attempts of standing out from the information clutter. However, Instagram being a highly visual social media brings some essential benefits to brands, since visual "cues" are easier for humans to process. The phenomenon can be explained through an information processing system known as heuristic processing. Heuristic cues are received through visuals, making the consumption of information highly automated and requiring low cognitive effort by the human brain. Another name for this could be "short-cut information processing" (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018). This means, and it has been suggested before by academics, that visuals on Instagram could be used as a "stop sign" to pause the users scroll and to incite communication between the brand and the user (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). While visuals have a higher likelihood of standing out from the information flood and to stop the customers' scroll, it is argued that the visual ought to be aesthetically beautiful in order gain favourable and likable attention (Pieters, Wedel, & Batra, 2010), thus not any attention-seeking visual will succeed. These are important considerations when attempting to comprehend what the consumers are looking for in the visuals and what would spark their interest enough to stop their scrolling. Also, Instagram-content is created especially for the consumer: to attract, attain, and entertain them (Pääkkönen, 2016; Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019).

Moreover, the branding aspect in the Instagram content is equally important. While the heuristic cues help the customer with their information processing efforts, the brand should be recognisable due to brand touch points (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018), which shape the brand story in the consumers' minds (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Thus, the brand message or the social media post should not differ too much from the brand image that the customer has of the brand – if the message is too dissimilar, the customer is not able to connect the message with the correct brand, which creates an obscurity in the minds of customers and raises negative emotions associated with the brand (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018). It should also be noted that people are able to make split-second assessments of

the brand by solely viewing the visual using the heuristic processing system or mental rules (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018), thus the visual is an important indicator and an assessment tool for developing brand perceptions.

The text under the visual cannot be forgotten either - it should be used to encourage the customers to engage with the brand (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). There is another information processing model that sheds light to this, namely the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The framework states that people process information in two different manners: either using high-cognitive effort, reading and examining the information with scrutiny, or using low-cognitive effort, making the information consumption process fast and emotion-based (Damiano, 2014). The latter, called peripheral route, is argued to be more persuasive, since it appeals to people's emotions instead of rationale (Damiano, 2014; Lwin & Phau, 2013). To draw to peoples' emotions, the visual as well as the text needs to be produced smartly. It needs to resonate with the customer in order for it to be memorable (Lwin & Phau, 2013) and it needs to use persuasive appeal rather than logical arguments (Damiano, 2014). All of this supports the use of emotion or symbolism marketing strategy, and thus drawing to the hedonistic, emotional side of the consumers when publishing Instagram content for luxury brands.

In summary, visuals have an immense power in gaining the customers' attention and building the brand image. With this, heuristic cues are helping customers to connect the visual with the brand and build the brand story forward in the customers' minds (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). However, this does not exclude the importance of the text in Instagram posts: a persuasive, emotional message, or an appeal is important for customers to confirm if the brand matches with their own values and beliefs (Lwin & Phau, 2013) and to create a bond with the brand and perhaps even encourage customers to engage with the brand (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). To aid the production of emotionally persuasive messages and brand-fitting visuals, the two most popular marketing strategies used on Instagram, symbolic and emotion strategies, are fitting. However, the dilemma of creating suitable content on a continuous basis, while keeping the audience interested and ensuring the content fits with the brand image the customers have, still persists. Even more, the content should be developed the consumer and their preferences in mind, thus it is crucial to discover the perceptions of the Finnish consumers in terms of Instagram-content.

## 2.2 Luxury branding

Before branding efforts can take place, it is important to realise the motivations of consumers to purchase luxury goods. The brands share a common set of symbolic attributes (Park, Im, & Kim, 2015), which are generally described as hedonic

and consumers have roughly two attitudes towards them. The first, value-expressive function implies that people purchase luxury products to project certain values of theirs and to express themselves through the product. For example, conveying a unique or an upscale image of themselves and projecting these values to others. This could be described as more internal motivation. A study by Choi, Seo, Wagner, and Yoon (2018) concluded that consumers with this attitude towards consuming luxury products have a greater purchase intention than the ones with the second type of attitude. The second, social-adjustive function implies that the luxury product is bought to maintain or enhance a certain social status, meaning that one ought to purchase products that match with the products that their peers use. This is more externally sourced motivation (Jin, 2012; Park, Im, & Kim, 2015). Simply put, it is about the image the consumer wants to project, thus the symbolism of the luxury goods and the values need to match with the consumer's – these are the values that the consumer wants to express about themselves and other people to notice about them. The abstract and intangible values of the luxury brands are greatly personal, since the symbolism behind them means different matters to different people. Besides these two symbolic attributes, a functional attribute of higher quality, so called quality value perception is a part of a luxury brand. This allows luxury brands to ask for higher prices for their products (Park, Im, & Kim, 2015). With these motivations in mind and the discovery of internally sourced motivation being more connected with purchase intentions, the importance of creating social media content that draws to the consumers emotions is even greater. It is difficult to incite consumers to see a connection between their and the brands' values if the social media marketing communication is highly informative, rather than appealing to one's emotions (Lwin & Phau, 2013). Yet again, the importance of drawing to the emotional side of the consumers is emphasised by academics, but what remains is to find out whether the Finnish consumers view the emotional messaging and strategies fitting for luxury brands or whether some other kind of social media content is preferred.

Besides reviewing the motivations of consumers to buy luxury goods, it is important to discuss the Finnish culture in the context of luxury and the underlying mental frameworks. The perception of luxury by Finnish people is rather complicated. Finnish hold a peculiar attitude and perception towards luxury, since the cultural background values equality and modesty (Latvala, 2013). This joints back to the past of being self-sustained, which influenced the purchase behaviour patterns: the Finnish acquired goods solely to a genuine need. Simply, frugality was admired and excessive consumption was resented (Pääkkönen, 2016). This can be illustrated with old expressions, such as *“vaatimattomuus kaunistaa”*, which essentially means *“modesty is a virtue”*, or *“ruma se vaatteilla koreilee”*, which translates to *“only ugly people need to dress up”*. These expressions give a preview to the complexities that luxury brands face in Finland: luxury seems rather unimportant and even slightly negative (Latvala, 2013; Nelskylä, 2018).

In addition, the importance of democracy and equality distances the Finnish from luxury, especially in terms of the premium price aspect. It is considered rude to tell about a luxury purchase, directly or indirectly, such as products having visible logos on them. It is thought to be straightforwardly “bragging with money”, even to this date (Nelskylä, 2018). This is contrary to study results from other cultures, where it is accepted to show your wealthiness (Dubois, Laurent, & Czellar, 2001). It is believed that everyone needs to be on the same level and must be considered as equals (Latvala, 2013). If someone has a more expensive luxury item, it means that the equality is disrupted.

However, there is more to luxury than complex feelings and negative perceptions. The core of Finnish luxury is nature, tranquillity, good design, craftsmanship, and most importantly, authenticity. Luxury for the Finnish people is something that is inherited, something that passes on from generation to another, since it is high-quality, timeless, and enduring (Latvala, 2013). Besides this, luxury could mean something that occurs every day: a little moment to appreciate good coffee or a view of nature (Latvala, 2013; Korhonen, 2015). This expands the concept of luxury, meaning not only an expensive diamond ring is luxury, but it can be something highly personal, for example a matter that one truly needs (Nelskylä, 2018). Similarly than elsewhere in the world, the concept of luxury evolves and changes according to the needs of the consumers. However, even the Finnish people are considering the traditional view of luxury, namely expensive, scarce, and high-quality goods such as a diamond ring, as the true luxury (Pääkkönen, 2016).

In general, consumers have become wealthier, which means more consumers can afford to purchase luxury goods. Surprisingly, this has not changed the consumption patterns of Finnish to a great extent. Only a few have luxury products as a part of their everyday lives or purchase them often, which has been claimed to be related to the old way of thinking – only purchasing the goods that one genuinely needs (Pääkkönen, 2016).

Only a few studies have been conducted in the field of Finnish luxury brands and perceptions, from the perspective of the companies (Forstén, 2017), by analysing consumer reports (Pääkkönen, 2016), or reviewing the overall concept and perception of luxury in Finland (Latvala, 2013), and all of them realise that the Finnish have two concepts of luxury. In regards of the first concept, a consensus is achieved: it is the traditional meaning of luxury, historical, expensive, exclusive and perhaps brand-focused. The second one has some overlapping similarities: it is in a closer proximity to the people, namely it is easy to approach or it is part of the daily lives, and it is subjective for the person itself. Some other characteristics were described as non-elitist, relaxed and culturally bound (Forstén, 2017), and moments in everyday life or certain experiences, like travelling or eating in an upscale restaurant (Latvala, 2013; Pääkkönen, 2016). However, the matter has not yet been investigated in the context of social media content and the thoughts, opinions and ideas that arise from that for the Finnish

consumers – do the Finnish consumers notice the two types of luxury brands also through the Instagram-content?

While Finnish consumers are rational, they also seek hedonic purchases and feelings of joy from luxury goods (Pääkkönen, 2016). It is the job of the brand to create the atmosphere and the perception of a brand like that can provide the consumers joyful feelings (Forstén, 2017), and not only the actual purchasers of those goods, but to everyone: without the admiration of non-consumers, the luxury purchase might not feel as a special one (Räty, 2018). Overall, the cultural background ought to be accounted for when considering social media content of Finnish luxury brands and especially the brand perceptions of Finnish consumers, but not forgetting the overarching reason why luxury goods are bought: to bring feelings of pleasure to one's life (Latvala, 2013).

Thus, it can be concluded that Finnish people do not have a traditional perception towards luxury, but a rather complex one. It might be difficult to elude the negativity that Finnish people hold towards luxury. What kind of brand image should be communicated, that tells the consumer about luxuriousness, but not to the extent that the Finnish consumer will not recoil? Also, the brands need to be certain what kind of luxury they are representing: the traditional one or the new, still evolving concept. While the traditional one has more specific brand image around it, the newer concept of luxury might be too subjective for businesses to utilise: how to commercialise a moment of calm in the nature?

## **2.3 Luxury brands' social media content**

Social media content marketing strategies, especially social media content on Instagram and luxury branding have now been discussed separately, but it is also crucial to review them together. The two have been described to have inherently different core values. Luxury brands are exclusive, limited to certain groups, and unique, whereas social media are interactive, open, and inclusive (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018; Park, Im, & Kim, 2015; Okonkwo, 2009). What has been of interest to scholars is the most efficient way of communicating the luxury brands' values in social media, such as exclusivity, when social media content is generally created for the "masses", or scarcity in platforms where an overexposure is a risk (Okonkwo, 2009). Thus, what is a suitable way of communicating the core values of luxury, while adhering to the norms of social media?

One way of communicating a luxurious brand is to create a luxurious atmosphere by the means of social media content (Okonkwo, 2009), which could be achieved for example using emotional messages in social media content. Emotional messages are better to catch people's attention and they are also more memorable, which shapes and builds the brand image in customers' minds (Damiano, 2014; Lwin & Phau, 2013). Most importantly, marketing expensive

goods, such as hedonic and luxury products, the usage of emotional message strategies is recommended (Behboudi, Vazifehdoust, Najafi, & Najafi, 2014), since this might deepen the emotional bond the customer has with the brand (Makkonen, 2012). Moreover, emotional appeals are argued to fit better the social media world, since it is interactive by nature (Lwin & Phau, 2013). However, there has not been a study this in the context of Finland – would the emotional appeal suit the rationally thinking Finnish consumer and could that overcome any possible negativity connected to luxury brands?

Another question that scholars in other countries have tried to explore is what kind of visual content is suitable for luxury brands, for instance whether luxury brands should post visually complex images to catch users' attention. In the offline world, the visuals of luxury goods are generally not complex, meaning the pictures have few objects and are very simplistic. This appears to continue in the social media world, at least in terms of classical luxury brands, but for newer, unknown luxury brands complex visuals were preferred and seen more fitting (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018). Still, the simpler the visual is, the more luxurious it seems (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018), but perhaps the expectations for classic luxury brands are different to the newer ones – consumers have a certain existing brand image for the luxury brands. However, it should be noted that certain visual components can make social media content more appealing to the consumers. For instance, visuals with human faces are more engaging on Instagram (Bakhshi, Shamma, & Gilbert, 2014), which then might not suit the highly simplistic image style of classical luxury brands. It is yet unexplored what visual components are fitting to luxury brands in the eyes of a Finnish consumer, for example does the Finnish consumer consider a classical luxury brand publishing simple, visually less complex images? Also, videos keep gaining popularity and are currently one of the preferred content marketing formats (Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019; Brubaker & Wilson, 2018), but is this content type utilised by Finnish luxury brands?

Besides considering what kind of social media content is suitable for luxury brands, research of luxury branding on social media repeatedly includes theories from psychology. One of these is Construal Level Theory (CLT), which explores the psychological distance consumers feel to certain products (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Simply put, the psychological distance means the proximity or distance a consumer feels to certain product (Park, Im, & Kim, 2015; Trope & Liberman, 2010). There are four different main measures to the distance: Spatial, temporal, social, and hypothetical distance. The higher the perceived distance is, the more abstract the customer feels toward the product, yet the mental images are rather coherent. The lower they are, the closer customers feel to attaining the luxury good and have relatively concrete mental images about the goods. Generally speaking, luxury brands are associated with more abstract mental images (Choi, Seo, Wagner, & Yoon, 2018) and thus the higher psychological distance, the more

luxurious the product will appear (Park, Im, & Kim, 2015). The concept is important to realise how luxurious a product will seem, but it has not been established whether the psychological distance and thus the perceived level of luxury is visible from the social media content in the eyes of Finnish consumers.

Nevertheless, it has been claimed that luxury brands should maintain the psychological distance on social media (Park, Im, & Kim, 2015). For instance, it could be maintained by not engaging with the audience, such as not replying to users' comments (Park, Im, & Kim, 2015). However, this creates a conflict with social media norms: two-way communications and interaction with users is highly encouraged and helps in creation of positive brand image (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018; Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). Are there other ways of communicating psychological distance, for example through social media content?

## **2.4 Methods to study creative strategies in social media**

In order to research the content of luxury jewellery brands on Instagram, it is necessary to decide what components are studied and which frameworks are used for benchmarking purposes and to guide the research. For this purpose, a study by Ashley and Tuten (2015) was found, where they introduced the concept of creative strategy. The core idea of a creative strategy is to draw to the emotion or the cognition of the viewer. The particular design of the creative strategy should create a desired response in the viewer. This concept seems fitting to this research, especially as these strategies have lately been applied in the context of social media content marketing as well (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). The next section discusses the creative strategies as proposed by previous research and introduces the two frameworks that are used to guide this research. For this study, an appropriate division of the creative strategy is visual and message appeal, since those are the main appeals used on Instagram.

Firstly, the visuals in social media are discussed. They could roughly be categorised into photographs, videos, and infographics. However, this rough categorisation does not reveal if the visual is appealing to the eye – in other words is it aesthetically appealing. While it is difficult to judge beauty and attractiveness, certain rules seem to apply to what generally is considered attractive. One of the rules is simply  $M = O/C$ ;  $M$  meaning aesthetic value,  $O$  harmony and unity, and  $C$  complexity. This principle's core idea is that the simpler and ordered the object is, the more beautiful it is (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018). While the principle is simple, it does contain the essence of what is considered aesthetically great looking, but it still lacks objectivity: How to measure this?



The concept of complexity is another manner to measure image's attractiveness. A study by Pieters, Wedel, and Batra (2010) noted two different types of visual complexities and proposed ways to measure those objectively. The first is feature complexity, which refers to dense perceptual features. This is a feature that the marketer cannot affect – the product pictured might have many details and be asymmetrical. Feature complexity can be measured by the file size of the image. The second is design complexity, referring to an elaborate creative design. This type of complexity can be altered by the marketer. Pieters, Wedel, and Batra created a set of six principles to assess the design complexity: Quantity, irregularity, dissimilarity, and detail of objects, and asymmetry and irregularity of object arrangement. The lower the score on these principles, the more aesthetically appealing the visual is and the image leans towards design complexity (Pieters, Wedel, & Batra, 2010).

Moreover, Pieters, Wedel, and Batra studied which one of the complexity types is more useful. They found out that feature complexity is less appealing – the viewer's attention span is short and brand recognition is minimal. Design complexity had an opposite effect – the advertisement was more appealing and comprehensible; thus, it had a more positive effect to the viewer (Pieters, Wedel, & Batra, 2010). Again, the information processing of the viewer creates a difference, the easier it is to comprehend, the more satisfied the viewer will be, which in turn creates a positive response.

In this study, the focus will be reviewing the elaborate design complexity. Not only this is the way a marketer could affect an image's likability factor, but some jewellery designs can be complex. For example, multiple diamonds on a ring could already create a dense perceptual feature. Moreover, it is interesting to review whether the design complexity has the same positive effect in the viewer as it did in the study of Pieters, Wedel, and Batra.

While determining a visual's likability and attractiveness could be a complex task, detecting the message appeal on an Instagram post might be slightly simpler. The basic division of the types of message appeals could be roughly divided in two: the emotional and the functional. But, these two might be too simple to the complex world, and thus several other message appeals have been developed, such as the appeals of resonance, user image, experiential, and so forth (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

To review which is the most suitable way to study the message appeals in this case, several different categorisations and code sheets of message appeals and social media communication means were considered. One of the most applied categorisations, which is used by many academics, is Social media typology presented by Coursaris, Van Osch, and Balogh McKay (2013). It was created after reviewing and comprising the different kind of posts brands publish on social media, such as Heritage, Promotions, and Operations under the category of Brand awareness. It is an extensive list, however it lacks the appeal part, meaning it does not try to investigate what is the objective of the post and what kind of

reaction it tries to incite in the viewer. Another recognised way to divide different message strategies is Taylor's six-segment message strategy wheel, which comprises of two basic 'views'; transmission and ritual, which are both divided into three subcategories each (Taylor, 1999). The transmission view is familiar to functional appeal, since it is based on rational and logical argument, and the ritual view appeals to consumers' egos and their aspirations on how they would like to present themselves (Golan & Zaidner, 2008). However, this categorisation lacks the social media aspect, which is important for this study, since some marketing communication methods only apply in social media, such as call-to-actions to like a post.

The categorisation that was chosen for this research is presented by Ashley and Tuten (2015). Their study on Creative Strategies in Social Media marketing was found to comprise both appeals and social media communications, meaning different appeals and types of posts. The list is extensive, counting in user-generated content and whether there are incentives for the audience to participate in a certain manner, such as voting, liking, or sharing. Also, sales promotions are included, such as contests and discounts, which have been described as suitable marketing tactics for Instagram (aan 't Goor, 2012). But most importantly, the list includes a variety of message appeals, known from the advertisement field: Functional, emotional, experiential, unique selling proposition, comparative, resonance, user image, social cause, exclusivity, animation and spokesperson (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). The mixture of different appeals and the post types, both from the advertising world and social media, creates a great basis to review brands' social media content marketing, since neither is per se advertising nor regular social media posts, but a combination of them both.

## 2.5 Conclusions

Social media content marketing is important in the current business world. Social media platforms keep gaining popularity and more and more businesses are followed in platforms such as Instagram (Aslam, 2020). The possibilities of increasing brand awareness and enhancing the brand communities on social media are vast. However, content creation to social media is complicated – one ought to create new and refreshing content on continuous basis, yet not steer too far from the brand image the consumers have (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011; Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019; Pulizzi, 2012; Ashley & Tuten, 2015). In addition, social media presence for luxury brands is complicated – how to communicate core values of exclusivity, scarcity or other in social media, which is a platform for the masses and overexposure might pose a genuine risk (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018; Park, Im, & Kim, 2015; Okonkwo, 2009), and how to create a luxurious atmosphere by the means of social media content for the Finnish consumers?

Moreover, it is important to underline the often discussed issue of breaking the information flood. One way of accomplishing this is to post appealing visuals, that have heuristic cues which the viewer is able to process effortlessly, and even better, is able to automatically “connect” the visual with the brand (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018; Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018). The text of the post ought to support this effort. It is advised to design the social media posts that viewers would use the peripheral route of information processing, which is more emotion based and uses less cognitive efforts. This type of processing is claimed to create more positive feedback in the viewer – they do not wish to use plenty of cognitive efforts when scrolling on Instagram (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018; Damiano, 2014; Lwin & Phau, 2013; Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018).

While visuals are important for all brands on Instagram, they are even more important to luxury brands. Having high aesthetic standards, luxury brands are known to utilise visual storytelling practises (Romão, Moro, Rita, & Ramos, 2019). Usually, the visual storytelling of luxury brands aims to draw to the emotional side of consumers (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018; Lwin & Phau, 2013). Luxury products are hedonic and consumers have two main motivational functions to purchase them, value-expressive and social-adjustive, which are both emotion-based, rather than rational (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018; Park, Im, & Kim, 2015), and therefore storytelling drawing to the emotions is important for luxury brands.

Furthermore, it has been studied that well-known, classical luxury brands create and publish simple content to social media, such as only displaying the jewellery or other simplistic features (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018). In terms of the design complexity principle by Pieters, Wedel, and Batra (2010) these kind of images are elaborate creative design and should be more likable than complex images.

Although the literature provides an indication on what are the possibilities for luxury brands’ content creation on social media platforms such as Instagram, it is uncertain how these would influence the brand image that the customers obtain, especially in terms of the perceived level of luxury. Especially, studies in regards of the Finnish luxury brands and consumers’ perceptions of those are lacking. It is yet to be defined what kind of content the Finnish consumer considers luxurious or what is considered as suitable content for a Finnish luxury brand.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The research consists of two parts. The first part explored the creative strategies of luxury jewellery brands on Instagram. This sought an answer to the first research question: What different creative strategies are used by Finnish luxury jewellery brands on Instagram? For this purpose, a small-scale, yet in-depth content analysis was the chosen method, to review the message and visual appeals as well as the visual complexity of the image. The second part of the research discovered the perceptions of the luxury jewellery brands, retrieved from those creative strategies. This part answers the second research question: How consumers perceive the visual and textual content in Finnish luxury jewellery brands' Instagram posts? A set of semi-structured interviews was the most suitable option to explore possible outcomes to this question, to examine how these creative strategies influence the brand image of luxury brands in Finland. After this, the connection, relationship, differences, similarities, patterns and so forth are analysed between the perception on the brand image in this niche market and the creative strategies used on Instagram.

#### 3.1 Part 1: Creative strategies of luxury jewellery brands on Instagram

The purpose of the first part of the research was to gain an understanding what kind of creative strategies this niche, the Finnish luxury jewellery brands, are using on Instagram. While the purpose was not to generalise, the in-depth analysis provided insights on the current state of social media content marketing by the brands and what are the content trends in this niche. Thus, the content analysis aims to provide an answer to the first research question:

*What kind of different creative strategies the Finnish luxury jewelry brands employ in their Instagram-posts?*

- a) *What message appeals are used?*
- b) *What types of visuals are used?*
- c) *What is the level of design complexity?*

The data collection and analysis is divided to two aspects, the visual and the textual. See Figure 1 for the simplified Theoretical framework.

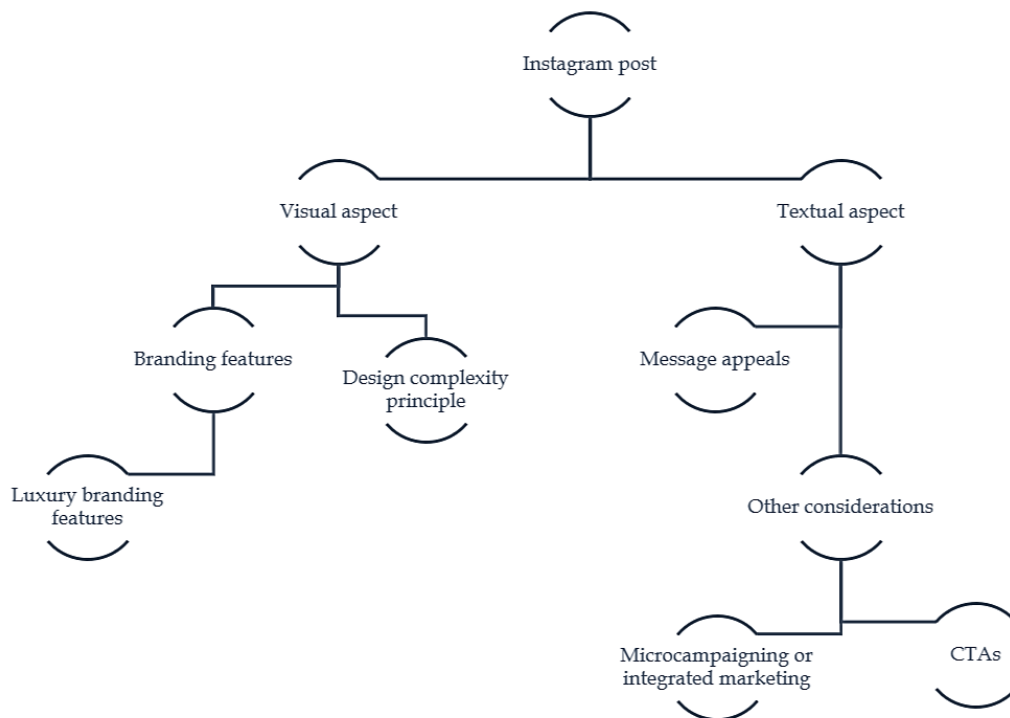


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

### 3.1.1 The analysed brands

It ought to be specified what kind of brands' content was analysed in this part of the research. First, listings of different Finnish jewellery brands were sought, which was found from wedding fairs' exhibitor lists. The selection process commenced by selecting approximately ten Finnish jewellery brands, which websites, Instagram accounts as well as any other social media were examined to gain a thorough image of the brands. Then, it was examined that they create both bridal collections as well as regular jewellery collections. With this it can be ensured that the Instagram content has variety and perhaps the content is directed to different kind of target audiences, meaning not only brides, but also regular customers. Shops or jewellers operated as a one-person business or an individual goldsmith were excluded, since these type of businesses had a limited following on Instagram. It is assumed that the larger the following, the more effort and time is spent on creating content, thus the content could be more thoughtful and branded. This suits the research better since it would provide more fruitful results from the content analysis. After meeting this criteria, approximately five brands remained.

After reviewing the Instagram accounts, Facebook accounts and websites more carefully, a decision was made to choose three different brands. All of the three brands create content on a consistent basis, approximately once a day. These brands also have their followers between 3 000 to 14 000 each, which is quite a large following considering this is a niche market. The brands are classic,

traditional jewellery brands in Helsinki, which all have a physical store located in the expensive city centre, where multiple jewellery stores are residing. Namely, these brands are Oy Tillander Ab, AU3, and Annette Tillander.

One could argue that more brands' content should have evaluated, but this was not the scope of the study. The purpose was to gain an idea and an overview of what kind of content is being published, rather gain a holistic dataset of all the possible content Finnish luxury jewellery brands post. Still, it was crucial to have an idea of the current situation is before the second part of the research commenced in order to provide valuable input for this industry and to analyse and make conclusions based on the reality of the situation. Thus, the number of the brands is limited, but that does not diminish the importance and the quality of the analysis.

Besides these brand level considerations, it ought to be stated that the Finnish market is small and there are not an abundance of luxury jewellery brands. A great illustration for this is the family name Tillander, which is a part of two of these brands' names. Tillander is an old jewellery family and brand, and there are in total of four brands in Finland carrying that name, all of their stores located in the same area in Helsinki city centre.

Table 1: Basic information from the three selected brands

Factors	Oy Tillander Ab	Annette Tillander	AU3
Jewellery collections	Silver label (affordable, everyday jewellery), Red label (diamond jewellery), and Black label (most expensive diamond jewellery)	Wedding, Everyday, Unique, Lapsille (for children), Miehillä (for men)	Wedding & Engagement, Keto, and 21 other design collections (all design collections are named differently)
Website	<a href="https://www.tillander.fi/">https://www.tillander.fi/</a>	<a href="https://www.annettetillander.fi/">https://www.annettetillander.fi/</a>	<a href="https://au3.fi/">https://au3.fi/</a>
Instagram - account	tillander1860	Annettetillander	au3goldsmiths
Number of followers <sup>1</sup>	14,3k	8,1k	3,3k
Other social media	Facebook: 81k followers	Facebook: 20k followers	Facebook: 7,2k followers
Frequency of posts	1-2 a day	1-3 a day, usually 3	1-3 a day
Store location	Keskuskatu 4, 00100 Helsinki	Mikonkatu 2, 00100 Helsinki	Unioninkatu 27, 00100 Helsinki

### 3.1.2 Data collection

To conduct the content analysis, 57 visuals and 35 texts were collected from Instagram. The visuals and the texts of the posts were captured by screenshots and

<sup>1</sup> Data of follower numbers was retrieved in November 2019.

the content analysis took place immediately upon the capturing of them. The number of visuals is higher due to the use of carousel post functionality, which allows Instagram users to add multiple visuals to a post. However, a post cannot have multiple texts, thus the number of texts analysed is equal to the number of posts.

The collected posts were all published during week 46, Monday 11<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2019. This could be called a snapshot approach, only focusing on a static moment in social media (Pauwels, 2012). The week was randomly picked, however it was less complicated to focus on more recent posts, since this assured that the posts as well as the social media strategies were current. A week's worth of posts was considered sufficient to understand what the most used appeals by these brands are, since the brands post once to thrice a day, which provided plenty of material for the analysis. All of the posts published during the week 46 by all the three brands was collected.

The content collection and analysis took place between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and it occurred simultaneously. First, Tillander's content was captured by screenshots on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, totalling to 9 posts and 17 visuals. Then, AU3's content was captured and analysed on two separate dates, the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> December. During the week 46, AU3 published 10 posts, containing 22 visuals. Lastly, Annette Tillander's Instagram content was captured and analysed on the 12<sup>th</sup> December. They published 16 posts and in total of 18 visuals.

### 3.1.3 Data analysis

The method of content analysis was chosen as the most suitable approach to analyse the social media content, albeit not conducting it in a traditional way but rather analytical. A traditional content analysis is widely used approach by other academics to analyse published content as such and when the content itself ought to provide an answer to your research question, without needing external data sources (Krippendorff, 2012). This is true to this first part of the research: the answer to the first research question is to be found from the Instagram content. Besides this, one of the main reasons of choosing content analysis is the ability to explore "the anticipated effects of available communications, hence not yet present" (Krippendorff, 2012), which cannot be retrieved by, for example, direct observation. When trying to detect the visual and textual appeal of the social media post, it important to consider what the posted sought with the post and what is the anticipated effect there. While this traditional approach is rather extensive, it might discard the aspect of collecting in-depth and rich data, which is important for this research.

Thus, other methods needed to be considered than only traditional content analysis, since the content analysis for the purposes of this research was rather in-depth and analytical. Pauwels suggested a six-step approach to analyse websites and their cultural aspects. Although it cannot be utilised in the manner it was initially meant for since cultural aspects are not studied in this research, it provides guidelines to collect thorough and rich data from a digital source

(Carneiro & Johnson, 2014), and thus suits the needs of this research better than the traditional method of content analysis. All the six steps of the multimodal framework are not applicable for this research, but the first three steps were adopted to some degree: “Preservation of the first impressions and reactions, Inventory of salient features and topics, and In-depth analysis of content and formal choices” (Pauwels, 2012). In the first step, the initial impressions are noted, which can be also a rather qualitative exercise, such as attractiveness of the accounts’ content. In the second step reviews and records the most important parts (Pauwels, 2012). Using a code sheet when recording the data is suggested, and thus two separate code sheets are used to analyse the two main components of the Instagram posts. The first part analyses the visual aspects of which coding largely depended on Pieters, Wedel, and Batra’s (2010) study and framework of design complexity principle (see Table 3). The second part analysed its textual aspects, to which a code sheet from Ashley and Tuten’s (2015) study on creative strategies was utilised (see Table 7). These were the main units of analysis – the two parts of an Instagram post. While Pauwels (2012) suggests conducting a negative analysis, noting down all the features or aspects that should be present but are not, it is not a valid analysis for this research, since it was unknown what should be presented in the content. The third step of Pauwels’ approach is the in-depth analysis of the content, which was also adjusted for the needs of the study. Pauwels and Carneiro & Johnson used this to analyse cultural signifiers and other connections in the data, but in this research the focus was in the visual complexity and message appeals. This step is completed in the Results -chapter.

This part of the research provided materials for the interviews and a “benchmark” for analysing those interview results. Simply, it was important to detect, for example a functional message appeal in order to connect the interview results to specific parts on the social media posts. Without this, the interview results could not be connected to a specific feature in the social media post and making the results not useful.

### **3.1.3.1. Analysis of visual appeals**

As established previously, the first element an Instagram user notices in the platform is the visual, or the “stop sign” (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018), and thus this analysis also commenced from the visual elements. Several functions of the visual were reviewed to have a solid understanding of the current state of the social media content marketing practises in the Finnish market by jewellery luxury brands. The main feature of this analysis was determining the level of design complexity (see Figure 1), which was adopted from the study of Pieters, Wedel, & Batra (2010). Another feature was adopted from Lee, Hur, & Watkins’s (2018) study who applied the design complexity principle to the luxury brand world and to social media. They examined what effects the visual complexity might have with brand familiarity, which are similar concepts to the ones being studied here, and discovering what type of visual content is connected to what kind of brand. Additionally, the visual design complexity provides a great starting point



and a benchmark for reviewing the connection between the visual and the brand perception. For example, is a simple looking image also connected to a traditional luxury brand by the Finnish consumers like Lee, Hur, and Watkin's study concluded? And even more so, is that type of visual something that is preferred on Instagram by the Finnish?

The visual content analysis was completed brand by brand. At first, the account was reviewed as a whole. Was there a rhythm in the visuals' order? Did the outlook create a cohesive pattern? Did they utilise Instagram stories and have those attached in the highlights? These aspects were reviewed in order to explore whether the luxury brands are conducting their social media content strategies utilising all the possible tools and thus, are they 'trendy' and current with their social media practises. This gathers the first impressions as suggested by Pauwels.

Then, the visuals themselves were reviewed in more detail, one by one. In the Table 3, the coding of the visuals and the Instagram-account's visual look is compiled. The table was used for every single visual, to keep the data analysis coherent. The first step of the analysis was to note the type of content a photograph, video, or infographic (is there written text in the picture itself and is that written text a main feature in the image). This was noted in order to review what content type was preferred by the brands. The second step was to detect the content of the visuals: whether the visual has a model, a regular person, or parts of the body, such as a hand with a bracelet on the wrist. In the third step, the background the image had was noted. The second and third steps reflect the study of Lee, Hur, & Watkins (2018), which states that the more classic and traditional the brand is, the less it uses human figures and more plain background. The fourth step examined other branding aspects: are there brand colours or even a logo in the visual? This point moderately joints back to the study of aan 't Goor (2012), where it was established that an image on Instagram receives more likes when the brand is visible from the picture in some manner. This step complies with Pauwels' second step of the inventory of salient features, recording the contents by using a code sheet.

After gaining an impression on the visuals on a general level, the design complexity, meaning the aesthetics of the visual, are determined. The analysis is completed by using the design complexity principle by Pieters, Wedel and Batra as the framework (see Figure 2).

Table 2: Coding for the visual aspects

The outlook of the account	Pattern? Rhythm?
Feed / Highlighted stories / IG TV	What they use?
<b>Type of post:</b>	<b>Explanation:</b>
Photo / video / infographic	What it is?
<b>Luxury branding aspects:</b>	<b>Explanation:</b>
Model / Person	What is shown? What is the situation?
Product alone	How is it presented?
Background	Monochrome (dark/light), something else?
<b>Other brand aspects:</b>	<b>Explanation:</b>

Logo	Visible?
Colours used	Brand colours?
<b>Design complexity:</b>	<b>Explanation:</b>
Quantity of objects	Number of objects. The less there are, the lower the score on design complexity.
Irregularity of objects	The shape of objects: regular receives a low score or irregular receives a high score.
Dissimilarity of objects	The shape, colour, orientation, and texture of the objects. Similar receives a low score, dissimilar receives a high score.
Detail of objects	The visual details, including edges, colour, texture. Less details receive a low score, many details receive a high score.
Asymmetry of the object arrangement	If the objects are arranged symmetrically, the visual receives a low score, and vice versa.
Irregularity of the object arrangement	If the spatial arrangement of the objects is regular, the visual receives a low score, and vice versa.

The design complexity principle consists of six principles: quantity, irregularity, dissimilarity, and detail of objects, and asymmetry and irregularity of the object arrangement (Pieters, Wedel, & Batra, 2010). These matters are inspected from the image, and a score of low, medium, or high is given to the aesthetics of the visual, after seeing how many of the principles are “checked”. With the help of these, the design complexity “score” of the visual can be determined and the lower the score is, the more aesthetically beautiful it is. While conducting the analysis, it was realised that some visuals fall in between the categories of Low, Medium, and High, and are thus placed “in between”.

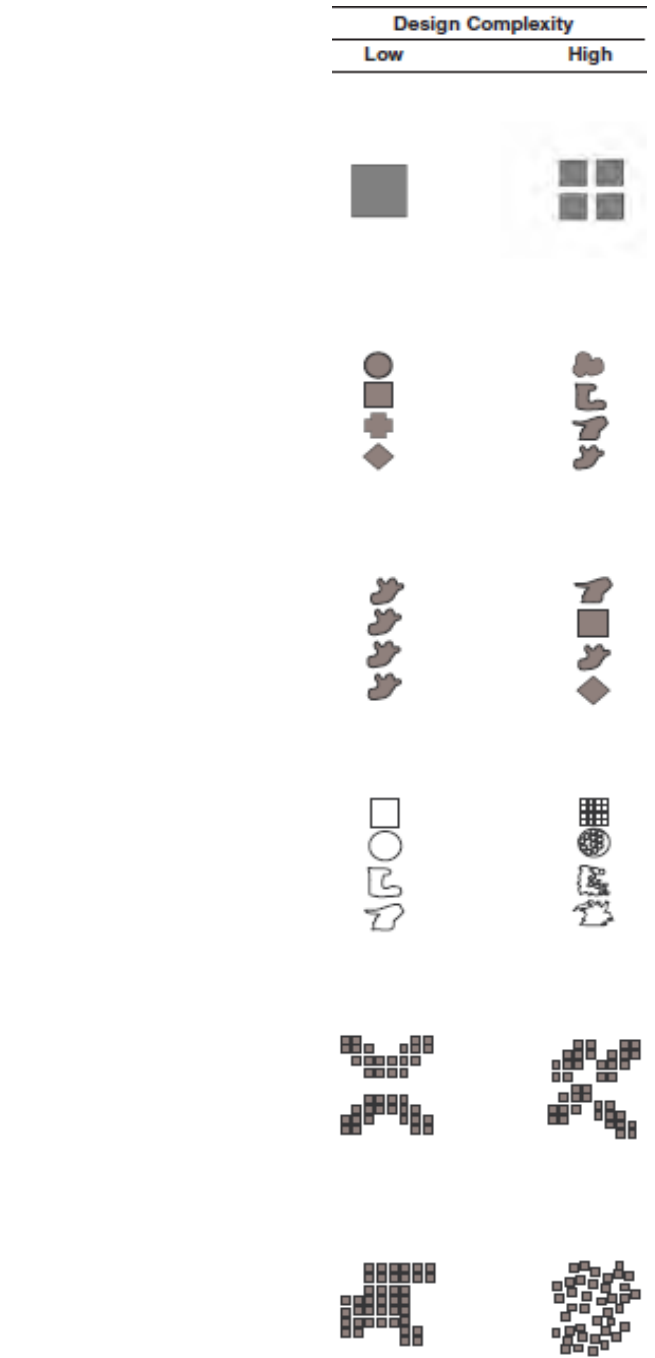


Figure 2: Adopted from Pieters, Wedel, and Batra (2010): the Design Complexity Principle

In Tables 3, 4 and 5 are two examples from each brands' visuals and how these were analysed.

Table 3: Example analysis of Annette Tillander's visuals in two posts



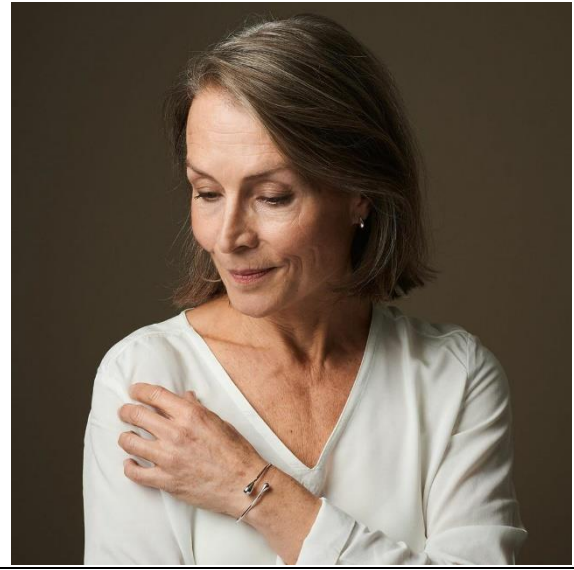
Posted on:	13 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	13 <sup>th</sup> November 2019
Content type:	Photo	Photo
Luxury branding aspects:	Ring in a silk covered ring box. Product alone, but not against a monochrome background.	Model, but no visibility on face. Focus on her chest, with pearls hanging from her neck and an arm wrapped around herself. White and light colours, not much background visible. The grey shirt is more of the background.
Other brand aspects:	Yes, logo visible in the picture.	Yes, earthy colours (grey).
Quantity of objects:	2	5
Irregularity of objects:	Low	Low
Dissimilarity of objects:	Medium	Medium
Detail of objects:	Low	Medium
Asymmetry of the object arrangement:	Medium	High
Irregularity of the object arrangement:	Medium	High
Design complexity score:	Medium to Low	Medium to High

Table 4: Example analysis of AU3's visuals in two posts



Posted on:	11 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2019
Content type:	Photo / Infographic	Photo (the 6 <sup>th</sup> image of a carousel of 9)
Luxury branding aspects:	No model, but several products from the Keto-jewellery line, creating a catalogue feeling. White, monochrome background.	Not a model, regular setting. Seems like the head-designer is in the photo, in their store explaining something to a customer.
Other brand aspects:	Logo in right top corner and name of the product line in top middle. White background, which seems to be a brand colour (logo has white).	Not visible, except the head designer.
Quantity of objects:	11	High
Irregularity of objects:	High	High
Dissimilarity of objects:	High	High
Detail of objects:	High	High
Asymmetry of the object arrangement:	Medium	High
Irregularity of the object arrangement:	Low	High
Design complexity score:	High	High

Table 5: Example analysis of Tillander's visuals in two posts



Posted on:	16 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	15 <sup>th</sup> November 2019
Content type:	Photo	Photo
Luxury branding aspects:	Three rings against a black background, reflections of the rings. Two "standing", third horizontal.	Model with a bracelet and earrings. Model is more mature, and looks to bottom left corner. Monochrome, brownish background.
Other brand aspects:	Yes, black background (black in the logo too).	No - earthy colours not part of the brand colours.
Quantity of objects:	3	5
Irregularity of objects:	Low	Medium
Dissimilarity of objects:	Low	High
Detail of objects:	Medium	Medium
Asymmetry of the object arrangement:	Low	Medium
Irregularity of the object arrangement:	Low	Low-medium
Design complexity score:	Low	Medium

By determining the design complexity score it aids in understanding how aesthetically beautiful the visual is in theory. It also indicates how the visual might be processed by the consumers. Low score means the visual is quickly understood by the consumer, using little cognitive effort, while high score requires more cognitive effort. Also, this data can be utilised to review whether the study results of Lee, Hur, & Watkins (2018) also apply in Finland, namely will the

images with low visual design complexity score be connected with a classical luxury brand or not.

Through analysing the visuals, it became easier to understand what kind of style and type of images are posted by the Finnish luxury jewellery brands. For instance, are they relying on studio photography or more “homey” looks. This connects with the brand image they are communicating and it is used as a benchmark when reviewing the results from the second part of the research.

### **3.1.3.1. Analysis of message appeals**

After analysing the visual aspects, the text and especially the message appeal were analysed. This is also a part of Pauwels’ second step, inventory of the salient features. The message strategies of the Instagram posts were reviewed based on Ashley & Tuten’s code sheet of creative strategies in their study of Creative strategies in social media marketing (2015). The study explored how the different message strategies influence processing, engagement or other important brand outcomes, such as brand loyalty and equity. They are also focused in the branding aspect, although Ashley and Tuten held a higher importance for the role of engagement and communication between the brand and the consumer, which in the case of luxury brands is not extremely relevant (Park, Im, & Kim, 2015). Overall, the study by Ashley and Tuten has been a great source of information and was one of the main inspirations for this research. Due to all of this, their code sheet of the different creative strategies deemed useful and suitable for this study as well.

The categorisation by Ashley & Tuten’s study was modified for the uses of this study. The aspect of animation is excluded, since this was examined in the visual appeal analysis. User-generated content was dismissed: the purpose of the study is to review the content produced and published by the brand, thus user-generated content is not in the scope of analysis. And what comes to sales promotion: it is not a common practise in the world of luxury brands to hold sales or provide discounts (Keller, 2009). Thus, a new aspect of sales promotion & user-generated content -aspects was created, which inspected what call-to-action, if any, the post uses.

Three different steps were taken to analyse the text. The first step was to inspect the possible appeal. This step is similar to the one of Ashley and Tuten’s study. The wording was important in order to understand the appeal of the text. For example, functional appeals were straight-forward, simple texts mainly explaining the details of the jewellery, such as the name of the collection or materials. If this was the case, the appeal was functional.

The second step was to review whether the post might be a part of a larger campaign or whether it is just a singular post. This links to brands having three different ways of conducting social media. First possible strategy is the integrated one: social media is a part of the whole marketing communications strategy. Second, a continuity and CRM -strategy, which means using social media as a communication tool to deliver the brand messages. Last, micro-campaigning,

which means posting a series of content related to the same topic, but not necessarily fitting to the larger scale strategy the company conducts. These generally have short-term marketing objectives (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Since it was difficult to differentiate between the first and second approach as they both have long-term goals, it was simply reviewed whether the post seems like a loose, singular one, or whether it matches some other posts and thus could be a part of a long-term strategy. This was rather difficult task when the posts examined were just from a week's time, but some patterns or possible marketing campaigns were detected. For instance, AU3 mentioned in three posts that the prices would increase after Christmas and encourage the viewers to make orders before 25<sup>th</sup> November. Thus, this was marked as a marketing campaign (see Table 7).

The third and last step assessed whether the text includes a CTA, that is, does it incite the user to do something? This is a common practise in social media – usually the user is directed towards a preferred action, such as a “like” or “click the link, or are encouraged to engage with the brand, for example by asking a question.

In the Table 6 below, the analysed aspects are compiled.

Table 6: Code sheet of message strategies and appeals

Type of appeal	Explanation:
Functional	Rational appeal, drawing to the logic. Mainly including the product details or other information.
Emotional	Emotional appeal, drawing to the emotions. Usually using strong imagery. Can be both positive and negative.
Experiential	How the product will feel once being used?
Unique selling point	Is the USP brought up in the post?
Comparative	Is the brand or product compared to a competitor?
Resonance	Is the message and visual referring to one another?
User image	Is the user's own image appealed to? For example, something about their own personality.
Social cause	Different charity causes
Exclusivity	“only today” or limited supply
Spokesperson/endorsement	Is an influencer used?
<b>Integrated content</b>	Explanation:
Part of a marketing campaign	Is there a pattern, would the post be a part of a campaign?
A singular post	Does it seem that the post is just a singular, “random” post?
<b>Call-to-action</b>	Explanation:
Sales promotion: Discounts	A discount or sales either at webstore or physical store
Sales promotion: Click / visit	Incites to visit a webstore or physical store
Invitation to engage: Like / Share / Comment / Vote	Is the user encouraged to engage with the post?
Invitation to engage: Participation to a competition	Is there a competition and in which way the user can participate?



Invitation to engage: Participation in some other way, for instance UGC	Is the user encouraged to share their own content or share their own stories?
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The first step, determining the appeal, was the most challenging due to the variety of combinations and levels of intensity of the appeals. In some appeals, it was to detect two appeals, but to decide which appeal is more prominent in the text. In Figure 3, the functional appeal by Annette Tillander does have a hint of emotional appeal with the imagery text of “lovely colours”, but since the functional appeal is still more prominent, it is marked as a functional appeal. Figure 4 gives another example of a mixed case; AU3’s invitation to “showroom” days in different cities. This appeal is functional too, but with the “only today” effect and having the designer present at the visits, the appeal was determined to have more of an exclusivity appeal. In Figure 5, the last case of an example is a text where the user image is drawn to, stating all of us have a little princess within, but at the same describing the product details of the ring: Fancy shapes Princess cut. While this appeal seems rather equal on both user image and functional appeals, it was evaluated that the play of words of princess leans more to the user image than to a functional appeal.

annettetillander Lovely colours!

Stirrup earrings  
In 18ct yellow gold 890€  
Silver 198€

Unique pendant, Perla Dressyr  
3800€

Annette Tillander Everyday  
Annette Tillander Unique  
Collections

Mikonkatu 3 Helsinki  
www.annettetillander.fi

Figure 3: **Example of a functional appeal**

**au3goldsmiths** Ensi lauantaina 16.11. klo 10-16 Keto koruja esitellään Oulun Korussa, Kirkkokatu 19, Oulu! Paikalla kultaseppä Jussi Louesalmi, ja runsas valikoima Keto korumalliston koruja. Tervetuloa!

Tampereella Timanttiset Ratinaassa, Keto korujen esittelypäivä on la 23.11. klo 12-18 (Huom! Aiemmin ilmoitimme väärän pvm:n). Tervetuloa tapaamaan Jussia ja kokeilemaan Keto koruja Ratinaan, Vuolteenkatu 1, Tampere, parin viikon päästä!

Unioninkadun putiikki Helsingissä palvelee lauantaisin normaalisti klo 11-16. \*

\*\*  
\*

Next Saturday, 16th November, Keto jewelry will be presented in Oulun Koru, Kirkkokatu 19, Oulu, at 10am-4pm! Goldsmith Jussi Louesalmi and a good selection of Keto Meadow jewelry will be present. Welcome!

Tampere folks: Keto Meadow jewelry event will be held in Timanttiset Ratina, Tampere on sat 23rd November at 12am - 6pm (Ps. We previously informed with a wrong date). Welcome to meet Jussi and try on the beautiful Keto jewelry in Ratina, Vuolteenkatu 1, Tampere, in a couple of weeks!

Our shop at Unioninkatu 27, Helsinki is open on Saturdays as usual, from 11am-4pm. \*

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\*

Au3 Kultasepät / Au3 Goldsmiths  
Unioninkatu 27, Helsinki  
Avoimna ma-pe klo 11-18, la klo 11-16.  
Open mon-fri 11am-6pm, sat 11am-4pm.  
au3@au3.fi  
www.au3.fi

Figure 4: Example of an exclusivity appeal

**tillander1860** Kaikissa meissä asuu pieni prinsessa 😊  
Tillander Fancy shapes Princess cut. #tillander... lisää

Translation:

We all have a little princess within. Tillander  
Fancy shapes Princess cut.

Figure 5: Example of a user image appeal

While in these example cases it was possible to determine which appeal was more prominent, in most cases the text included a mix of two or even three appeals. In these cases, all the detected appeals were noted. An example of this can be seen in Figure 6.

**annettetillander** Beautiful romantic and feminine rings!

AneMy Rae  
AneMy Lux Chrys  
Alexandra  
Celena  
AneMy  
Annette Tillander Wedding  
Annette Tillander Unique  
Annette Tillander Luxury  
Collections

Mikonkatu 3 Helsinki  
www.annettetillander.fi

Annette Design & Photo

Appeal: **Emotional** and **Functional**.

First phrase indicates an emotional appeal by its imagery text and use of adjective. But the latter part is highly functional: names of the rings and the address of the store.

**tillander1860** ❤️Eternal love❤️ 091 solitaire+ eternity ring and complete with a tennisbracelet. #keskuskatu #malloftripla #onlineshop

Appeal: **Emotional** and **Functional**.

'Eternal love' is a sign of drawing to the feelings of the viewer. The product details are a functional appeal.

**au3goldsmiths** Ihan uusi Keto sydän kaulakoru \*Inspired by LOVE\*

Aika söpö!

Materiaalit 750 valkokulta ja värikkäät safiirit 0,81ct. Design Jussi Louesalmi. Hinta 2090€. Tämän ihanuus nähtävillä Oulun Korussa, Kirkkokatu 19, Oulu, esittelypäivässä lauantaina 16.11. klo 10-16!

Ps.Muistathan tilata jouluksi tarkoitetut korulahjat 25.11. mennessä! \*

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\*

Brand new Keto Meadow heart necklace \*Inspired by LOVE\* So cute!

Materials 750 white gold, colorful sapphires, 0,81ct. Design Jussi Louesalmi. Price 2090€.

You can see also this beauty in jewelry event in Oulun Koru, Kirkkokatu 19, Oulu, on sat 16th Nov 10am-4pm!

Ps.Remember to order Christmas jewelry gifts by November 25th! \*

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Au3 Kultasepät / Au3 Goldsmiths

Unioninkatu 27, Helsinki

Avoimna ma-pe klo 11-18, la klo 11-16.

Open mon-fri 11am-6pm, sat 11am-4pm.

au3@au3.fi

www.au3.fi

Appeal: **Emotional**, **Functional**, and **Exclusivity**.

Description of emotions when the jewellery was designed indicates emotional appeal. Product details are a part of functional appeal. Invitation to the showroom day demonstrates an exclusivity appeal.

**tillander1860** Helsingin Sanomissa sivuilla A 18-19 hyvä juttu yrityksemme historian alkuvaiheista. Toimintamme alkoi Pietarissa jo vuonna 1860. Helsingin sanomien lisäksi voit lukea historiasta verkkosivuiltamme [www.tillander.fi](http://www.tillander.fi). #tillander

Translation:

In the newspaper Helsingin Sanomat in pages A18-19 is a good article of our company's history's first phases. Our operations started in St. Petersburg already in year 1860. Besides the Helsingin Sanomat article, you can read about our history from our website [www.tillander.fi](http://www.tillander.fi).

Appeal: **USP** and **Resonance**.

Tillander's USP is their long history and being one of the first jewellery crafters in Finland. Resonance was apparent from the image: the newspaper article on a table with a coffee cup by its side. Simply, the article that was mentioned in the text was also in the image.

Figure 6: Examples of mixed appeals

Furthermore, there were also simpler cases of detecting the message appeals, namely when the text had only one message appeal and not several. In the below Figure 7 two examples are displayed.

tillander1860 'Älä pelkää kohdata uutta, älä yritä sitä hallita. Sinä olet elämän lapsi, eikä sinun tietäsi ole vielä kukaan kulkenut. Tillander Silver Label Via -korusarja.' #tillander #verkkokauppa #malloftripla #keskuskatu

Translation:

'Do not be afraid to face the new, and do not try to control it. You are a child of life, and no one has travelled your path.' Tillander Silver Label Via -jewellery collection

Appeal: **Emotional**

The text is a poem and uses imagery text.

au3goldsmiths Bloggaaja Umppu eli Ulla-Riitta Koskinen kävi ihastelemassa Keto koruja. Käy lukemassa juttu blogista: [www.umppu.vaiuttajamedia.fi](http://www.umppu.vaiuttajamedia.fi) tai hyppää mukaan instan kautta: @umppu Terveisiä Tampereelle!

Translation:

Blogger Umppu, Ulla-Riitta Koskinen, came to admire the Keto-jewellery. Go read the story from the blog: [www.umppu.vaiuttajamedia.fi](http://www.umppu.vaiuttajamedia.fi) or jump in on IG: @umppu Greetings to Tampere!

Appeal: **Endorsement**

The post is about an influencer visiting the store.

Figure 7: **Examples of unambiguous appeals**

The second step of the research reviewed whether the post was part of a campaign or just a singular post. The only brand that repeatedly advertised a matter in their texts was AU3, see Figure 8 for an example. The third step looked at the possible CTAs in the texts, and the text presented in Figure 8 could be counted in as a CTA as well; a recommendation to order Christmas presents. Also, Tillander utilised some CTAs, but in a different manner than AU3. They mainly asked questions from the viewers and thus, encouraged them to engage by commenting. An example of this can be seen in Figure 9.

**au3goldsmiths** Au3 Kultasepät työn touhussa.  
Jos olet aikeissa tilata laadukkaita korulahjoja jouluksi, tee tilaus 25.11. mennessä!  
Samalla voit hyödyntää edullisemmat hinnat. Korujemme hinnat nousevat joulun jälkeen kullan, palladiumin ja jalokivien hintojen nousun takia. \*

\*\*  
\*

Au3 Goldsmiths at work.  
If you are planning to give high quality jewelry gifts for Christmas, make your order by 25th November!  
Also take advantage of cheaper prices: Our jewelry's prices will rise after Christmas due to higher gold, palladium and gemstone costs. \*

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\*

Au3 Kultasepät / Au3 Goldsmiths  
Unioninkatu 27, Helsinki  
Avoimma ma-pe klo 11-18, la klo 11-16.  
Open mon-fri 11am-6pm, sat 11am-4pm.  
au3@au3.fi  
www.au3.fi

#au3kultasepät #au3goldsmiths #korut #koru #jewelry #jewellery #smycken #lahja #gift #present #gåva #keto #kultaseppä #goldsmith #design #jussilouesalmi #joulukorut #christman #jul #lahjajaiselle #giftforme #joululahja #christmaspresent #julkalpp #torikorttelit #helsinki

12. marraskuuta

**au3goldsmiths** Seuraava Keto korujen esittelypäivä on Timanttiset Ratinassa, Tampereella jo ensi lauantaina 23.11. klo 12-18. Nähdään siellä! Osoite: Kauppakeskus Ratina, Vuolteenkatu 1, Tre.  
Ps. Iso kiitos kaikille Oulun Korussa viime viikonloppuna käyneille Keto koruasiakkaille!  
Kuvassa: Keto korvakorut, materiaalit 750 valkokulta, värilliset safiirit. Hinta, pitkä malli 1350€/kpl, lyhyt malli 1285€/kpl.

Muistathan tehdä joululahjaksi tarkoitetut korutilaukset 25.11. mennessä! Samalla hyödynnät alemmat hinnat, korujemme hinnat nousevat joulun jälkeen kullan, palladiumin ja jalokivien hintojen nousun takia. \*

\*\*  
\*

Next Keto jewelry event is already this week saturday 23rd November at 12am-6pm. Welcome to Timanttiset Ratina in Tampere, Vuolteenkatu 1. See You there!  
Ps. Thank You all who visited Keto jewelry event in Oulun Koru last weekend!  
In the image: Keto Meadow earrings, materials: 750 white gold, sapphires. Long model, price 1350€ / each, shorter model, price 1285€ / each.

Remember to order the Christmas gift jewelry by 25th November! Also take advantage of cheaper prices: Our jewelry's prices will rise after Christmas due to higher gold, palladium and gemstone prices. \*

\*\*  
\*

Au3 Kultasepät / Au3 Goldsmiths  
Unioninkatu 27, Helsinki  
Avoimma: ma-pe klo 11-18, la klo 11-16.  
Open: mon-fri 11am-6pm, sat 11am-4pm.  
au3@au3.fi

Figure 8: Example of a marketing campaign in AU3's text

**tillander1860** Rakastettu mallimme 054 sivukivillä rungossa tai ilman. Voisiko tämä sormus koristaa sinun sormeasi 😊  
#tillander #keskuskatu #malloftripla #verkkokauppa

Translation:

Our beloved model 054 with or without sidestones in the frame. Could this ring decorate your finger

**tillander1860** Pinkit, keltaiset vai kirkkaat?  
JS016-timanttisormus 18 karaatin kierrätettyä valkokultaa.  
#tillander #keskuskatu #malloftripla #verkkokauppa

Translation:

Pink, yellow or clear? JS016-diamond ring with 18 carat recycled white gold.

Figure 9: Examples of CTAs in Tillander's texts

## 3.2 Part 2: Perceptions of luxury jewellery brands on Instagram

Following the content analysis, a set of interviews were conducted with the target group. The purpose of the interviews was to reveal deeper, more focused insights in terms of brand perceptions and other aspects in regards of different creative strategies. Such as, is there a connection between the visual and the textual appeal and does a specific strategy influence the brand perception in a specific way; are there some attributes that create a luxurious image of a brand; and what luxury aspects are important to the Finnish customers in social media posts? Thus, the interviews aim to answer the second research question and to shed light to the main objective of the study:

*How does the Finnish consumer perceive a luxury jewellery brand after being exposed to different message and visual appeals in a social media post?*

The fruits of the content analysis paved way for the interview planning. It was necessary to understand and discover what the current situation is before analysing, suggesting, or interpreting how the content marketing strategies in this niche are functioning with the intended target audience. Besides this, the data collected functioned as the main component for the interviews and thus had an important, yet practical role in this research.

### 3.2.1 Data collection

Interview as a method is a fitting approach when the research is qualitative by nature: the motivation is to find out what the target group perceives (Staller, 2012). Additionally, the purpose was to derive insights and information from the interviews, which is an inductive approach to the research data, and which is essential in qualitative research (Staller, 2012).

It was decided to conduct semi-structured interviews. They have certain topics that are discussed in the interview, rather than ready-formulated questions or specific set of questions that are asked from every interviewee (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). The intention is to have the discussion to flow naturally, while the interviewer sometimes redirects the discussion to the predetermined themes (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). This interview approach was chosen, since it provides a more lucrative setting for unprecedented insights from the interviewees, but keeps the discussion on pre-selected topics (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008) of luxury jewellery brands and their Instagram content. The aim is to have the interviewee freely speaking about what matters to them rather than guide the discussion to any direction, but still keeping the focus on the research topics.

The target group of the interviewees was Finnish females aged 25 to 45, which is the demographic group that purchases the most luxury goods (Buckle, 2019). They needed to own at least one luxury item, are interested in luxury brands on some level, and have an Instagram -account. The sample was gathered by using personal contacts as well as snowball-sampling.

The sample consists of 11 interviewees in total. More than 10 interviews seemed like a suitable amount for a master's thesis and fitted the time constraints and other restrictions, such as possible interviewees' busy schedules that were present.

While it could be argued that majority of luxury jewellery is actually bought by men, for example engagement rings, at the same it can be argued that the men are not likely following luxury jewellery brands on Instagram. In fact, majority of the Instagram users are female (Aslam, 2020). And thus, only females were interviewed.

The sample is presented in Table 7, in the chronological order in which the interviews were conducted.

**Table 7: The interview sample (presented in chronological order)**

	Age
Interviewee A:	26
Interviewee B:	28
Interviewee C:	25
Interviewee D:	26
Interviewee E:	30
Interviewee F:	27
Interviewee G:	31
Interviewee H:	36
Interviewee I:	45
Interviewee J:	45+
Interviewee K:	27

The interviews were held from December 2019 to January 2020. They were held in a variety of settings: at the homes of the interviewees, their offices, or most popularly in cafes. A relaxed setting was meaningful for the interviewees being able express themselves at ease, thus the interviewee was prompted to share their preference for the location.

All of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. It deemed important to be physically present with the interviewees, in order to catch the expressions of non-verbal communication. The cues of non-verbal communication are important in case the interviewee is not expressive or there is a matter that they discard to mention in their explanation, but clearly created a reaction in them (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). For this research, it was important to notice when an interviewee would stop by an image, but not comment on it. In these cases, the interviewer would know to ask about the image later on, such as what did they thinking about or viewed when pausing there.

As mentioned previously, the Instagram-posts that were collected during the first part of the research were used in the interviews. However, not all of the posts were used. A selection of the posts was made, with varied levels of design complexity and different features in the image itself, to have a variety of different kind of images presented. Same applied for the texts, all the message appeals and different CTAs that the brands used were represented in the selected posts. The posts were anonymised: no brand name, logo, designer, address, or any other indicator towards the brand were visible. Also, some aspects of the texts were adjusted or removed – in order to analyse what different perceptions those created. For example, if many texts included a Finnish and English text, in some the text was altered to include both and in some only the Finnish version. Thus, some of the images and texts were manipulated to present different materials to the interviewees and in order to minimise the possibility of being influenced by an established brand perception of these brands in case the interviewee would know them.

The different posts, including all the different message appeals and visual styles the three Finnish brands genuinely use, was a part of the projective technique that was used in the interviews. A projective technique was chosen, since it was expected that using this technique will reveal some deeper thoughts and beliefs (Nunez, 2015), which is also the aim of this qualitative study. Also, people are visual thinkers and using images was thought to be a gateway for the interviewees to express themselves, leading the conversation to new spheres (Parry, 2018). The use of the images and texts seemed to make the interview easier for the interviewees, since they had something else to focus on than their own responses, and thus they focused less on giving a normative answer and more on looking at the Instagram-posts. Simply, they felt less like they are being interviewed and more that they were giving their expert opinion on the images and texts.

The interview process commenced with introducing the themes of discussion with open-ended questions, such as “what is luxury to you” and “do you follow any luxury brands on Instagram and why”. After these “warm-up” questions, the main part began, with the projective interview technique using the pre-selected posts.

In this main part of the interview, the interviewees were asked to scroll on a touch-screen device, in a manner they would do on Instagram, and stop by any image. For this reason, the face-to-face meeting was important: the interviewer could easily detect if the interviewee stopped by an image or thought about it for a while, but did not comment on it, and then ask more about it. There were two rounds with the scrolling on the device, which was locked to a full-screen mode. The interviewees scrolled a document that had one item per screen view, which is similar to scrolling on Instagram: one can see only one post per screen view.

The first round only showed the visuals. If the interviewee stopped by an image, or paused for a long time without commenting on it, the interviewer asked some guiding questions, such as “what do you like in this image”, “what reminds you of luxury in this image”, and “what kind of brand would post this”. After



the interviewee had scrolled through the images, they were asked “what is the most luxurious image and why” and “what is the least luxurious image and why”, in order to gain more in-depth perception on the level of perceived luxury.

In the second round, the interviewees scrolled a document that included the texts used in the posts. The texts were placed under the image, in a similar manner than in Instagram. The reason why the visual was shown separately first and then together with the text, was to review whether the text, namely the message appeal, influenced the brand perceptions the interviewee gained from the visual alone. Simply, the intention was to examine how the message appeal influences or changes the initial brand perception. In the end, it was again asked what the most luxurious post is and what is the least, and why, to review whether this changed after the introduction of the texts. A discussion followed revolving around the topic on how the text influenced the images’ and brands’ perceived level of luxury and any other thoughts the interviewees might have had.

The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. The transcription of the interview data started in December 2019 and was completed in February 2020. A certain form for the transcriptions was created, which followed the order of the document used in the interviews. The form had the visuals in the same order as in the interviews, which made the transcription process easier. Below the visual were two sections: “Only the visual”, where the interviewees’ comments were written of the first round when they only scrolled the images, and “With the text”, in which the comments of the second round of the interview, with the texts of the posts revealed, were noted. Each interview response was transcribed into their own document, and later the documents were printed for analysing purposes. The interviews were held and transcribed in Finnish, of which snippets that were used in the thesis itself, were translated to English.

Before the interviews took place, three pilot interviews were conducted. The pilot interviews shed light on whether the projective technique worked as wished, how long the interviews will be and whether the interviewer’s style is appropriate and not too intervening. After the pilot interviews, it was realised that more focus needed to be put on steering the conversation to the brand behind the post, since the interviewees focused mainly in the connection between the visual and text. While the information and insights on the visuals and message appeals were highly valuable, it was crucial to discover and reveal the brand perceptions the interviewees gained from the visuals and the message appeals, in order to attain results to the main research question and the main objective of the study of how the creative strategies influence their brand perception. Fortunately, the interviewees were rather talkative, thus fewer guiding questions were needed, but it was decided to include more guiding question to discuss the brand behind the post, such as “what kind of brand would post an image like this”.

To comply with GDPR-regulations, the interviewees were explained for what purposes the data will be used and where it will be stored. It was informed to them that the interview recording will be deleted from any device and cloud-services after the transcription has been completed. They were requested to sign

a consent document of Jyväskylä University, in which it was explained that the data is only collected for the purposes of this master's thesis and where they could specify if their direct quotes could be utilised.

### 3.2.2 Data analysis

The method of semi-structured interviews suits well together with thematic analysis (Ayres, 2012), therefore this was the chosen method for the interview data analysis. Thematic analysis starts with some predetermined topics or codes that will be refined to themes as the analysis progresses (Ayres, 2012). Therefore, the topics that were part of the semi-structured interviews, could be re-utilised as the initial themes for the data analysis. In addition to the convenient match between the semi-structured interviews and the thematic analysis, this approach was chosen due to its suitability to search for brand perceptions: thematic analysis guides the search for "patterns of experience" (Ayres, 2012).

The main themes searched for at the beginning were brand perception, qualities of luxury, and Finnish luxury brands, thus the same as the predetermined themes of the interviews. Later, these themes were the codes were redefined to a more structured format. The first main theme of brand perception was linked to sub-themes of visual appeals and message appeals. The second main theme of luxury brands was linked to sub-themes of Finnish luxury, qualities of luxury, and perceived level of luxury. The theme of brand perception was connected to the sub-theme of perceived level of luxury; although they overlap a little, it was still considered worthwhile to analyse them separately as well. These codes are visualised in Figure 10. The different themes were colour-coded and then searched from the printed interview transcriptions. The interview transcription were read several times, each time trying to seek new insights or new meanings to already identify themes. A coding frame was developed throughout the analysis process and finalised when summarising the results.



Figure 10: **Coding framework for the thematic analysis**

Besides the coding frame, memo making was a crucial part of the process. In the memos insights, hunches, and preliminary results were noted. These were further used to develop the themes. The memo-making started already when the interviews were being conducted, when interesting insights occurred and it seemed significant to revisit those themes in upcoming interviews. For example, the use of English language in the texts lifted the level of luxury for an interviewee, which was not a factor that was considered beforehand by the researcher. Thus, in the next few interviews, the interviewees were specifically asked about the use of English language and what they thought about it, in order to see whether there was a pattern in the perceptions in regards of this matter.

### 3.3 Conclusions

The research had two different methodologies to find an answer to the two research questions. The first part of the research included a sample of Finnish fine jewellery luxury brands' Instagram content, which was collected and analysed. Certain aspects were investigated in detail: the visuals and their design complexity score and the message appeals used. Also, the overall look of the Instagram account and the most apparent branding and marketing efforts were noted. This

part of the research shed light into the current state of social media content marketing of the niche luxury brands in Finland, which was crucial background knowledge before entering the next phase of the research, which aimed to answer the main research question. Besides the gained background knowledge, the Instagram content retrieved and analysed was used as a main component in the interviews.

Second part of the research was a set of interviews with the target group of Finnish females was conducted. The interviews aimed to explore how different visuals and message appeals influenced the brand perception of the target group, but at the same other discoveries were made. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and a projective technique was utilised, using the visuals and texts from brands' Instagram posts. It was considered important to retrieve insights from the actual content that the Finnish luxury jewellery brands publish. Based on the themes used in the interviews, a thematic analysis followed, delving deeper into the main themes of brand perception, including the visual and the textual influences to it and the main theme of luxury brands, including sub-themes of Finnish luxury brands, perceived level of luxury, and qualities of luxury.

### **3.3.1 Reliability and validity of the data**

The reliability and validity of the data are important topics to discuss when a qualitative research has been conducted, since the researcher holds a crucial role interpreting the data (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). While one aims to stay as objective as possible, it is not achievable – the researcher carries attitudes, thoughts, and experiences with them, and although the attempt is to be objective, several internal constructs still influence what, how, when and in which manner the data is processed (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Therefore, a process was created to re-evaluate the initial assessments.

On the first part of the research, the reliability of coding relied on the feedback and underlying reactions gained from the interviews, meaning the initial assessments of the visual and message appeals were re-evaluated after the interviews (please see Figure 11). This process was decided after the texts were analysed three times and the coder begun to be blinded to the subtleties, thus it was decided to analyse the appeals again after the interviews were completed. In practice, the reactions and the comments by the interviewees, such as a long pause or a comment on the props of the visuals, were used to determine the final analysis. After the interviews, a compilation of all of the appeals was created, first entering all the posts in a single document, and viewing and reading them through at once, and then reviewing them again one by one. Some interpretations were updated – mainly adding a message appeal that was not noticed at first. Some interpretations by the researcher were confirmed in the interviews, for example emotional appeals, which were either greatly liked or disliked and thus raised emotions, and usually the interviewees were able to explain why it was like that, which helped to understand the different viewpoints to the texts. And

some appeals, especially if there was a mix of emotional and functional appeal, such as in many Annette Tillander's texts, were corrected after the interviews. In such cases, the researcher failed to see the smaller, yet effective part of the emotional appeal, which was more visible to many of the interviewees.

It must be noted that these matters were questioned in unnoticeable manner – it was not asked whether the interviewee thought that the text resonated with their user image, but it was gathered from their comments, such as “Everyone wants to be a princess!” (in connection with the text presented in Figure 5). Although it is realised that this might not be standard manner to determine reliability and validity, it was important for this research, and especially for the first part of the research, in order view how the target audience interprets the texts and whether they could comprehend the image effortlessly, and whether those would correspond with the initial evaluation. Therefore, using the target group to confirm the quality of the findings and the reliability of the data seemed suitable.

For the second part of the research, pilot interviews were held to examine the role of the researcher in the interview situation. The interviewer has two main tasks: to gather information and to ease the communication (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). During the pilot interviews, the communication style of the interviewer was adjusted to be less intervening and to help the interviewees to refocus on the themes that were the most crucial for the research, namely the brand behind the posts. This helped to confirm the validity of the data – measuring what was intended to be measured and to ensure the data is “defensible” (Golafshani, 2003). For the data interpretation, the transcriptions of the interviews were read several times, but sometimes keeping a month's time in between, in order to distance from the data and perhaps reveal new ideas and thoughts.

These measures were taken to ensure the high quality, reliability, trustworthiness, and validity of the data and to reprocess the researcher's own standpoint and thinking, which is a crucial part of qualitative research (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008; Golafshani, 2003).

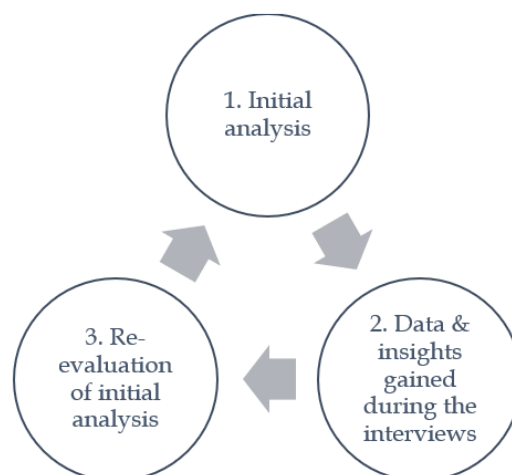


Figure 11: Code reliability checking -process

## 4 RESULTS

The following results are separated into two parts. Part 1: Creative strategies of luxury jewellery brands on Instagram. Part 2: Perceptions of luxury jewellery brands on Instagram. In part 1 findings about the visual and message appeals are discussed. This addresses the first research question: What different creative strategies are used by Finnish luxury jewellery brands on Instagram? In part 2 findings focus on visual appeals, message appeals, brand perception, Finnish luxury, qualities of luxury and the perceived level of luxury. This addresses the second research question: How does the Finnish consumer perceive a luxury jewellery brand after being exposed to different message and visual appeals in a social media post?

### 4.1 Part 1: Creative strategies of luxury jewellery brands on Instagram

The following results emerged from a content analysis of Instagram posts of three Finnish luxury jewellery brands.

#### 4.1.1 Visual appeals

The only brand, which had a clear branded style in the posts, was Annette Tillander. This became clear by the white frames they use around all of their images and especially through the same colour scheme throughout the visuals. For AU3 and Tillander, no visible pattern was detected, such as every other image with a model, or having colour patterns, for example one row with images with black background and the other with white. Furthermore, Annette Tillander had one stories -highlight, titled "customers" and showing stories that their customers had posted of the jewellery. AU3 had several story -highlights (see Figure 12).



Figure 12: AU3 story highlights

Overall, there was plenty of variety in the content posted by the brands, but the type of the visual was solely image. AU3 had a few images with an infographic look, with their logo, the name of the jewellery collection, and at least seven different jewellerys presented, but this was the only exception. No videos were posted.

Compilation of the design complexity scores per brand is summarised in Table 8. Each image was given a score, comprising in 57 analyses in total. The majority of the design complexity was categorised as low, having 21 images of 57 with low design complexity. Simply, most of the visuals showed the jewellery with a monochrome background. This was described as the classical luxury brand look by Lee, Hur, & Watkins (2018). Tillander was mainly focused in the jewellery images of this classical style, having the most images of low design complexity of the three brands, whereas AU3 and Annette Tillander had medium to high design complexities as well. AU3 had the most high complexity images, which were mostly taken “from action”, such as the endorser visiting the store or the jewellerysmiths working, but also from images of store fronts. These images were not overly polished, but rather from real situations. However, for Annette Tillander, the medium complexity images resulted from the props and background they use. In most pictures, there were some flowers or dried flowers as props. The background varied, but were either nature-oriented, such as wood or leather, or a jewellery box. Annette Tillander also used models, similar to Tillander. However, their use of models varied – in Tillander’s images one can clearly see that the images are taken in a studio setting, whereas Annette Tillander’s images seemed not to be. AU3 had only one image with a model, which was taken in a studio.

Table 8: **Compilation of the visual complexity scores**

Visual complexity	Annette Tillander	AU3	Tillander	In total
Low	4	7	10	21
Low-Medium	3	2	3	8
Medium	6	3	2	11
Medium-High	2	2	0	4
High	3	8	2	13

57

Moreover, the contents of the images in the posts differed from brand to brand (see Table 9). Only Tillander and Annette Tillander posted images with the jewellery presented on a wrist or finger, without displaying the model’s face. In these occasions, the background was mostly the model herself, for example showing just her torso. Overall, Tillander had the most studio images, whereas AU3 the most “regular situation” images. These two also had similar images when only the jewellery was pictured, with a monochrome background. On the other hand, Annette Tillander utilised the most props in the images with only the jewellery, and when she used a model, the setting was more natural and seemed that it was not taken in a studio – or at least did not use the regular studio background.

To sum up, Tillander had either images of the jewellery with a monochrome, either white or black, background or models photographed in a studio, although

there were a few exceptions. These kinds of images were considered as a look of a classical luxury brand (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018), thus Tillander had the most classical luxury brand look out of the three. AU3 had the most images taken from a regular setting or a real life situation: store fronts, endorser visiting the store, and so on. They also had a few images that had an infographic, or rather a catalogue look to them, as they included several jewelleries and two logos. Besides this, AU3 had images of only their jewellery with a monochrome white background. Annette Tillander differed from the other two, since they did not have images with a monochrome white or black background, but they used props and variety of backgrounds when the image had only the jewellery presented. Additionally, the images featuring a model were not taken from a regular studio setting – or at least it was made to look like a more natural set up. And thus, Annette Tillander had the least classical luxury brand look out of the three.

Table 9: **Compilation of the contents of the images in the posts**

<b>The image displayed a...</b>	<b>Annette Tillander</b>	<b>AU3</b>	<b>Tillander</b>
Model	4	1	2
Person in a regular situation	0	5	0
Only the jewellery	14	12	13
Jewellery on a hand, neck, or ear-buds	4	0	1
Brand colours	13	11	3
Logo	7	2	0
Something else than jewellery	0	6	1

Lastly, the branding aspects of the images are discussed – whether the brand was displayed in some manner in the images. Firstly, Tillander’s images did not present the brand in any manner. No logo, brand name, or colours used presented the brand. An exception were the jewelleries pictured with a monochrome black background – black is a brand colour of Tillander. But mainly, it seemed that the brand was not visually present on their Instagram content. Secondly, AU3 had the brand present in the images that had features of infographics in them, as those had the logo and the name of the jewellery collection in the image. Also, when they posted images with only the jewellery, they consistently used the colour white as the background – which is also a brand colour, since the logo consists of white and blue. Thirdly, Annette Tillander displayed both their logo and used brand colours. The logo was shown when the jewellery had the background of a jewellery box – the logo was printed in all of the boxes. Besides this, their brand colours are rather natural, such as brown and beige, which is visible from their website. These colours were also displayed in the Instagram content.

A compilation of all the images that were analysed for the research can be found in Appendix 1.



#### 4.1.2 Message appeals

The brands had slightly different tactics in their message appeal usage. Of the three brands, Annette Tillander had the least amount of diversity in their appeals (see Table 10). They mainly used functional appeal that included a little bit of emotional appeal. Besides this, they had a few resonance appeals, but mainly when the image had a pearl jewellery and the name of the jewellery included a pearl as well. AU3 is the only one who used endorser and exclusivity appeals and the most CTAs of the three. The CTAs that AU3 used were mainly inviting viewers to come visit their physical or online store or recommending to order jewellery. Tillander used CTAs as well, mainly inciting the viewers to engage with them by asking questions. Also, Tillander was the only brand using the user image appeal as well as the social cause. The user image appeal referred to the princesses within everyone and the social cause appeal was mentioning the use of recycled gold.

All in all, the most used appeal was functional, followed by emotional, and then resonance and exclusivity. Resonance was used by all the brands, but exclusivity was used only by AU3. It must be noted that one post usually included more than one appeal, mostly two, but in some cases also three. Thus, clear cases of a single message appeal were rare and the texts were generally compiled of two appeals.

Table 10: Compilation of the message appeals

Appeals	Annette Tillander	AU3	Tillander
Functional	16	5	5
Emotional	8	3	5
USP	0	1	2
Resonance	3	2	1
Exclusivity	0	6	0
User image	0	0	1
Social cause	0	0	1
Endorser	0	1	0
Experiential	0	0	1
<b>CTAs</b>			
Engagement	0	1	3
Order	0	1	0
Click/Visit	0	6	2

This research also analysed whether a post would be a singular post or part of a marketing campaign. AU3 had the most connections between the posts. There was a campaign about ordering Christmas presents before the 25<sup>th</sup> November as well as reoccurring promotion about their showroom day in Oulu. On the 16<sup>th</sup> November, Annette Tillander's posts all started with the phrase "Simply beautiful", which could be a micro-campaign of its own. However, it is not possible to

determine this by one week's worth of content – it could be that they reutilise the same phrase throughout their content. And lastly, all of Tillander's post seemed singular and not being a part of a campaign.

## **4.2 Part 2: Consumer perceptions of luxury jewellery brands on Instagram**

The following results emerged from a thematic analysis based on interviews with Finnish luxury brand consumers. These results also emerged from a content analysis of Instagram posts of the three Finnish luxury jewellery brands.

### **4.2.1 Perceptions of the visual appeals**

For the most part, the level of design complexity did not matter for the interviewees. They were not reviewing the image considerably longer if the design complexity score was higher than if it was lower. There was not more positive feedback on more elaborate designs, thus the study results did not comply with Pieters, Wedel, and Batra's (2010), which stated that more positive feedback was retrieved from visuals with low design complexities. However, what became more important was that the jewellery was visible and clear. If the jewellery was on a model and was small, they searched the image for the jewellery, and thus spent more effort trying to see what kind of jewellery it is. This was a bit negative experience for them - they did not want to spend time zooming in.

There were a few reoccurring reasons for the interviewees to scroll past an image. First, the ones who were actively searching for a piece of jewellery, skipped an image only if the jewellery design did not please them. Thus, it did not matter what was around the jewellery or if the image was otherwise pleasing – as long as the design of the jewellery itself was appealing to them. Second, if the model seemed too mature in age, the interviewee lost interest in the post. One interviewee commented:

“Maybe if I would be looking something for my mother”.

If the model was the same age range as the interviewee and the jewellery was what the interviewee was looking for, the other content in the images were viewed with scrutiny. For example, the model's hand needed to look flawless and maintained, but definitely not old. Same applied for the props – they needed to be also from the luxury world: upscale, good materials, and well-made. For instance, a leather bag that was used as a prop was criticised, as it looked too old to be luxury.

Additionally, it was surprising how visuals with similar looks was easily connected to the same brand. The branded style that Annette Tillander uses, which have similar colour scheme and styling, were matched being from the same brand, without the interviewees knowing the brand. This reassures that the brand's images should be of a same branded style throughout, for consumers to easily categorise them under the same brand and to add social media touchpoints to the brand story.

It was fascinating how the varied group of interviewees had a similar preference: all liked the behind-the-scenes image from AU3 – a black and white image where a man is inspecting a diamond (see Figure 13). This kind of content affirmed that the jewellery is authentic, for example that the diamonds are real. Also, it created the feeling of craftsmanship, since you could see a part of the work process with your own eyes, which was highly valued and was considered as high-quality.

#### **4.2.2 Perceptions of the visual appeals**

The interviewees put more weight to the message appeals and commented them much more than the visuals. They were rather clear on what kind of content they would like to consume. For most of them, it was especially important to receive direction and explanation what is happening in the visual. They wanted to be told where they should focus their attention, especially if the jewellery was not easily detectable. Those were explained to bring clarity, since that told the viewer what they should be looking at. It could be that this reduces the cognitive efforts of the viewer and therefore it is preferred.

But for some, they requested to have even more: a narrative explanation or story how the jewellery was made or how one could combine it with different looks, what the designer was feeling when they designed the piece, or what was the insight of the designer in regards of the jewellery. A few interviewees told that they are searching a "feeling" from the images and texts – perhaps storytelling helps them with it. In some cases, this was accomplished as simply as describing something as 'elegant' or 'beautiful'. This led them to see that specific feature in the image as well. For example, using the term beautiful, the interviewees stated that "it is indeed beautiful", and thus noticed the feature in the visual better when it was mentioned in the text as well. Thus, the texts including a resonance appeal were appreciated. For example, an interviewee stated:

"Jewellery purchases are based on feelings since you don't really need them. They are not products that you absolutely must have. So that's why I think creating feelings and vibes is especially important."

Attention to detail was expected from the luxury brands. It was important that there was a point or a "red thread" in the post, as well as in the brand image – simply, there needed to be added value to the consumer. If the interviewee felt or thought that the post was "written in a hurry on a Monday morning", they felt

devalued. On a smaller scale, this also influenced smaller details in the text, such as spelling or grammar mistakes. It made it seem like the post was written in a rush, and thus the attention to detail was lost. Simply, the interviewees expected every small detail to be considered, from the idea to the execution.

The most positively regarded appeal was the user image appeal, which was used by Tillander (see Figure 13). Although it would not personally appeal to the interviewee, some still assured to like it, understanding the point behind it. Most liked the fact that the viewer was addressed in the appeal, or as one interviewee put it:

“Everyone wants to be a princess!”

The appeal that created the most division of opinions was an emotional appeal used by Tillander, which was a poem (see Figure 13) Some liked it since it was telling a story and poem was considered deep, meaningful, dignified, which was fitting for a luxury brand.

“This creates atmosphere and adds expensiveness to the jewellery.”

“This is stylish and keeps it on the luxury level.”

While others had a negative reaction towards it, even an adverse response. The most extreme responses were connected with the model’s age, and her being more mature, the interviewees stated that the poem about life’s different and unique paths did not suit the model – it was regarded phony. Also, the interviewees felt they were imposed to do things in a certain way. Certainly, this particular emotional appeal did raise emotions.

“This makes me feel a bit sad. The whole thing doesn’t work.”

“Don’t come and tell me how I should do things.”

“This is so conflicting. You are a child of life and then the model is over 40.”

The most negative feedback received an emotional and resonance appeal by AU3, which described the bad winter weather conditions of Helsinki (see Figure 13). The most disappointing seemed to be its negativity – this was not expected from a luxury brand, which is assumed to be hedonic. The interviewees wanted positivity and happy stories, and to be reminded of the good summer weather and not the bad winter weather. Although it had the resonance appeal, which was appealing to the interviewees, the emotional appeal describing negative matters was unsuitable. Thus, the greatest disappointments came when the text was unappealing, but even more when it did not fit the image.

“Cold and wet do not belong to luxury.”

“And the negativity, I know it is boring in Helsinki right now, but why you need to remind me of it?”

Tillander  
11<sup>th</sup> November 2019



415 tykkää tästä

tillander1860 Kaikissa meissä asuu pieni prinsessa 😊  
Tillander Fancy shapes Princess cut. #tillander... lisää

Translation:

Everyone has a little princess within. Fancy shapes Princess cut.

**User image appeal**

The most liked appeal

Tillander  
14<sup>th</sup> November 2019



151 tykkää tästä

tillander1860 'Älä pelkää kohdata uutta, älä yritä sitä hallita. Sinä olet elämän lapsi, eikä sinun tietäsi ole vielä kukaan kulkenut. Tillander Silver Label Via -korusarja.' #tillander #verkkokauppa #malloftripla #keskuskatu

Translation:

'Do not be afraid to face the new, and do not try to control it. You are a child of life, and no one has travelled your path.' Tillander Silver Label Via - jewellery collection

**Emotional appeal**

The most divided opinions

AU3  
13<sup>th</sup> November 2019



41 tykkää tästä

au3goldsmiths Helsingissä on märkää, kylmää ja pimeää. Nyt on ikävä kesää! \*

Translation:

It is wet, cold, and dark in Helsinki. We miss summer!

**Emotional appeal**

The least liked appeal

Figure 13: Preferred and disliked posts

The texts with the most used appeal, namely the functional appeal, were not disliked nor especially notable either. An exception was the point of the price. Some were against seeing the price since it would not fit into a luxurious brand image. And some were more approving to have the price included in the text "so you know right away if you can afford it". These were mainly the interviewees who were looking for something specific, such as a wedding band to match with their engagement rings. Other interviewees wanted to just have "hints" about the price range, such as carats or the materials used, although they admitted that it might be difficult to place the jewellery to a certain price category if they had just the material information. However, it would signal to them that the jewellery belonged to the luxury category, since carats, gold, and all that communicates luxury.

Along to this, texts that seemed irrelevant to the brand, such as commenting on sports events, were generally disliked. In these cases, the interviewees started to analyse the text, to understand it better, which means they used more of their cognitive efforts. Firstly, the product became unwanted after the connection to the championship football team:

“I wouldn’t want these now, since they are now some football earrings.”

Secondly, the football team, which was male, seemed irrelevant to the Finnish females and it was criticised to be a “men’s thing”, whereas if it would have mentioned a Finnish female team, it would have been more fitting.

Similar conflict occurred when discussing call-to-actions. Some did not pay attention to them, since they are a common communication element on social media, but for some the CTAs were not fitting for luxury. Questions or attempts to engage with the viewers received a negative reaction, such as “fishing for comments”. One interviewee stated, “they know, they take care of it”, meaning the luxury brand needs to be the expert and not ask consumers’ opinion. It was also considered that it would negatively influence the brand image:

“I wouldn’t want that all Tuijas & Pirjos\* would have commented pink. Maybe I takes away from the luxury feel.”

*\* Tuija and Pirjo are common Finnish female names, and used in this occasion to refer to middle-aged women, who are noticeably active on social media. In this case, it has a negative connotation to it.*

#### **4.2.3 Brand perceptions based on the creative strategies**

While the two previous sections described how the brand perception changed or was influenced by visual or message appeals, the interviewees were also asked directly what kind of brand they thought to be behind a post. It was clear that the interviewees used the message appeals to a higher extent when they needed a confirmation to their initial perception, which was based on the visual appeal. However, the visual appeal was able to give the interviewees already plenty of hints about the brand. Images with only the product against a white background were described as clear, from a “big house”, expensive, but also cold. If the picture had a “warm” background, such as wood, the usual guess was that the brand is Finnish, quite modern, and had a small boutique. At the same, using props like wood, communicated about the brands’ values. For instance, wood background meant that the brand has green and sustainable core values:

“When you can see the wood and the small flowers, I think it refers to that [sustainable production]. A brand that is down-to-earth.”

Whereas a black background was a classic luxury brand from France:

“This makes me think a global producer, for example in France, since it is so traditional.”

Although the visual had more power in the creation of a certain brand image, since it was the first matter or hint that the interviewees received in the interview process, the text had the “final say”. Spoken language in the text communicated of a warm, modern, easy-to-approach brand, but at the same it was

not luxurious and it was stated that a luxury brand should not “talk to their followers” in such a manner. And having English texts meant that the brand was an internationally renowned brand and “upped” the brand image to the viewers:

“Now that it is in English, it makes it a bit more international.”

Overall, the text confirmed to the interviewees whether their initial perception of the brand, based on the visual alone, was correct. If there were matters that did not suit the image they had in mind, the reaction was negative. For example, an image with a hand with a large diamond ring and bracelet was initially considered to be posted by a luxurious brand, possibly Finnish. However, once the text was revealed and it was noticed it included an emoji, which was not considered to belong to the world of luxury, the brand perception was crushed – it did not suit the level of luxury the interviewees considered it to be. One interviewee even suspected whether the large diamond in the image was real – the perception changed so radically.

#### **4.2.4 Perceptions of Finnish luxury brands**

As described above, the Finnish luxury brands were usually considered warmer than the international luxury brands. However, the matter of Finnish luxury seemed paradoxical. On one hand, brands of domestic origin were considered high-quality and great design. Something being Finnish was always connected with high-quality and Finnishness is a unique selling point in itself:

“A Finnish brand is always luxury on some level.”

On the other hand, some interviewees said that they are unable to name any Finnish luxury brands, since they do not think those exist. If a brand was named, they wanted to reason or explain their choice, “although it is not a high-end brand.” A few interviewees discussed the idea that no brand in Finland has been marketed and branded in a manner like Italian or French luxury brands are. Another explanation was that Finnish luxury products are too normal for Finnish people, such as Marimekko’s products. It was described of being luxury for foreigners, but regular commodities for Finnish:

“It’s not luxury to me. It is a high quality Finnish product.”

And for some, the Finnish luxury jewellery is a matter that you cannot see, but you need to find them a different way:

“You don’t really see Finnish jewellery anywhere, you kind of just have to know about them.”

Overall, there was not a clear consensus what Finnish luxury brands are like, but it was clear it was different from the international, renown luxury brands. One

of the most evident explanations to the difference was that international luxury brands were described to give “kicks” whereas Finnish brands could not – an emotion that the luxury shopper was seeking for.

“In my opinion, Finnish luxury is very different from an international luxury.”

“I don’t get the kicks from it [Finnish luxury] that I am looking for.”

Furthermore, as one of the warm-up questions the interviewees were asked what they considered Finnish luxury to be. For many, Finnish luxury was considered to be an experience, such as extremely good customer service, that could be considered as an experience itself. It could also be a ‘once in a lifetime’ experience or a concept – it did not need to be a material product. However, it needed to be expensive and unique. It could be something that only a Finnish person knows to appreciate, exclusive to the natives – such as the serenity of nature.

Also, the interviewees described a sort of trust towards the Finnish luxury brands: they could trust that those products are truly high-quality and long-lasting. It could be something that was passed on from generation to another – the tradition would create a wow-effect. The products were produced ethically, not cutting any corners. The focus of these brands was told to be more in the high-quality factors, such as how the jewellery fits, than in the brand itself:

“More quality, less logo.”

#### 4.2.5 Perceptions of luxury’s qualities

Overall, some content features were considered more luxurious, regardless of them being Finnish or not. For instance, if the image content included a large diamond or many diamonds immediately meant luxury for majority of the interviewees. For many, an expensive looking item or just an “expensive feel” equalled to luxury. Also, naming the designer in the text brought additional value. The fact that a real person is behind the jewellery brought forward craftsmanship qualities and thus, a confirmation that it is not a mass product. Hand-crafted jewellery was considered particularly luxurious. If a jewellery was hand-crafted, it was also considered unique, which was a desirable attribution:

“I want a luxury jewellery, not high-quality. Luxury is only for me, high-quality can be for anyone and everyone.”

Some interviewees were also reviewing the practicality of a jewellery – would it get worn out easily or how did it fit the hand of the model. This aspect could be connected to the high-quality and durability elements, which were especially important when considering Finnish luxury.

A few interviewees explained that they seek emotion, or “kicks”, out of luxury. They explained that it needs to bring this feeling of goodness. It would be important to consider how that kind of feeling could be created. All in all, these above matters were pointed out when the interviewees were picking out



luxurious aspects. These kind of aspects, although they do not compile a luxury brand image, might help in the communication of a luxurious brand image.

#### 4.2.6 Perceptions of the level of luxury

The interviewees were asked at the end of each round what they considered to be the most luxurious and the least luxurious post. When the interviewees had reviewed only the visuals, the most luxurious images were described as flawless, simple, every detail had been considered, and had a large diamond. The least luxurious were when the image seemed "homey", the model's hands looked old or something else in the image looked worn out, but the most disliked images were the ones that the interviewee needed to spend time to look at the jewellery: when the jewellery was not easy to detect or they needed to zoom in. Thus, the more effort the viewer needed to spend looking at the image, the more inferior it seemed. Figure 14 below shows how interviewees perceived brands according to most to least luxurious.

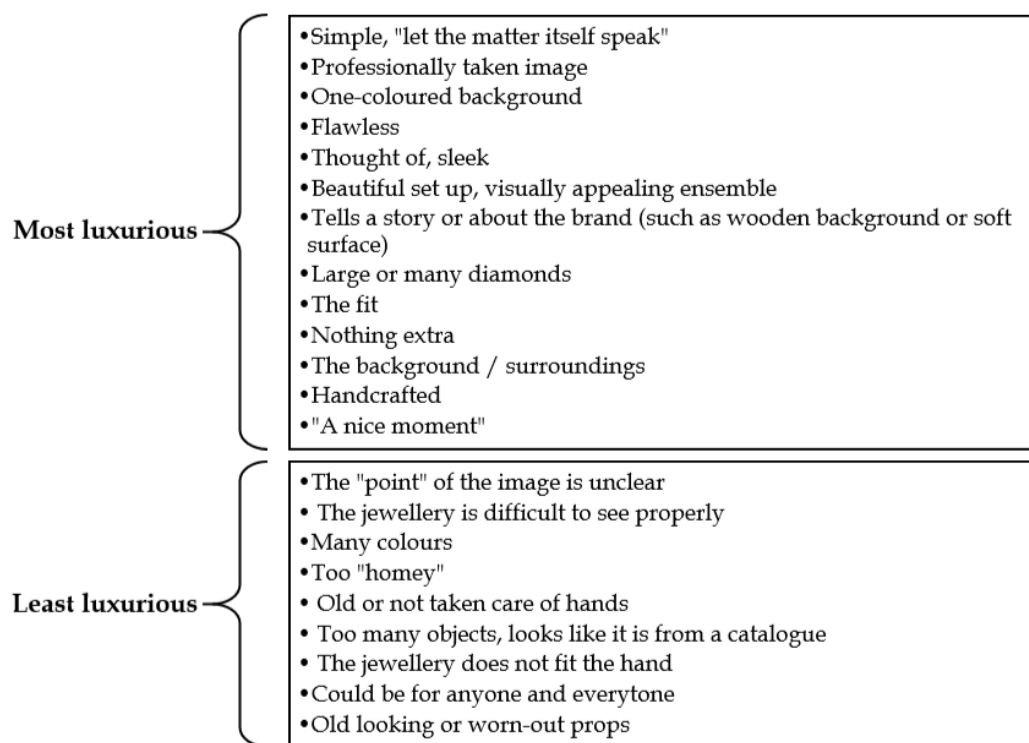


Figure 14: Perceptions of the most and the least luxurious brands

The comments on the most and the least luxurious brands support each other: every element and detail needed to be considered in the image and all those elements needed to communicate luxurious and expensive feel, and it

needed to be easy for the viewer to see the jewellery, thus to spend little cognitive effort to understand what is happening in the image.

After the round of only visuals, the interviewees were shown the texts of the posts. The same questions were asked after they scrolled through all the posts: which is the most and which is the least luxurious. The responses varied greatly from the first round. Some aspects that the interviewee was not expecting in the text lowered the level of luxury that they had perceived from the visual alone. The aspects were exclamation marks, repetitive use of &-sign, emojis, and CTAs. These aspects were not considered suitable for luxury brands, although something like a CTA is quite a relevant part of social media communications.

Besides these aspects, the most confusing and disappointing was text that did not match the image in the interviewees' opinion, namely had some conflicting themes presented. In these cases, the interviewees experienced varied levels of negative feelings and disappointment.

“The picture itself is pretty, but the text is nowhere near to the picture's value. They are not a pair.”

If the match between the image and text was not fitting, everything about the brand perception needed to be reconsidered, but especially if the brand is still luxurious or not. Most times, the level of luxury decreased. For this reason, the matter of including the price in the text divided opinions. If the price matched the expectation of the interviewee, the level of luxury was upgraded. If the jewellery was expected to be more expensive, it downgraded the level of luxury.

In some specific occasions the level of luxury was increased. This occurred when there was a clear match between the text and the image: the text supported the image and told a story of what was happening there. For example, AU3's behind-the-scenes post from the jewellery shop (see Figure 15). The expectation was the text to describe what is happening in the image. Although the text included just a small phrase of description, it was enough to “up” the level of luxury – the expectation was met.

Also, the mention of “luxury” or “unique” in the text upgraded the level of luxury for some of the interviewees, but for some it was considered to factitious: true luxury does not need to be underlined. But, naming the design or the collection name usually communicated genuine luxury to the interviewees. All in all, there was a clear disruption when the visual and the message did not match, and this raised negative emotions towards the brand. Message appeal revealed the final level of luxury, but the visual appeal already set the tone:

“You cannot fix a bad image with a good text, but you can ruin a good image with a bad text.”



Translation: Au3 Goldsmiths at work.  
 If you are planning to give high quality  
 jewelry gifts for Christmas, make your or-  
 der by 25th November!

Figure 15: Example post of matching appeals

### 4.3 Summary of findings

In Part 1 an analysis was conducted of the visual appeals and message appeals, namely the creative strategies that the Finnish luxury jewellery brands use on Instagram. The visuals consisted of one type only, images, thus no videos or other types were used. Besides this, the images were for the large part only featuring the jewellery. For AU3 and Tillander, the jewellery was photographed against a monochrome, black or white, background. Annette Tillander varied the background from wood to jewellery boxes, and used flowers as props. Annette Tillander used their brand colours in most of the images and also featured logos, whereas AU3 did this occasionally and Tillander rarely.

For the most part, the message appeals were a mix of two or three appeals. The most used appeal was functional, followed by emotional and then resonance. AU3 and Tillander had the most variety in their appeals, the first using exclusivity and endorser appeals and the second user image and social cause, as the only ones of the three. CTAs were also only used by AU3 and Tillander. AU3 generally recommended viewers to come visit their store or to order jewellery and Tillander mainly incited viewers to engage with them by asking questions. Annette Tillander did not use any CTAs nor diverted from the three appeals they used, namely functional, emotional, and resonance.

In Part 2 an analysis of the interviews focused on revealing how Finnish women perceived the brand when different creative strategies were used. First, the visual appeals were discussed, revealing that low or high design complexity did not affect the interviewees. Second, the liked and disliked message appeals were presented. User image appeal was favoured, whereas an emotional appeal drawing to negative emotions was disliked. A poem and having price in the text divided the opinions of the interviewees. Third, the brand perception aspect was explored. The visual alone clearly communicated certain brand attributes, such as mono-

chrome white background was an international, yet cold brand. Fourth, the aspects of Finnish luxury were shared. It was already known that Finnish consumers have a peculiar attitude toward luxury and the interviews confirmed that – it was unclear to the interviewees what are Finnish luxury brands, and whether those even exist. Fifth, qualities of luxury were described, namely what aspects in the posts were directly interpreted as luxury: expensive feel, designer's name, and the fit of the jewellery. The most luxurious quality was the emotional “kick” – however it is uncertain what is a fitting way to communicate that. And the last topic was the perceived level of luxury, which was one of the most interesting findings. The interviewees expected a certain level of luxury from the image alone, and if that was not matched with the text, the level of luxury downgraded. Also, if the text and image did not tell the same story or were not a “match”, it ruined the perception of the brand. Simply put, the expectation of the viewer needs to be met and the image and the text need to be a pair.

## 5 DISCUSSION

This chapter aims to delve deeper into the research results and provide insights as well as connect the findings to theories and frameworks introduced in Chapter 2. The research questions are returned to and it will be reviewed whether an answer was found to them.

### 5.1 Creative strategies on Instagram

The first research question, which provided both crucial background information on the reality of the current situation as well as the interview materials, was:

*What different creative strategies are used by Finnish luxury jewellery brands on Instagram?*

The sub-questions referred to what message appeals and visual appeals are used and what is the level of design complexity that is used in the visuals.

First, the message appeals used by Finnish luxury jewellery brands heavily focused on the functional side. It could be that the business owners of these brands realise that Finnish are rational buyers (Pääkkönen, 2016) and therefore prefer to use rational message appeals. Also, as it is prominent from the interview results, the functional appeal did not stir emotions, whereas some of the emotional appeals received a negative reaction. Thus, another explanation could be that the business owners realise the negativity that Finnish people hold towards luxury, and thus want to diminish any possible additional negativity, such as stirring emotions “the wrong way” by posting an emotional message appeal. Regardless, while purchasing a luxury good can be considered a financial investment, especially when it is jewellery which in Finland is passed from generation to another (Latvala, 2013) and Finnish people are described as rational buyers (Pääkkönen, 2016), the purchase of a luxury good is still driven by emotional factors: value-expressive and social-adjustive motivational functions (Choi, Seo, Wagner, & Yoon, 2018). Consumers view brands as their self-reflection and use them to construct their identities, and especially with hedonic products like luxury goods (Jin, 2012). Overall, it is recommended that a hedonic brand, such as a luxury brand, would use communications to draw to the emotional side of the consumers. Therefore, it was unanticipated that **the brands relied on rational message appeals more than emotional message appeals**. It is concluded that more emotion based message appeals, such as user image, emotional, and experiential appeals, should be utilised by the brands in order to communicate values of luxury and to create a luxurious atmosphere through their Instagram-content.

As discussed in the literature review, it was unknown what kind of marketing strategies the brands might utilise in their Instagram-accounts. Ashley and Tuten (2015) suggested three strategy options for social media: integrated marketing strategy, CRM-strategy, or micro-campaigning strategy. These options were reviewed with more scrutiny during the content analysis and it can be concluded that micro-campaigning was the most utilised strategy, albeit the short time period of the content analysed could not reveal larger marketing strategy patterns. Other strategy options were suggested aan 't Goor (2012), who discovered that the most popular marketing strategies on Instagram were the emotion strategy, which tries to influence affective beliefs of brands, and the symbolism strategy, which communicates a certain lifestyle and brand attributes. The latter symbolism strategy was not used by the brands to a high degree. There were no notions of promoting or communicating a certain lifestyle to the audience – there were no storytelling for this kind of purpose. However, the emotion strategy, which can be exploited by emotional message appeals, was utilised more. For example, Annette Tillander's descriptive emotional appeals, such as "Beautiful romantic and feminine rings!" presented in Figure 6 describes how one would feel when wearing the rings, namely feminine and romantic. Overall, the brands were not drawing to the emotional side of the consumers to a high degree, as it is visible from the use of message appeals. While Finnish consumers are different to consumers from other countries, it ought to be mentioned that Finnish consumers purchase luxury goods due to emotional reasons (Latvala, 2013; Forstén, 2017; Pääkkönen, 2016), therefore emotion based message appeals and marketing strategies should be utilised more.

Second, the visual appeals used by the brands were only images rather than infographics and videos. Thus, there was not variety in the content types. Especially the lack of videos caught attention since video-content has been declared to become the next "big thing" (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018) and videos are highly popular communication means, especially in field of content marketing (Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019). Besides, Instagram supports videos on its platform. For example, a separate feature called the IGTV has been launched to post longer videos in the platform. Thus, the visual storytelling practices by the Finnish luxury jewellery brands are quite limited, but those should be expanded.

Third, the images had a variety of different visual complexities, but the majority had a low visual complexity. According to Pieters et al. (2010) this equals to aesthetically beautiful images, thus the images were appealing. Most images were professionally photographed and followed the classical style of luxury brands' visuals: one-coloured background, either black or white, simplistic, and only the jewellery presented (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018). The content by Annette Tillander was an exception: they used props and variety of different backgrounds. The additional elements were almost all the time related to nature, which Finnish people connect to luxury the most (Latvala, 2013). Thus, while they had a newer style to present the jewellery, they seemed to know their target audience's preferences, namely nature. However, it was noted from the interview results that the design complexity score did not matter to the Finnish consumers in terms of

luxury jewellery brands. The interviewees were more focused on finding atmosphere and feelings from the images, as well as designs that they liked, rather bothered if the image had many props, asymmetrical setup, or many different colours. Thus, **the importance of the design complexity was invalidated** after the interviews. Other features, such as the jewellery being presented clearly, gained more importance.

## 5.2 Perceptions of luxury jewellery brands on Instagram

The second research question, and also the main research question of this study, explored

*How the target group perceives the brand images of the Finnish luxury jewellery brands when being exposed to different creative strategies and visual appeals?*

Throughout the interviews, it became clear that the visual was investigated with more scrutiny than the text. It set the mood for the text and the interviewees expected a certain type of texts for certain type of images. This is an important consideration for Instagram – the visual is the first thing that the user notices and can make them either to stop to read the text or to scroll further (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). If the image was luxurious and beautiful for the interviewees, they expected the text to reflect that same image. But, if the text communicated something else than luxury or beauty, for example it mentioned sports or the text begun with an emoji, the initial brand perception was shattered and the disappointment was grave. **It was less important to follow the “rules and norms” of social media than the ones by luxury brands’ world.** For example, more than half of Instagram-posts contain an emoji (Aslam, 2020), but this was not an accepted practice by the luxury brands – almost all the interviewees condemned the social media post with an emoji, stating it lowering the level of luxury of the post as well as the brand.

There was a clear disruption when the visual and the message did not match, and this raised negative emotions towards the brand. Simply, this means that **every message appeal was expected to have a resonance appeal**. The viewer retrieved heuristic cues from the image and wanted the text to confirm what they had noticed. The interviewees did not want to misunderstand what occurred in the image and they wanted the text to tell them what to focus upon. This could refer the interviewees relying on their heuristic information processing system or the peripheral route of information processing as per the ELM-model. The lower the cognitive efforts to comprehend the post were used and the faster the information consumption process was, the more pleasing it was for the viewers and the more positively they regarded the brand behind the Instagram-post. This meant that the image and the text had to “tell the same story”.

Besides the image and the message being a pair, it also ought to be considered what kind of brand is communicated through the image. The image alone can lead to comprehensive brand evaluations (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018), which was the case also with Finnish consumers. The interviewees obtained a certain expectation from the visual, and if this was not met with the message, negative feelings aroused. This was especially clear when the perceived level of luxury was discussed. If the interviewees thought the brand to be of certain level, but the text implied otherwise, the brand perception changed radically. For example, it seems precarious to include the price in the text – while this will be helpful for the people who are searching jewellery to purchase them, but if the jewellery was cheaper or more expensive than the interviewees thought it would be, their whole brand perception changed. Even though the brand would have been more expensive than the interviewees thought, this was counted as a negative brand experience, and thus negative feelings towards the brand would arise. Therefore, one of the main insights in terms of branding obtained from the interviews is: **The visual sets the tone, but the text reveals the level of luxury.**

Surprisingly, the design complexity principle did not affect the interviewees' perceptions of the brands. Both high and low scored visuals were suitable for luxury brands and for Instagram. However, the design complexity did communicate something about the brand to the interviewees. Reaffirming the results from the study of Lee, Hur, & Watkins (2018), Finnish customers also consider simple visuals with low design complexity to be by classical luxury brands. These are brands that are not from Finland, but rather brands of a global scale. These kind of brands were seen desirable, but at the same these brands were described cold in a negative sense. Also, it was considered that the Finnish luxury brands could not be a brand like that, meaning they are not succeeding in creating that sort of brand image. However, when a brand seemed warmer and easier to approach, it was more likely to be a modern Finnish brand. While warmth would seem to be a more positive brand feature, the cold classical luxury brand was described as a more desirable brand image. Thus, **the brand could be either warm and easily approachable but not luxurious in the classic sense, or cold and desirable, which is something that the Finnish brands could not achieve.**

This realisation lead to an unexpected finding: it seemed like the “spot” for classic luxury brands was saved for the highly luxurious global brands in the consumers' minds, to where a Finnish brand could not fit in. A Finnish luxury brand was still considered as high-quality, expensive, and unique, which are all key features of a luxury brand (Park, Im, & Kim, 2015; Jin, 2012). Regardless of this, the only consensus about the differences between the Finnish and international luxury is that it is different. It could be claimed that there are **two completely separate categories of luxury brands for Finnish: the warm domestic ones and the cold global ones.** This also confirms the findings of Forstén (2017), Latvala (2013), and Pääkkönen (2016): there are two separate concepts of luxury. Most importantly, **these two types of luxury brands are detectable and visible to the consumer from the Instagram-content.**



First, the domestic luxury brands, which are described as warm, modern, and approachable. These were handcrafted products and the brands were situated in a small boutique store. While these brands were described with positive adjectives and some of the interviewees stated to be extremely glad to purchase jewellery from a brand like this, these kind of brands were less desirable the other luxury brand category. For some interviewees, a brand being Finnish was a sign of high-quality, but still for many it was extremely difficult to name Finnish luxury brands or those did not exist. Certainly, the Finnish brands are in a closer proximity to the Finnish customers, and perhaps for this reason do not seem as desirable or luxurious, since they have more concrete mental images of them (Park, Im, & Kim, 2015). Another consideration could be the cultural background. Perhaps something that is Finnish is not seen as “fancy” as an international brand, since the Finnish are modest: something that is from Finland could not be extremely luxurious. However, this does not explain the difficulties in explaining what the Finnish luxury brands are, nor why they do not give the same emotional “kick” as international brands.

The second luxury brand category was described as international, desirable, and truly luxurious. These were the classical luxury brands, images displayed with one-colour background only presenting the product there (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018). The brands were considered to be more distant, and thus seem more abstract to the consumers. Also, the higher psychological distance, the more luxurious the product will appear according to the CLT-theory (Park, Im, & Kim, 2015). This abstractness could add the “dreaminess” of a brand – when it is not close by, it is easier to dream of it. This category complies with the previous study results of a traditional luxury brand (Forstén 2017; Latvala, 2013; Pääkkönen, 2016). An interesting observation is that the interviewees did not see a Finnish brand being a part of this highly luxurious brand category, but why remains unclear.

Additionally, the type of traditional and truly luxurious brands were seen more negatively since these were described as cold brands. It seemed that these brands had the negativity stigma, which roots from the Finnish culture. However, the warm, modern luxury brand types were seen more positively. While they were not as luxurious, the interviewees did not consider them negatively. It could be that the newer concept of luxury, which was also described by Forstén (2017), Latvala (2013), and Pääkkönen (2016) as being in a closer proximity to the people and it is subjective for the person itself, can be displayed in this luxury brand category of warm, modern Finnish luxury brands. While the warm, modern luxury brand image were easier to attain and it does not carry the stigma of negativity along with it, the interviewees still described the lack of emotional “kick”, which was sought by the interviewees as luxury product purchasers. Perhaps including more emotion-based message appeals, such as user image, emotional, and experiential appeals, to the social media content adds a new layer to the brand story and the Finnish consumers might start to see the brands through value-expressive attitudes – namely how the values of the brand align with their

own. All this could help in creation of a luxurious atmosphere in Instagram by the means of visual and textual content.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

This master's thesis explored the creative strategies used on Instagram by Finnish luxury jewellery brands and the responses to those strategies by the target group. The main objective was to find out whether the different creative strategies have an influence on the brand perception and especially, how the creative strategies mould the brand image the target group has.

To commence the exploration to this topic, current literature was read revolving the topics of social media content marketing, luxury brands globally and in Finland, and luxury brands on social media to gain a solid understanding of the concepts. The literature exposed multiple conflicts and difficulties in terms of social media content marketing for luxury brands, for example how luxury brands should present themselves in social media in order to maintain a luxurious brand image, but at the same comply with the community standards of social media. After this, several frameworks and theories of creative strategies, social media communication and visual appeals were reviewed to choose a suitable framework to help to guide the first part of the research, which examined Instagram content. This was split in two, the message and the visual, to make a solid and logical division of the features in the content and to find applicable frameworks. The frameworks that were chosen upon were a message strategy code sheet by Ashley & Tuten (2015) to review the textual aspects of the Instagram posts and a design complexity principle by Pieters, Wedel, and Batra (2010) for the visual components.

After the literature review, the research begun by exploring the current situation – *what are the creative strategies used by Finnish luxury jewellery brands on Instagram?* The research was conducted by the method of content analysis. It was found that the brands use mainly functional, emotional and resonance message appeals. The brands only posted image content and no videos. Also, the images were mostly low design complexity displaying only the jewellery, thus they applied to the classical luxury brands' way of visual communication (Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018).

The second part of research focused on the main research question: *How does the Finnish consumer perceive a luxury jewellery brand after being exposed to different message and visual appeals in a social media post?* To reveal insights and deeper meanings of the target group, a set of semi-structured interviews were conducted. A projective technique was used, which utilised the real Instagram posts by the Finnish luxury jewellery brands that were analysed in the content analysis. A selection of these Instagram posts were made in order to have a large variety of different images, message appeals and visual complexities. These posts were then scrolled in a device to simulate Instagram scrolling, first only viewing the visual and then viewing the whole post, including the message with the visual. The interviewees were eager to examine the posts' details and especially focus was given to ask questions in regards of the brand behind the post.

The interview results indicate that every message appeal was expected to have a resonance appeal. The viewer wanted to use less cognitive efforts and this was eased with the help of the text – it guided the viewer to what features they should notice or focus on. Another interesting result in terms of the content was that the visual sets the tone for the message appeal in regards of the level of luxury the viewer expects. However, the message determined the final level of luxury of the brand. If the brand image the viewer initially perceived by looking at the visual alone did not match with the brand image that was communicated through the message appeal, the brand perception changed radically. Some specific elements in the text influenced the level of luxury – it either increased or decreased when the text was revealed. This realisation paved way for further insights in the matter of brand perceptions. For the Finnish consumers, a luxury brand could be either warm and easily approachable but not luxurious in the classic sense, or cold and desirable, which is something that the Finnish brands could not achieve. From this it was determined that two completely separate categories of luxury brands reside in the Finnish consumers' minds: the domestic and the global ones. These resemble to findings of previous studies, which established a newer and a traditional luxury concept in Finland. What remains as a question is that could a Finnish brand achieve a higher level of luxury by using more emotion-based message appeals and marketing strategies that draw to the emotions of the Finnish consumers.

## 6.1 Managerial implications

The results of the research are considered valuable to the Finnish businesses operating in the luxury sector. Some of the remarks and insights from the interviews could be directly used, such as stopping the use of emojis if a highly luxurious brand image is sought after, and maintaining visually similar look throughout for brand recognition purposes. Besides the social media content, some other remarks could be considered. For example, Finnish consumer perceives luxury as an experience – how could that be utilised by the brands, could the level of customers service be increased to even higher standard?

Also, there is untapped potential trying to provide new kind of brands in the Finnish market. Although the Finnish luxury brand market is small, it does not exclude the opportunity of communicating a luxurious brand image. The results from both previous studies and the current study indicate that consumers who purchase luxury goods seek an emotion or “kicks” out of it. They want to purchase a product with that they can express their values, but first it is needed to know if their own values match with the brand's values (Choi, Seo, Wagner, & Yoon, 2018). However, the Finnish luxury brands communicate mainly the functional aspects of their jewellery. It would be important to create more emotional bonds with the customers, explaining the brand values, and tell the brand's

story. It is also encouraged to experiment with an emotion or a symbolism marketing strategy that are used on Instagram by businesses with different origin than Finnish (aan 't Goor, 2012).

There is another great opportunity for the brands in this niche to expand the variety of their content: “pre-produced video being ranked as the most effective and successful format of content marketing” (Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019). Especially on Instagram, video content receives two times more engagement than image content (Aslam, 2020). Video-format could be combined with the favoured behind-the-scenes content, which could further increase the level of transparency and highlight the craftsmanship features. Besides this, value-rich content breaks through the information flood (Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019), which could be highly useful on a platform such as Instagram.

Besides the marketing strategy, the study reveals important factors in terms of the brand perceptions. If a warm brand image is sought after, certain elements should be included in the visual and message appeals, such as wood elements or mentioning the brand being Finnish. If a brand wants to seem highly luxurious, a cold brand image is more suitable, but carefulness is important – too cold brand seems too far away and unachievable.

There were a few clear things that the Finnish luxury jewellery brands could experiment with. First, the interviewees were extremely interested in the behind-the-scenes content – this is a great tip for anyone producing content for a luxury brand. This also highlights the aspect of authenticity, which is important for Finns (Latvala, 2013). Second, it is encouraged to produce video content. Videos are gaining popularity on social media (Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim, 2019) and it could be easier to communicate emotion to the viewers, for example with the choice of music. Third, it needs to be realised that certain matters that are usual on social media, such as CTAs, emojis, hashtags, and so forth, do not communicate a luxurious brand image for the Finnish consumer. If luxurious brand image is sought after, those elements from the texts should be removed.

## 6.2 Limitations

There are a few notable limitations to this study. First of all, the world of luxury branding is immense and there are several definitions of luxury brands. Depending on the perspective or even the studies that are read, a different view on luxury brands might arise. This study aimed to keep the definition of luxury brands rather free, but still one might argue that the concept should have been defined more strictly.

Second, the cultural context of the study is only applicable to Finnish people and culture. The Finnish have a peculiar attitude towards luxury, which is also noticeable from the study results and has been established by previous studies. The study only interviewed Finnish females and analysed content from Finnish brands, but it was not researched whether for example Finnish males have

different perceptions or if the brand perceptions change when using posts from international brands, such as Tiffany's.

Third, time restrictions and scope did not allow the exploration to multiple concepts that could be important for the topic or to analyse the brands' social media content from several time periods and on different social media platforms, but these are left for the future researchers to discover. Retrospectively, the study could have focused on the first or the second part of the research, in order to have an even deeper exploration to those topics, and not on both.

Last, the results confirmed the visuals' power in terms of creating the brand image, however the order of the interview process might have artificially put more focus on it – the visual was the first matter the interviewees noticed, thus they might unintentionally be more perceptive to it than in real life. However, it works the same way on Instagram, the visual is the first thing to be noticed, although the text is readily available to the viewer whereas in this research the text was revealed only afterwards. Thus, a different method could have been used to study these matters. Perhaps a focus group could have worked or a different projective technique. However, Instagram scrolling is usually an individual activity, thus focus group setting could have been too distant from the reality of the situation. The interview technique could have been changed, for example asking the interviewees to take out their own devices and truly scroll in the brands' Instagram accounts. Then the initial brand perceptions should have been noted, namely what the interviewees thought of the brand prior. Thus, the power of the content could not have been reviewed as clearly. Same applies to the content analysis – another method could have been chosen. It is worthwhile to consider whether following a more freer study methodology, such as grounded theory, could have produced more unprecedented results.

### **6.3 Future recommendations**

The study could be repeated in a different luxury brand sector, in a different cultural context, or retrieving content from a different social media platform. It would be interesting to review the social media content to a deeper extent that was possible for this study, for instance including more brands or different brands from different luxury product categories, studying more posts from different time periods, and perhaps also analysing Facebook content.

Also, different concepts could be included to the study frame that was not possible here. While it was not in the scope of this study, concepts such as semiotics or the brand luxury index, the BLI-scale, seem valuable and could be highly relevant to review in the context of social media content and the brand perceptions that its creative strategies bring.

While the concept of engagement is not the scope of this study, it raises other important considerations towards luxury brands in social media. Social me-

dia is not only a one-way communication platform, but a social platform. Exclusivity, a value of luxury, could be displayed by not engaging with followers – how would that change the brand perceptions of the target group?

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## APPENDIX 1      Content analysis – compilation of the visuals in posts

Below is a compilation of the visuals that the three luxury jewellery brands posted during the test week.

### Annette Tillander



11<sup>th</sup> Nov



11<sup>th</sup> Nov



12<sup>th</sup> Nov



12<sup>th</sup> Nov



12<sup>th</sup> Nov



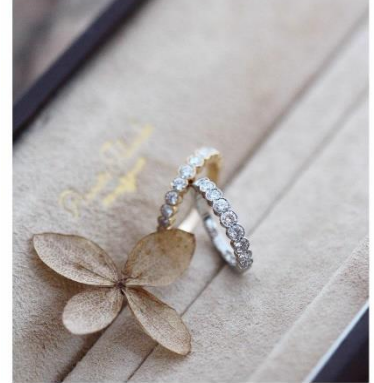
13<sup>th</sup> Nov



13<sup>th</sup> Nov



14<sup>th</sup> Nov



14<sup>th</sup> Nov



14<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 1



14<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 2



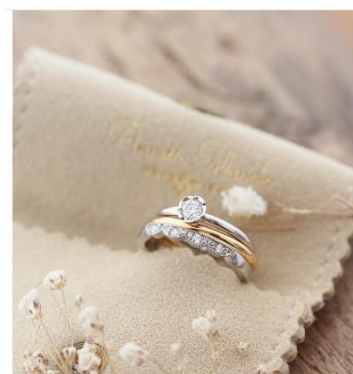
14<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 3



15<sup>th</sup> Nov



15<sup>th</sup> Nov



15<sup>th</sup> Nov



16<sup>th</sup> Nov



16<sup>th</sup> Nov



16<sup>th</sup> Nov



AU3

11<sup>th</sup> Nov12<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 112<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 412<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 112<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 212<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 512<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 212<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 312<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 6



12<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 7



12<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 8



12<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 9



13<sup>th</sup> Nov



14<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 1



14<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 2



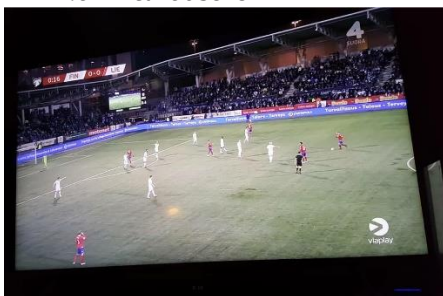
14<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 3



14<sup>th</sup> Nov



15<sup>th</sup> Nov



15<sup>th</sup> Nov



16<sup>th</sup> Nov - carousel 1



16<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 2



18<sup>th</sup> Nov

**Tillander**



11<sup>th</sup> Nov



12<sup>th</sup> Nov



12<sup>th</sup> Nov



13<sup>th</sup> Nov



14<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 1



14<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 2





14<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 3



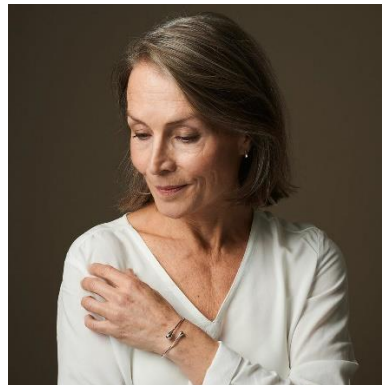
15<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 1



15<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 2



15<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 3



15<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 4



16<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 1



16<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 2



16<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 3



16<sup>th</sup> Nov – carousel 4



16<sup>th</sup> Nov



17<sup>th</sup> Nov

## APPENDIX 2 Interview materials for Instagram simulation

Below a compilation of the process and the selection of message appeals and visuals that were used in the interviews as a part of the projective technique. The images were showed in the same order as here (left to right), first displaying only the image and then during the second round revealing the text as well.

### Warm up questions

1. How do you define luxury?
2. How does Finnish luxury differ or is similar in comparison to that?
3. Could you name some luxury brands?
  - a. And how about Finnish ones?
  - b. International ones?
4. Do you follow those brands on Instagram or on another platform? Or do you follow some other luxury brands on social media?
  - a. Why do you follow them?

### Instagram-simulation materials



Kaikissa meissä asuu pieni prinsessa.  
Fancy shape, princess cut.

Translation:  
All of us have a little princess within.  
Fancy shape, princess cut.



Helsingissä on märkää, kylmää ja pimeää. Nyt on ikävä kesää!




Translation:  
It is wet, cold, and dark in Helsinki. Now we are missing the summertime!



Elämän kyynleet ovat tänään ilon kyynleitä! Kiitoksia huuhkajat!

Translation:  
Life's tears are happy tears today! Thank you huuhkajat!

\*life's tears is the name of the product line in this picture. Huuhkajat is the national football team of Finland, which won a game that placed them in the

<p>Message appeal: User image Design complexity: Low</p>	<p>Message appeal: Emotional and resonance Design complexity: Medium</p>	<p>championships for the first time. Message appeal: Emotional Design complexity: Low</p>
		
<p>Feminine and neat, Perla Pearl Bracelet! Luxury collection</p>	<p>&lt;3 Eternal love 091 solitaire + eternity ring, complete with a tennis bracelet</p>	<p>Ihan uusi sydän kaulakoru *Inspired by LOVE* Aika söpö! Materiaalit 750 valkokultaa ja värikkäät safiirit 0,81 ct. Design Matti Maijanen. Hinta 2090€. Translation: Brand new heart necklace *Inspired by LOVE* Quite cute! Materials 750 white gold and colourful sapphires 0,81 ct. Design Matti Maijanen. Price 2090€.</p>
<p>Message appeal: Functional and resonance Design complexity: High</p>	<p>Message appeal: Functional (and a bit emotional) Design complexity: High</p>	<p>Message appeal: Functional, emotional Design complexity: Low</p>



Tora & Sandy & Ane Lux Love!  
1160€ & 250€ & 1260€  
Wedding collection



Bloggaaja Uppu kävi ihastelemassa meidän koruja. Käy lukemassa juttu blogista: [www.uppu.vaikuttajamedia.fi](http://www.uppu.vaikuttajamedia.fi) tai hyppää mukaan Instagramin kautta: @uppu.

Translation: Blogger Uppu came to admire our jewellery. Go read the piece from the blog: [www.uppu.vaikuttajamedia.fi](http://www.uppu.vaikuttajamedia.fi) or jump in from IG: @uppu.



'Älä pelkää kohdata uutta älä yritä sitä hallita. Sinä olet elämän lapsi, eikä sinun tietäsi ole vielä kukaan kulkenut.'  
Silver-label korusarja

Translation:  
'Don't be afraid to face new, don't try to control it. You are the child of life, and no one has travelled your path yet.'  
Silver label -jewellery collection

Message appeal: Functional

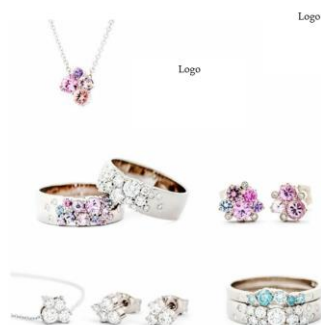
Message appeal: Spokesperson/endorsement

Message appeal: Emotional & user image

Design complexity: Medium

Design complexity: Medium

Design complexity: Medium



Koruesittely Oulun korussa lauantaina 16.11. klo 10-16! Kultaseppä Matti Maijanen esittelee laajan valikoiman XX- korumalliston sormuksia, korvakoruja ja



Kultaseppät työn touhussa. Jos olet aikeissa tilata laadukkaita korulahjoja jouluksi, tee tilaus 25.11 mennessä!



Elegant unique ring!  
Collection: Unique

kaulakoruja. Tule tutustumaan, kokeilemaan ja valitsemaan oma lempikorusi!

Translation: Jewellery demo in Oulun koru -store on Saturday 16th November from 11 until 16 o'clock! Goldsmith Matti Maijanen shows the wide range of XX- jewellery collection's rings, earrings, and necklaces. Come by, try out and choose your own favourite jewellery!

Message appeal: Exclusivity, CTA to come to the store

Design complexity: Medium to High

Translation: Goldsmiths at work. If you are planning to give high quality jewellery gifts for Christmas, make your order by 25<sup>th</sup> November!

Message appeal: Functional and CTA to buy

Design complexity: High

Message appeal: Functional

Design complexity: High



Simply beautiful, my Ane and Tora rings!



Pinkit, keltaiset vai kirkkaat? XXX-timanttisormus 18 karaatin kierrätettyä valkokultaa.  
Translation:  
Pink, yellow or clear? XXX-diamond ring with 18 carat recycled white gold.

Message appeal: Functional, and a bit of resonance and emotional

Design complexity: Low

Message appeal: Functional and social cause. CTA to engage with the post.

Design complexity: Low