

NEGATIVE CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract <p>The impact of social media on consumption is significant, as content continually prompts consumption through social media. Social media content creates continuous impulses for purchases filled with material and various experiences. Thus, it is easy to fall into negative consumption behavior and increased consumption through social media. Therefore, it is crucial to gain a better understanding about the factors behind negative consumption behavior and how social media affects negative consumption behavior. The aim of this study was to provide answers to the research question: How does social media affect negative consumption behavior? The sub-problems of the study were: What are the drivers behind negative consumption behavior? How does social comparison on social media affect consumer consumption behavior? How does social media reinforce the Diderot effect? This study examines the impact of social media on negative consumption behavior.</p> <p>Drawing on a comprehensive literature review, the research examines various drivers of negative consumption behavior, including self-concept, materialism, social comparison, and the need to belong, within the context of social media. The research method chosen for this study was semi-structured thematic interviews, and seventeen active social media users were interviewed for the study. The findings reveal that social media increases consumption, triggers negative consumer behavior, and activates the drivers behind negative consumer behavior. Additionally, the study provides new insights into the connection between the Diderot effect and social media, demonstrating how social media enhances and strengthens the Diderot effect, or the cycle of purchasing. The research also offers new perspectives on the effects of social comparison on purchase decisions, showing that comparison on social media platforms leads to pressures to conform and emulate others' lifestyles. This increases feelings of inadequacy and impulsive buying. Social comparison on social media thus enhances the culture of materialism and consumption. This master's thesis advances a deeper understanding of the complex interaction between social media and negative consumer behavior, offering valuable insights to marketers and policymakers seeking to address the challenges posed by excessive consumption in the digital age.</p>	
Key words Social media, negative consumption behavior, social media marketing, consumer behavior, materialism, Diderot effect	
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TIIVISTELMÄ

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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Sosiaalisen median vaikutus kulutukseen on huomattava ja sosiaalisen median kautta tuleekin jatkuvasti sisältöä, joka ohjaa kuluttamaan. Sosiaalinen media luo jatkuvia ostoimpulsseja sisällöllä, joka on täynnä materiaa sekä erilaisia kokemuksia. Sosiaalisen median kautta voikin siis helposti ajautua negatiiviseen ostokäyttäytymiseen ja kulutuksen lisääntymiseen. Tästä syystä on tärkeää saada parempaa tietoa siitä, mitkä tekijät negatiivisen kulutuskäyttäytymisen taustalla ovat ja miten sosiaalinen media vaikuttaa negatiiviseen kulutuskäyttäytymiseen. Tutkimuksessa pyrittiin antamaan vastauksia tutkimuskysymykseen: Kuinka sosiaalinen media vaikuttaa negatiiviseen kulutuskäyttäytymiseen? Tutkimuksen alaongelmia olivat: Mitkä ajurit toimivat negatiivisen kulutuskäyttäytymisen taustalla? Kuinka vertailu sosiaalisessa mediassa vaikuttaa kuluttajan kulutuskäyttäytymiseen? Kuinka sosiaalinen media vahvistaa Diderot efektiä? Tämä tutkimus tutkii siis sosiaalisen median vaikutusta negatiiviseen kulutuskäyttäytymiseen.</p> <p>Hyödyntäen kattavaa kirjallisuuskatsausta, tutkimus tarkastelee erilaisia negatiivisen kulutuskäyttäytymisen ajureita, mukaan lukien minäkuva, materialismia, sosiaalista vertailua ja joukkoon kuulumisen tarvetta sosiaalisen median kontekstissa. Tutkimusmenetelmäksi tähän tutkimukseen valittiin puolistrukturoitu teemahaastattelu ja tutkimukseen haastateltiin seitsemäätoista aktiivista sosiaalisen median käyttäjää. Tulokset paljastavat, että sosiaalinen media lisää kulutusta, triggeröi negatiiviseen kulutuskäyttäytymiseen ja aktivoi negatiivisen kulutuskäyttäytymisen taustalla toimivia ajureita. Lisäksi tutkimus tuo uutta tietoa Diderot-efektin ja sosiaalisen median yhteydestä ja siitä, kuinka sosiaalinen media lisää ja vahvistaa Diderot-efektiä eli ostokierrettä. Tutkimus tarjoaa myös uusia näkemyksiä sosiaalisen vertailun vaikutuksista ostopäätöksiin, osoittaen, että vertailu sosiaalisen median alustoilla johtaa paineisiin mukautua ja jäljitellä muiden elämäntyylyjä. Tämä lisää riittämättömyyden tunteita ja impulsiivista ostamista. Sosiaalinen vertailu sosiaalisessa mediassa lisääkin materialismin kulttuuria sekä kuluttamista. Tämä pro gradu tutkielma edistää syvempää ymmärrystä sosiaalisen median ja negatiivisen kulutuskäyttäytymisen monimutkaisesta vuorovaikutuksesta, tarjoten arvokkaita näkemyksiä markkinoijille ja päättäjille, jotka pyrkivät ratkaisemaan liiallisen kulutuksen aiheuttamia haasteita digitaalisella aikakaudella.</p>	
Asiasanat Sosiaalinen media, negatiivinen kulutuskäyttäytyminen, sosiaalisen median markkinointi, kuluttajakäyttäytyminen, materialismi, Diderot-efekti	
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The widespread influence of social media platforms has revolutionized the way people interact, communicate, and engage with the world around them. The growth of social media has not only facilitated unprecedented connections but has also significantly shaped consumer behavior and patterns (Bush & Gilbert, 2002). As users immerse themselves in the world of social media, they become active participants in a virtual ecosystem where consumption is not only encouraged but often glorified (Kamal, Chu & Pedram, 2013). It can be said that the sharing of information, transparency of information, and the broad range of products and services enabled by the internet and especially social media have had a significant impact on the change in consumer behavior (Greenberg, 2010a, 2010b).

As social media becomes part of our daily routines, social media users are constantly aware of other people's activities and are highly susceptible to companies' marketing communications. The availability of opinions, knowledge, and information in online channels has led to a vast majority of consumers, especially young consumers, seeking more information on the internet and social media to support their purchase decisions and relying significantly more on peer consumers' experiences than on companies' marketing communications (Greenberg, 2010a, 2010b). According to Hayran, Anik and Gürhan-Canli (2016), people today face significant pressures concerning both existence and consumption due to social media and the content they see in these channels. This pressure inevitably causes various emotional states and thoughts, thereby leading to changes in consumer behavior (Hayran et al, 2016). Especially among young people, when one's self-image is not necessarily fully clear or structured, this can easily lead to comparison and, in some cases, imitation to achieve one's ideal self (Thi, Wang, & Lee, 2023).

Social media is filled with influencers who are followed by many users and whose recommendations and opinions are trusted by many. Often, these influencers are also considered as role models who are looked up to (Ruvio, Gavish, & Shoham, 2013; Thi et al, 2023). This can easily lead to comparing oneself to other social media users and influencers, in which case one may want to identify with the role model and mimic their lifestyle or appearance (Thi et al., 2023). Previous research by Thi et al. (2023) suggests that people whose sense of self or identity is not necessarily strong may want to imitate their role models and favorite influencers to gain acceptance in the eyes of others. Through influencers' recommendations and the products they use, we may seek confirmation for ourselves (Ruvio et al., 2013; Thi et al, 2023). Social media and social media influencer marketing is also full of stimuli that guide people to consume and acquire material (Pellegrino, Abe & Shannon, 2022; Liu, He, & Li, 2019; Frick, Matthies, Thøgersen & Santarius, 2021).

The allure of social media lies in its ability to build and sustain lifestyles where material possessions and conspicuous consumption serve as markers of social status and validation (Sun, Wang, Cheng, Li, & Chen, 2017). Beneath the surface of social media lie darker sides and negative aspects characterized by negative consumption habits and behaviors. Social media platforms act as catalysts for increased consumption and materialism and easily expose consumers to impulse purchases (Pellegrino et al., 2022). Continuous product promotion, influencer recommendations, and the pursuit of content, fuel an insatiable desire for immediate gratification, leading individuals down the path of overconsumption and financial pressure (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989). There are many reasons why we buy more than we need and often overspend at the same time. Many motives for purchases come to us through society, and many motives also come from personal and internal motives (Becker, 2021).

Beneath the polished images and recommendations of influencers on social media lies a complex network of negative consequences associated with excessive social media use and particularly with consumption behavior. This thesis tries to critically examine the harmful effects of social media on individuals' consumption habits and the multifaceted dynamics between digital platforms and consumer behavior, as well as to explore whether social media can lead to overconsumption and a cycle of purchases. One less known and studied phenomenon affecting consumption is the Diderot effect or the series of purchases, based on impulse purchases, and for this reason, the phenomenon has been chosen as one of the aspects to be studied in this thesis. A cycle of purchases is created when a new consumer product is in some way in conflict with the goods already owned, and this conflict can lead to dissatisfaction with the goods already owned (McCracken, 1986; Becker, 2021; Song, Gonzale-Jimenez & Belk, 2021). Consumer behavior on social media has been studied extensively from the perspectives of both consumers and marketers, but the influence of the Diderot effect on consumer behavior in the context of social media has not been studied much. The topic of the Diderot effect is not new, but its connection to social media is not such a researched topic. However, it is clear that with social media being so strongly present in our everyday lives, it is important to study its effect on consumption behavior and the cycle of purchases and possible overconsumption.

The research is important from the perspectives of individuals, communities, and organizations as the influence of social media grows. At the same time as marketers' understanding of social media consumer behavior increases, they can develop their marketing measures accordingly. Especially with the growing importance of responsible marketing, sustainability, and consumption, it is important to understand the effect of the Diderot effect on consumer behavior. This research seeks to inform and inspire behavior change and pave the way for a more sustainable and conscious approach to consumption in the digital age.

The significance of this research extends beyond academic inquiry to broader societal impacts. By examining the negative effects of social media on consumer behavior, this research seeks to raise awareness of the dangers of uncontrolled consumption in the digital age. In addition, the role of responsibility around consumption has risen to an increasingly significant position and many of the problems related to the environment are linked to consumers and consumption behavior, because we constantly consume products and services for the reason that not consuming is not an option for us (Gupta & Agrawal, 2018). The prevailing level of consumption is not at a very sustainable level and therefore, in the same way, continuous consumption can cause extensive destruction on our planet (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). For this reason, it is extremely critical to pay increasing attention to responsibility and consumption and the factors behind consumption.

1.2 Purpose of the study

Many of the previous studies concerning social media and its effect on consumer behavior have mainly focused on the positive aspects of social media, with fewer investigations into its negative effects. Previous research on the negative effects of social media has also centered on some of the negative consumption decisions (for example Pellegrino et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2019; Frick et al., 2021; Zheng, Yang, Zhou, Niu, Liu, & Zhou, 2020), yet these studies have not broadly considered the drivers behind negative consumption decisions or Diderot effect. There are already some studies about impulse buying in the context of social media (for example Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018; Nyrhinen, Sirola, Koskelainen, Munnukka & Wilska, 2023; De Kervenoael, Aykac & Palmer, 2009; Dodoo & Wu, 2019), but there aren't that many studies that include many different negative consumer behaviors. In addition, there is not that many previous studies about the Diderot effect, especially in the context of social media. Also, previous studies about Diderot effect (Davis & Gregory, 2003; Song et al., 2021) have neglected the complex relationship between the Diderot effect and social media in the context of negative purchasing behavior. So, it remains unclear how social media reinforces Diderot effect besides other negative consumption behaviors. By examining the reactions and experiences related to the role of social media in promoting overconsumption and negative consumption behavior, this study seeks to address the research gap in understanding the adverse effects of social

media on consumer behavior. Investigating the impact of social media on negative consumption habits and the Diderot effect is very important, when emphasizing considerate responsibility and negative purchasing behavior are important from a personal well-being and responsibility point of view.

By examining and comparing consumer reactions and experiences regarding the impact of social media on consumption decisions, this study aims to address the research gap regarding the negative effects of social media on consumption decisions, negative consumption behavior, and the spiral of buying (i.e., the Diderot effect). Investigating negative consumption behavior and the influence of social media on consumption decisions is important because responsibility is increasingly emphasized, and negative consumption decisions have adverse consequences for individuals and their well-being (for example Zheng et al., 2020; Thoumrungroje, 2018; Sharif & Khanekharab, 2017; Olsen, Khoi & Tuu, 2022). Furthermore, this study seeks to identify the drivers behind negative consumption behavior. This thesis complements previous consumer behavior research by enhancing understanding of the impact of social media on negative consumption behavior and the underlying drivers of negative consumption behavior. Additionally, the concept of the Diderot effect brings a new perspective to this kind of research. The goal of this research is to increase understanding of negative consumer behavior and overconsumption in the context of social media. Based on this goal, the research problem is divided into main and sub-questions.

In the light of the aforementioned increasingly important questions, this thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

Main research question:

- How does social media influence negative consumption behavior?

Sub-questions:

- What drivers contribute to negative consumption behavior?
- How does comparison on social media affect consumers' purchasing behavior?
- How does social media reinforce the Diderot effect?

The proposed research questions cover areas that have received scientific attention in the past. Despite this, the aim of this study is to provide new insights into the field, especially the impact of social media on overconsumption, negative consumption behavior, and the manifestation of the Diderot effect. In addition, this study aims to find out consumers' attitudes towards social comparison in the context of social media, which enriches our understanding of the dynamics of contemporary consumer behavior. In the empirical section, the objective is to determine how active social media users perceive and experience the influence of social media on their consumption behavior, as well as whether they recognize social media as fostering negative consumption behavior. Therefore, the

interaction between theoretical background knowledge and empirical data leads to a deeper understanding of the impact of social media on consumption behavior, thereby enhancing the understanding and depth of consumer behavior.

1.3 Structure of the study

The structure of this thesis consists of an introduction, theoretical chapters, an empirical part, and a discussion of the results. The thesis is divided into two main parts: theoretical and empirical parts. In the theoretical part, a framework for empirical analysis based on previous research is created. The empirical part, on the other hand, focuses on presenting research findings based on primary data. The theoretical part of the thesis examines negative consumption behavior, its different forms, and underlying factors. In addition, the theory is based on the context of social media and its possible role behind negative consumption decisions.

In the first content chapter, negative consumer behavior, its different forms, and underlying factors are examined in detail. The objective of this section is to present key concepts related to negative consumer behavior. Additionally, this chapter explores the factors underlying negative consumer behavior. In the first content chapter, the understanding of social media and its significance in consumer behavior is also deepened. This section investigates how social media and influencers fuel negative consumer behavior. Following this, the methodology section of the thesis describes the research method and explains how the research data were collected and analyzed. Moreover, this chapter justifies the choices made during the process. Chapter four presents the results of the research, and chapter five presents the conclusions and reflections on the research results guided by the theoretical framework. The aim is to reflect on the consistency of the results of this study with previous research and literature. The fifth chapter also summarizes the theoretical and practical conclusions and examines the reliability of the research, considering possible limitations that may affect the research results and conclusions. Suggestions for further research are also mentioned at the end.

1.4 Use of artificial intelligence

In this study, artificial intelligence was used for transcribing and translating interviews. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and transcribed using artificial intelligence. The interview data was checked, proofread, and corrected, after which the material was translated into English with the help of artificial intelligence. The researcher reviewed and proofread the translations to ensure that the meaning of the interviews remained the same as in Finnish.

2 NEGATIVE CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This chapter introduces different forms of negative consumption behavior and the drivers behind it. Additionally, the chapter discusses the impact of social media on negative consumption behavior. This chapter begins by presenting various forms of negative consumption behavior, followed by a discussion of the drivers behind negative consumption behavior. Finally, the specific influence of social media is highlighted, addressing influencer marketing and the imitation of influencers, which are closely related to the topic of this thesis.

2.1 Negative consumption behaviors

2.1.1 Impulse buying

Impulse buying behavior is described as the sudden urge to buy something without prior planning (Rook, 1987; Baumeister, 2002), and without considering its long-term effects (Nyrhinen et al., 2023). Impulse buying entails being driven by a pursuit of intense emotional experiences and pleasure, as noted by Iyer, Blut, Xiao, and Grewal (2020), Nyrhinen et al. (2023), and Sharma, Sivakumaran, and Marshall (2010). It involves spontaneous actions and a quest for novelty, variety, and enjoyment (Nyrhinen et al, 2023). While impulse buying is typically motivated by the immediate gratification of positive emotions associated with purchases, it is generally regarded as undesirable due to its tendency to lead to negative consequences such as feelings of guilt, dissatisfaction, and regret post-purchase (Nyrhinen et al, 2023). Negative consequences of unplanned impulse purchases can include debt, stress, or anxiety (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012).

In the background of impulse buying is the competition between the individual's internal desire and the super-ego, where this desire tries to overcome the impulse to buy things without rational thinking (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). Impulse buying is usually caused by external triggers and these external

triggers stimulate an individual's impulsive nature leading to impulse buying (Wang, 2015). Social media and content created by influencers and peers increase the impulsive nature of an individual, which often leads to a willingness to buy. This applies especially to online consumers who have a high social media intensity and who constantly browse social media pages and are therefore often exposed to advertising content made by influencers (Pellegrino et al., 2022). In addition, conspicuous buying behavior has been found to be associated with social media users who want to belong to some specific group and receive social encouragement from others and who often compare themselves to influencers and other people. In fact, impulsive shoppers often seem to buy products in a conspicuous way, usually buying eye-catching items they've noticed on other people on social media (Pellegrino et al., 2022).

The nature of social media and comparing oneself to others as well as promotion, sales and the shopping environment increase the individual's impulse to buy. This can be seen to especially affect online consumers who have a high level of social media engagement and are constantly browsing social media pages, and through that, they are constantly exposed to sales promotion and advertising materials (Pellegrino et al., 2022). Smart devices offer a continuous stream of immediate consumption opportunities, which lead to certain consumption-related challenges. One of these challenges is temptations and the ease of impulse purchases (Dodoo & Wu, 2019). In addition, according to previous studies (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Wilcox, Kramer, & Sen, 2011), people's frequent use of social media makes them do irrational decisions and increases consumption of luxury goods, i.e. visible goods. According to studies, factors affecting online impulse buying are pictures of products, several advertisements, cheap prices of products, and good offers (de Kervenoael et al., 2009). Previous research has also found a close connection between self and impulse buying (Dittmar & Drury, 2000).

The influence of social media on individuals' behavior is very significant due to the diversity of experiences shared through social media (Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018). Positive brand perceptions can easily be cultivated on social media, and it triggers to do spontaneous and impulsive purchase decisions (Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018; Xiang, Zheng, Lee, & Zhao, 2016; Nyrhinen et al, 2023). In particular, young people are at the forefront of digital consumption because they are highly active social media users and have grown up surrounded by social media (Nyrhinen et al, 2023). Therefore, especially young consumers are susceptible to marketing happening on social media and are also vulnerable to peer evaluation on social media (Savolainen, Oksanen, Kaakinen, Sirola, Zych, & Paek, 2021). According to studies, younger consumers are more likely to make impulsive purchases, while older consumers usually have better self-control (Iyer et al., 2020).

Because of the nature of the online setting, consumers often respond instinctively to cues from social media, which frequently result in impulsive buying. In a social media environment, people are also easily influenced by peer consumers who share uplifting and personal content, which increases their tendency to make unexpected purchases (Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018; Xiang et al., 2016; Nyrhinen et al, 2023). Especially younger consumers might be very

susceptible to peer influences and subjective norms on online platforms (Savolainen et al., 2021). Previous research indicates that consumers who are heavy users of social media tend to be more susceptible to making impulsive buys (Nyrhinen et al, 2023). Consumers who deeply engage with social media often lose sight of their other worries and use social media as an escape from their everyday issues (Thoumrungroje, 2018; Nyrhinen et al., 2023). In this case, their materialistic traits are emphasized because social media often emphasizes these traits, and this can easily lead to impulsive or compulsive purchases (Thoumrungroje, 2018; Nyrhinen et al, 2023). For these reasons, consumers who are susceptible to the influence of others and more inclined to act impulsively on social media tend to make impulse buys more easily compared to those who are less impulsive (Nyrhinen et al, 2023).

2.1.2 Compulsive buying

Compulsive buying behavior is best described as *uncontrollable and excessive buying*, which is often influenced by internal tension and frustration, which is tried to be extinguished by shopping (Pellegrino et al., 2022). Compulsive buying behavior can cause momentary pleasure after being rewarded, which can at least temporarily improve mood (Pellegrino et al., 2022). O'Guinn and Faber (1989) defined compulsive buying behavior as the habit of buying things too much and too often. Typical of compulsive buying behavior are excessive or poorly controlled buying desires or behaviors (Pellegrino et al., 2022). An essential aspect of compulsive buying is the interest or feeling that something must be purchased, and this is often experienced as disturbing and uncontrollable (Gallagher, Watt, Weaver, & Murphy, 2016).

According to Dittmar (2005), compulsive buying is very typical of the motivation to pursue and create an "ideal self" through material goods. When buying consumer goods, consumers are often not interested in the economic or practical value, but rather the psychological benefit. Psychologically motivated buying is becoming an increasingly prominent feature in contemporary consumer behavior, and purchases are often made in an attempt to improve self-image, self-esteem, or relationships (Dittmar, 2005). However, it is very common for people to engage in shopping behavior that is uncontrolled and excessive, leading to psychological distress and other negative consequences. The extreme form of such shopping behavior is "compulsive buying behavior," which is a kind of behavioral disorder characterized by impaired control and resulting harmful consequences. Compulsive buying is defined as impulsive, excessive, and uncontrolled purchasing (Dittmar, 2005). The difference between compulsive buying and impulsive buying is the "inability to control the desire" (Olsen et al, 2022). In consumer behavior literature, impulsive buying is associated with pleasure, excitement, and hedonistically motivated purchasing behavior, while compulsive buying is seen as addiction and is associated with guilt, harm, and the darker side of consumer behavior (Olsen et al, 2022). Compulsive buying is described as chronic, excessive, and repetitive behavior and is often seen as an uncontrollable obsession or coping mechanism (Kukar-Kinney, Scheinbaum & Schaefers 2015). It has also been found that there are five factors associated with

compulsive buying: the tendency to spend, impulsivity during purchases, dysfunctional behaviors associated with purchases, emotions during purchases, and post-purchase guilt (Gallagher et al, 2016). Also, Herabadi, Verplanke, and van Knippenberg's (2009) study found that impulsive buyers experience positive emotions (excitement, happiness, and pleasure) during their purchasing behavior. When consumers achieve psychological pleasure through shopping, they tend to increase the frequency of shopping, and this can easily lead to overuse and addiction. Over time, the pleasure and impulse of shopping can easily turn into a shopping addiction (Herabadi et al, 2009). Thus, compulsive buying can also be defined as the extreme form of impulsive buying.

Research on social media has shown that intensive use of the platform significantly influences compulsive buying (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2009; Sharif and Khanekharab, 2017; Pellegrino et al., 2022). In social media, it is very easy to compare yourself and your life to others. Social comparison plays a huge role in influencing the subjective well-being of social media users, and social media is particularly likely to negatively affect users who tend to engage in social comparison (Tiggemann, Hayden, Brown, & Veldhuis, 2018; Zheng et al., 2020). Users publicly present their lives and possessions to their followers (Chu, 2011), forcing other consumers with their own insecurities to compensate for these negative feelings with purchases. Studies of social media have indeed revealed that intensive use of the platform significantly affects compulsive buying (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2009; Sharif & Khanekharab, 2017; Pellegrino et al., 2022). Social media intensity refers to the level of activity and commitment to social media that a social media user has (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). According to previous studies (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Wilcox et al., 2011), constant use of social media makes consumers make irrational decisions and increases consumption of luxury goods, i.e. visible goods.

2.1.3 Conspicuous buying

In conspicuous consumption, it is typical to show off one's own wealth through showcasing goods and services (Trigg, 2001). Conspicuous consumption is often referred to as "expressive consumption" and "luxury consumption" (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). According to the literature, conspicuous consumption is described from various perspectives, but the pursuit of status is seen as the primary motive behind it. Additionally, the role of status, identity, and material esteem can be clearly seen as factors underlying conspicuous consumption (Kumar, Bagozzi, Manrai, & Manrai, 2022). Perez-Truglia (2013) suggests that the consumption of visible products, which are seen and positively perceived by others, may lead to happiness by fostering positive perceptions of the consumer. According to Mandel and Nowlis (2008), engaging in conspicuous consumption and displaying it can help consumers feel connected to the groups they aspire to be part of, which in turn enhances their happiness and satisfaction. Additionally, Kumar et al. (2022) argue that consumption acts as a means of empowerment, helping to build identity and allowing for self-expression by consumers. Conspicuous buying often means presenting expensive luxury products or services to others (Sundie, Kenrick, Griskevicius, Tybur, Vohs, & Beal, 2011). The

motive for conspicuous buying is often some social drivers, for example, trying to impress, needing to belong, showing off, or accumulating appreciation through possessions (Nunes, Drèze & Han, 2011). In addition, conspicuous buying behavior has been found to be associated with social media users who want to belong to some specific group and receive social encouragement from others and who often compare themselves to influencers and other people. In fact, impulsive shoppers often seem to buy products in a conspicuous way, usually buying eye-catching items they've noticed on other people on social media (Pellegrino et al., 2022).

Spending is very strongly linked to emotions and psychology, and the motive behind spending is mostly desire, not necessity. According to Veblen (Vernon, 1974), conspicuous consumption is strongly associated with the purpose of showing off and consuming to show one's position in society through the goods one owns. He has pointed out that conspicuous consumption is a purchase which purpose is to present himself and his own aristocratic class at the same time as other classes trying to resemble this class (Vernon, 1974.) Psychological factors are strongly present in this kind of consumption, such as seeking the appreciation of others and the need to belong. In addition, this type of consumption is strongly associated with hedonistic consumption and the emotions behind consumption decisions (Vernon, 1974.). It can be seen that in visible consumption, emotions guide people's purchasing decisions, and consumption is not necessarily thought of so rationally (Cohen, Pham & Andrade, 2008; Hung & Mukhopadhyay, 2012). Negative buying behavior and the Diderot effect are strongly based on hedonistic consumption and emotions. In addition, in Diderot-effect there is usually conspicuous consumption linked to the phenomenon as well.

Several studies have shown that there is a connection between enhanced self-image and conspicuous purchase behavior (Wilcox et al., 2011; Thourmrunroje, 2018). This is due to the fact, that, through social media, it is possible to interact with others and through that, you also get a lot of product advertising and recommendations. This increases the temptation to make impulse purchases instead of mandatory purchases. According to Wilcox and Stephen's (2013) study, the use of social media increases self-esteem and at the same time stimulates the desire to spend. The time spent on social media platforms is triggering to impulsive purchase decisions (Wilcox & Stephen, 2013). Social media can indeed be seen to increase visible consumption. In social media, users easily compare themselves to influencers, whom they look up to and who are almost like "idealized" versions of themselves (Richins & Rudmin, 1994). Significant consumption and its promotion on social media often leads to a boost in self-esteem, as consumers share usually only the highlights of themselves and their life, which often receives a positive reception (Pellegrino et al., 2022).

2.1.4 Diderot-effect

The Diderot effect is a fairly new concept in scientific research, although the definition and the origin of the concept is very old. The concept dates back to the 19th century and this concept of consumer behavior is still very descriptive of

today's consumer behavior as well and the principle still works in the same way. Today, however, the concept can be associated with overconsumption, which is a very current topic. The Diderot effect is based on the idea that the purchase of a new item inspires the purchase of additional new items that are suitable for this specific new purchase, and this can easily lead to a cycle or a series of purchases (Song et al, 2021). In other words, the Diderot effect is a chain reaction where a new consumer product inspires and triggers the consumer to buy more products that fit this new consumer product. A cycle of purchases is created when a new consumer product is in some way in conflict with the goods already owned, and this conflict can lead to dissatisfaction with the goods already owned (McCracken, 1986; Becker, 2021; Song et al, 2021). This conflict between new and old products often arises because the products do not look good together and this incompatibility can also be cultural, or image-based.

According to McCracken (1986), possessions are used as a means of reflecting perceptions of the self and as a form of self-expression. His idea of using things as a form of self-expression is taken even further in the definition of the concept of "Diderot unities". The history of the concept is based on the fact that the French philosopher Denis Diderot received a new gown as a gift, which inspired him to redo his entire interior so that the new gown would also match his interior and other possessions (McCracken, 1988; Becker, 2021; Song et al, 2021). He thought the robe was so magnificent that his own property was not compatible with it (McCracken, 1988; Becker, 2021; Song et al, 2021). This can be used as a metaphor for the Diderot effect. The effect therefore means a buying series that leads to overspending (Lorenzen, 2015). Indeed, the Diderot effect has been defined, according to McCracken, as "a force that encourages the individual to maintain cultural consistency in his/her complement of consumer goods". This effect works in three different ways, the first of which is to maintain "unity" or consistency in the whole of the property and to maintain that whole so that it does not include products that do not fit into that whole (McCracken, 1988). Secondly, it includes consumers and related organizations using this coherence to shape narratives around consumption and lifestyle choices. The third method of operation is the so-called decoupling and creating new product groups with the help of new products. This establishment of a new "unity" typically occurs through what is often referred to as "the initial key purchase" (McCracken, 1988). McCracken mentions about certain product groups that seem to "hold" together with certain lifestyles. According to literature, these product unities sometimes break up with the arrival of an intruder product, as for example in the story from which the Diderot effect got its name (McCracken, 1988; Davis & Gregory, 2003).

Based on previous studies of the Diderot effect, it can be assumed that the new self, created by the Diderot effect, brings changes to consumers consumption habits (Song et al, 2021; McCracken, 1988; Davis & Gregory, 2003). According to Song et al (2021) the Diderot effect can be strongly linked to materialism and consumption habits and the Diderot effect can be strong, especially with products that most strongly shape one's self-image and which communicate to others that this is who I am. A person who wants, for example, to improve or make a better version of herself, her clothes, or her interior decoration, constantly begins to notice flaws in her life, and with her purchase decisions she tries to improve herself

and her life in general. Certain types of "identity changes" can easily cause a series of purchases because you want to modify yourself in a certain direction and you want to fix all the so-called unbalanced things so that they will fit into the new self. Especially consumers who want to fit into a certain model are prone and motivated to use their consumption decisions to lead their lives in the direction in which they get the version of themselves they want (Song et al, 2021).

Spending is very strongly linked to emotions and psychology, and the motive behind spending is mostly desire, not necessity. According to Veblen (Vernon, 1974), conspicuous consumption is strongly associated with the purpose of showing off and consuming to show one's position in society through the goods one owns. He has pointed out that conspicuous consumption is a purchase which purpose is to present himself and his own aristocratic class at the same time as other classes trying to resemble this class (Vernon, 1974). Psychological factors are strongly present in this kind of consumption, such as seeking the appreciation of others and the need to belong. In addition, this type of consumption is strongly associated with hedonistic consumption and the emotions behind consumption decisions. In visible consumption, emotions guide people's purchasing decisions, and consumption is not necessarily thought of so rationally (Cohen et al., 2008; Hung & Mukhopadhyay, 2012). Diderot-effect is strongly based on hedonistic consumption and emotions. In addition, in the Diderot effect there is usually conspicuous consumption linked to the phenomenon

Diderot-unities

According to previous studies on Diderot unities, a new object inspires the acquisition of additional objects. Song et al. (2021) broadened the notion of Diderot unities to encompass how a "new self" also influences changes in the collection of consumer items. Focusing on cosmetic surgery, they highlighted the interconnectedness between changes in personal appearance and material consumption habits. Their research presents an extended concept of Diderot unities that goes beyond just individuals and objects to include experiences as well. They found that individuals who undergo cosmetic enhancements often experience a perceived misalignment between their altered appearance and their current belongings and lifestyle. According to their research, a surgically enhanced person may perceive an imbalance between the self and the assembly of self-expression objects, and the imbalance triggers a series of purchases to restore balance by acquiring possessions and experiences that match their new self (Song et al., 2021). Some social media users can also be seen behaving in accordance with this model, imitating their favorite influencers and buying a product inspired by the influencer and then buying more and more things that fit this new product, new self, and new lifestyle that has been imitated from the influencer.

Researchers have presented reports according to which materialistic consumption is connected to an idealized self-state (Richins, 2004). McCracken (1986) argues that possessions are a way to reflect perceptions of the self. The idea of using possessions as a way to express a new self underlines McCracken's (1988) "Diderot-unities", which are named after the French philosopher (Song et al,

2021). Diderot was given a new robe, prompting him to redecorate his entire home to ensure that the rest of his possessions would match the elegance of his new attire. In this way, Diderot unities are a driving force behind excessive consumption. Diderot-unities are a process of overconsumption (Lorenzen, 2015). Based on previous research and the concept of Diderot unities, it can be assumed that through social media influencers, the public will easily have a desire to buy, and through these purchases, consumers can adopt increased materialistic consumption in order to match their new self and emphasize it even more.

Previous studies show that the self plays a significant role in consumer choices and is involved in shaping numerous consumption-related attitudes and behaviors, including brand loyalty, buying intentions, and emotional attachment to brands (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, 2011; Song et al, 2021). McCracken's (1988) analysis of Diderot unities implies that consumers might engage in heightened consumption to achieve consistency among their belongings, particularly when a new item serves as a trigger—for Diderot, it was an extravagant gown—that increased consumption. Based on the previous research of Diderot unities, this thesis will extend McCracken's (1988) account by arguing that social media can affect the self and self-concept, and these changes in the self in turn lead to different materialistic consumption practices.

2.2 Drivers behind negative consumption behavior

2.2.1 Self-concept

Consumption is driven by motivations based on self-control theory driven by various factors (Song et al, 2021). There is a crucial role of the self in human behavior and consumption practices. Previous theories based on self-related theories confirm the important role of the self in people's behavior and consumption behavior (Bem, 1972; Sirgy, 1982; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Fournier, 1998). Self-concept is defined as “the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings, which refers to the self as an object” (Rosenberg, 1989, p.7). This is also strongly related to the dimension of social perception and its influence on the formation of self-concept (Mead, 1934). The self-concept is therefore a very multidimensional entity that is made up of different areas. Self-concept includes the real self as well as the desired or ideal self (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Reed & Americus, 2002; Song et al, 2021). Self-concept is not just a static entity, but it is shaped and changing by different things (Gonzalez-Jimenez, 2017; Markus & Wurf, 1987). Based on these theories, it can be seen that consumers are able to influence themselves and their self-view and change their self-view and identity. It also has a great influence on the consumer's decisions and choices, as it is part of the formation of consumption-related attitudes and behavior patterns, such as brand commitment, purchase intentions, or emotional brand attachment. (Malär et al., 2011). Consumers may drift into a series of purchases when trying to combine their new and old possessions and when striving towards their goal or

ideal self. In this case, the new products may only cause an increase in consumption.

The self-concept is relatively weak in early adulthood, but in middle-aged people, for example, the self-concept begins to be quite stable and clear. For this reason, older consumers do not feel the need to change brands or their style as much, for example, as they have already developed a certain attachment to the products and brands they have used (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010; Song et al, 2021). Younger consumers are also easily exposed to content on social media that can affect their self-image and expectations of themselves (Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian & Halliwell, 2015).

2.2.2 Materialism

Materialism is very strongly present in today's consumer society and has been described as one of the central forces in today's consumer society (Sun et al., 2017). Essential in materialism is the belief that acquiring material possessions would be the source of ultimate happiness and life satisfaction (Belk 1984; Richins & Dawson 1992; Richins & Rudmin 1994; Sirgy 1998). However, materialism has several definitions and is a very broad topic to define. Materialism has been described, for example, as "the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions" and the pursuit of desired spaces or life goals through the acquisition and ownership of material goods (Richins, 2004; Belk, 1984). Hurst, Dittmar, Bond, and Kasser (2013) define materialism as "a set of values, goals, or expectations related to the acquisition of wealth and material goods" (Hurst et al., 2013, p. 257). Research has demonstrated that consumers who hold strong materialistic values often buy products as a way to forge their identity, attain happiness, enhance their self-image, and gain social acknowledgment from others (Richins, 2004). Materialistic consumers try to make positive impressions of themselves to others through the things they own (Sharma, 2011). That is why materialism is so strongly linked to the self-concept. Materialism is also often associated with a certain concern about status or identity in relation to other people (Sharma, 2011). Social contacts and culture can be strongly associated with materialism because they strongly influence materialism and the effort to achieve the desired position in society (Twitchell, 1999). Materialism is also strongly associated with the constant desire to get more and more, but this "more" is undefined (Richins, 2017, p. 481).

Richins and Dawson (1992) define materialism as a value system that is divided into three different values: centrality, happiness, and success. In this context, centrality refers to the emphasis on physical objects in an individual's life. According to the definition by Larsen, Sirgy, and Wright, (1999), a key aspect of materialism is the individual who considers material objects to be very important. Sirgy et al. (2012) introduce a nuanced perspective, defining materialism as possessing both negative and positive aspects. According to the model, Sirgy et al. (2012) developed, materialism may result in life dissatisfaction if materialists assess their living standards through unrealistic, idealized expectations. This, in turn, makes it more likely that they will view their own standard of living and overall life in a negative light. Shrum et al. (2013)

contribute a functional perspective on materialism, which sees materialistic behavior as motivated goal pursuit, where the purpose is to build and maintain self-identity. According to this perspective, materialism is defined by how much the consumer constructs her identity through her purchases.

People who are high on the materialism scale typically have stronger desires and expectations for material goods and may struggle with their possessions more than those who are less materialistic because of potentially unattainable goals (Richins & Dawson 1992; Sirgy 1998; Sirgy et al. 2012). Research indicates that materialists view consumption as an escape and feel they have little control over their spending behaviors, which ultimately undermines well-being. Because of materialists' unending desires and impractical expectations, they find it harder to achieve satisfaction with their quality of life compared to those who are less materialistic (Shaw, 2002). People with a high level of materialism are more prone to compare themselves to wealthier individuals than they are, and this can lead to envy and a sense of injustice, which in turn can lead to a decrease in life satisfaction and happiness (Sirgy 1998).

Previous studies have shown that consumers' materialistic values play a large role in consumer behavior and psychology (Belk, 2010; Richins, 2017). Materialism is strongly associated with conspicuous consumption, with which one wants to show status and wealth, and it is also associated with maintaining and improving a positive self-image through consumption (Janssens et al, 2011; Kasser, 2002). Although materialism is often associated with negative things, and is often associated with things as overspending, materialism can also have positive effects. According to previous research, hedonistic pleasure explains the positive effect of materialism, and numerous previous studies have shown that materialists think owning and acquiring material is central to their life satisfaction (e.g., Richins, 2011, 2013; Shrum et al., 2013). Often, when studying materialism, the focus is on the negative consequences of materialism, for example experiencing worse subjective well-being, but materialistic values do not automatically belong to only positive or negative classifications. Materialism can also be strongly associated with determination to succeed, self-confidence, and an uplift in mood (Richins & Dawson, 1992; Hudders & Pandelaere, 2012). Thus, materialism is a personal value that emphasizes the acquisition and possession of material while the consumer moves toward her life goals (Richins, 2011; Richins & Dawson, 1992).

Shrum et al's (2013) point of view to materialism is very functional and in it, materialistic behavior is seen as a motivated pursuit of a goal and in which the purpose is to build and create self-identity. According to this definition, in materialism, people participate in the creation of identity through consumption (Shrum et al, 2013). It is also stated that consumers who have strong materialistic impulses and who are status-oriented in acquiring and displaying materials often use goods and clothes to impress others, and in their lives material is in huge role, and they use these things as a way to show their success to the outside (Arndt, Solomon, Kasser, & Sheldon, 2004).

2.2.3 Social Comparison Theory

Social comparison theory (SCT) suggests that people are intrinsically motivated to verify their own relationship with others based on certain evaluation processes (Festinger, 1954). Social media channels offer their users opportunities to define their status as better, equal, or worse than their acquaintances. Social comparison can lead to either a strengthening or a weakening of self-esteem, depending on the direction in which one compares oneself. The social comparison that occurs downward suggests that comparing oneself to those in a worse position works to boost self-esteem, while upward social comparison works in the opposite way and can lower self-esteem (Liu et al., 2019). Researchers understand that consumption plays a very central role in the formation of identity. Building an identity is a reflexive project, where interaction with others acts as a central guiding factor, and in addition to this, lifestyles and consumption are essential for the formation and re-formation of identity (Bauman, 1996). Many social media users make a conscious effort to make others aware of their achievements and show off these achievements, thereby convincing others that their life is better than it actually is.

Based on social comparison theory, social media platforms can be regarded as spaces where users have the opportunity to observe and measure their own lives against the lives of others (Festinger, 1954). The formation of social identity can also be seen to be influenced by an individual's relationship with social media influencers and belonging to desired communities (Tajfel, 1981). Social comparison can indeed be seen as a key mechanism that affects the subjective well-being of social media users, and social media is most likely to have a negative effect on those users who have a tendency towards social comparison (Tiggemann et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2020). Users publicly present their lives and possessions to their followers (Chu, 2011), forcing other consumers with their own insecurities to compensate for these negative feelings with purchases. The idealized self that is presented in social media channels includes not only the inner self but also the surrounding possessions or experiences that define us (Belk, 2013). Based on these highlighted properties, others form impressions of us and create connections with other people and our past selves. The content of social media forms a certain kind of collection that reflects who one is and what one thinks (Carroll & Romano, 2011). This gives social media users the opportunity to enhance their idealized selves by bringing out certain things about themselves.

Researchers often use social comparison theory (SCT) to examine negative buying behavior on social media (Liu et al., 2019; Pellegrino et al., 2022). Users often compare themselves to influencers and other users, and especially influencers are often seen as ideal versions of themselves, admired and identified with. Social media can be seen to have a direct effect on visible consumption. Consumption and its exposure on social media leads to an increase in the self-esteem of users, as people share mainly highlights of their lives, which often receives positive reactions from other users (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). Such positive reactions might influence to individual's self-control and may lead to a negative buying behavior as a result of social media use (Pellegrino et al., 2022).

The need to belong

The desire for interpersonal connections, or the need for belonging, is a fundamental human motivation that largely guides individuals' behavior (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), the need for acceptance is closely tied to the formation and maintenance of social bonds. They argue that belongingness can be almost as compelling a need as other basic human needs and human culture heavily conditions the pressure to provide belongingness. People are motivated by and have always been motivated by a strong desire to form and maintain lasting interpersonal bonds, and individuals often seek repeated and positive interactions (Alt, 2015). The fear of social exclusion motivates people to seek out groups. Thus, the fear of social exclusion motivates people to act similarly to others and thus try to avoid exclusion. The fear of social exclusion is driven by psychological factors and refers to the unpleasant anticipation of being left out of the mainstream group (Alt, 2015). The fear of social exclusion can be seen as consisting of feelings or anticipation of alienation, being ignored, left behind, and strongly driven by the concern of being apart from the group (Elhai, Levine, Dvorak, & Hall, 2016). Often, this fear of exclusion is attempted to be alleviated by pursuing popular trends and staying on trend to gain acceptance from others.

As social creatures, we live in various relationships with other people, and these connections shape our identity and actions (Vargas-Bianchi, 2022). Thus, according to Vargas-Bianchi (2022), for example, the choice of consumption functions is one part of social reality, and our choices are influenced by the impact of our friends, family, and peers on our purchasing decisions. They argue that some consumption decisions are also made to promote belongingness to a certain group of people and to experience a sense of belonging through it. According to Griskevicius and Kenrick (2013), the desire to belong affects purchasing decisions in several product categories. They argue that products in certain product categories help people to care for their social relationships in a certain way. Vargas-Bianchi (2022) also argues that the purpose of photos and/or messages shared on platforms like Facebook and Instagram is to promote an individual's connection to groups that interest them. Social media often showcases a lot of material and experiences, highlighting aspects of oneself and one's interests, thereby aiming to show identification with a particular group to others. According to Vargas-Bianchi (2022), brands or products also serve as signals of acceptance and facilitate belongingness. They argue that consumers acquire certain products to adhere to the norms of a certain group or align their purchasing behavior with the tastes or opinions of group members to belong.

2.3 The role of social media on negative consumption behavior

Many people spend several hours a day on their phones and on social media in their everyday lives. Social media and its content are deeply ingrained in our daily routines, which can bring both opportunities and risks for sustainable

consumption (Frick et al., 2021). As exposure to social media content increases in our daily lives, it can significantly affect people's consumption motives, for example, through social media commercial advertisements or peer communication on social media platforms (Frick et al., 2021). Advertising has generally been claimed to increase consumption through heightened aspirations and consumption norms (Kasser & Kanner, 2004), and therefore, the impact of Internet usage must be considered in consumption behavior research.

As the time spent in the online environment in our daily lives is so significant, it is essential to examine how social media usage and its content affect consumption aspirations and behaviors. Previous studies have found a positive correlation between Internet usage and material desires (Pellegrino et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2019; Frick et al., 2021). Previous research on online content has also categorized two different types of content that can influence consumption motives and behaviors. These content types are online advertising and social media peer-generated content, defined as content produced by users on social media platforms (Frick et al., 2021). Consumers tend to favor information coming from meaningful social networks and trust it (Flanagin, Hocevar, & Samahito, 2014). This shapes consumers' normative beliefs and subsequently leads to social pressure or subjective norms. Through this, individuals may also engage in certain risk behaviors, such as impulsive buying. In the digital realm, the vast amount of information and the rapid pace of social media prompt users to make quick decisions using the information that is immediately accessible (Flanagin et al., 2014; Savolainen et al., 2021).

2.3.1 Social media

Social networks are a channel for sharing various information about products and experiences. Kamal et al. (2013) state, that consumers have higher materialism as the intensity of their social network usage increases. Social media users build a certain kind of identity for themselves in social media in order to encourage other users to engage with this content (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2011). According to them materialistic individuals often compare their own standard of living with the standard of living of others, and the comparisons lead to a growing use of social media, as social media offers its users a vantage point into the lives of others. In addition, Festinger (1954) states, that individuals try to define themselves and their worth by comparing themselves to others, either upwardly to "better" or downwardly to "worse." According to this theory, upward comparison leads to negative self-evaluations, while downward comparison leads to self-improvement and increases self-confidence. Social media and advertising content mostly contain idealized images, exposure to them can lead to comparing yourself to others and to increasing the need to buy things that you have previously seen on social media (Lee, Kim, & Ham, 2016).

In social media people want to present idealized and highlighted representations about themselves to other people and the ideal self is brought out through the assets and experiences presented in the profiles. Through conspicuous consumption, a respected position in the social network is sought, and many consumers buy goods because of their symbolic meaning (Tutgun-

Ünal, 2020). In social media, users constantly see others' polished content about their lives, and this can cause identity fragmentation and negative buying behavior (Tutgun-Ünal, 2020). The term social influence refers to "perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a given behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). Social pressures are often caused by people important to the person, such as friends, acquaintances, relatives, colleagues, or business partners. The fear of social exclusion is the main reason why individuals strive to comply with social norms (Bamberg & Möser, 2007). Social norms strongly guide behavior in collectivist cultures, and individuals in these cultures are often motivated by social comparison and imitation. Social influence is indeed considered a critical factor in the formation of purchasing habits (Alzubaidi et al, 2021).

Social media platforms offer consumers opportunities to obtain, share, and exchange various information about products and experiences. Because these sites are so popular, marketers use them to communicate with potential consumers, often through influencers. Often, social media users carefully manage their profiles to highlight mainly positive characteristics and to present a more idealized self to others (Ellison et al., 2007). According to previous studies, the use of Facebook can lead to unhappiness for its users, and its users have been found to have envy and low satisfaction with their own lives, and others' lives are generally seen as better than their own (Krasnova et al., 2013). The same can also be applied to other social media channels, where one's own life is presented in a positive light. Comparison between oneself and others can increase the willingness to also present oneself in a positive light, and this can also lead to visible consumption, which is presented on social media. It is typical of social media that users there often bring a very positive picture of their lives and emphasize the best moments of their lives. This easily creates a false image, as users rarely show bad moments or failures on social media channels. This easily leads to thinking that other people's lives are better than one's own life, even though the reality could be something completely different. Goffman (1959) long ago identified impression management as an interactive process in which individuals are motivated to present themselves in the best possible light. Previous literature has introduced the concept of the "postmodern identity problem", where identity is constantly rewritten and reformulated (Bauman, 1996). In social media, this phenomenon is further accentuated, as social media users modify their identities in an attempt to gain approval from others. Social media channels are very powerful tools for constructing and presenting identity stories, and it allows its users to narrate their lives the way they want. Social media users often use decision heuristics when they create mental images of the relative happiness or well-being of other social media users. Previous studies have shown that social media users build a self-descriptive identity to encourage other users to engage (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2011).

Social media facilitates interaction between people and also easily exposes people to direct and indirect recommendations about various products, which increases the temptation to make impulse purchases instead of mandatory purchases (Pellegrino et al., 2022). Increased social media engagement and SMI increases an individual's conspicuous consumption. So, it has been found that the time spent browsing social media correlates with the need to do purchases.

Social media therefore increases visible consumption in many different ways. In addition, research has shown that people with higher materialism are usually active social media users and are also more positive towards it. It can also be seen that people who are more open and positive toward social media might be more easily prone to negative consumption behavior (Pellegrino et al., 2022). Moreover, within social media platforms, individuals are swayed by their peers who share engaging and tailored content, heightening their inclination towards spontaneous buying (Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018; Xiang et al., 2016; Nyrhinen et al., 2023). Especially younger consumers are greatly impacted by peer influence and subjective norms in the digital realm (Savolainen et al., 2021). Previous research also suggests that individuals who frequently use social media are more prone to exhibit impulsive buying behaviors (Thoumrungroje, 2018). Thoumrungroje (2018) states that individuals who are heavily involved in social media might neglect other aspects of their lives and find relief from everyday stresses through their online activities. They may also embrace the materialistic values frequently showcased on these platforms, which could lead to impulsive and compulsive purchasing habits (Thoumrungroje, 2018).

2.3.2 Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is a very effective way to do marketing and gain visibility for products. Today, influencer marketing is part of the marketing budget of many companies, and many companies invest in this form of marketing (Ye, Hudders, De Jans, & De Veirman, 2021). With influencer marketing becoming more common, it is also good to pay attention to its possible adverse effects and familiarize ourselves with these dark sides of influencer marketing, in order to learn more and improve influencer marketing and reduce its so-called adverse effects. The most susceptible audience to influencer marketing is often especially young consumers, who are still very vulnerable and susceptible to influences coming from outside, in which case it is also good to take this into account when implementing influencer marketing tactics.

Influencer marketing refers to well-known social media personalities endorsing products and brands within their content for a monetary reward (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Influencers have the ability to create a very strong and close relationship with their followers, and followers often consider influencers as reliable sources and as if their friends, whose lives they follow almost daily (Lou, 2022). Influencers try to create a strong and close relationship with their followers by showing them their personal lives and even connecting with their followers through messages or comments. Followers often have positive assumptions about the products recommended by the influencer, because the followers feel that they trust the influencer's recommendations and they may even want to imitate their favorite influencers to some extent. Influencers are also considered a source of inspiration and are even expected to tell their followers about the latest trends, products, and brands that the influencer uses (Lou, 2022). Influencers are often also considered experts in a certain area, in which case they are even considered experts in a certain subject area, and their recommendations are thus even more trusted (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Influencer marketing is very effective, especially when reaching a young and committed audience (Van Dam & van Reijmersdal, 2019). The young audience is particularly vulnerable and easily exposed to influencer marketing, as their self-image is not yet fully formed, and they may be more susceptible to external influences. Influencers are like good friends and for this reason they are considered very trustworthy, making it very likely that followers will listen to their tips and recommendations (De Veirman, Hudders, & Nelson, 2019). Studies indicate that consumers view content produced by influencers as more genuine and trustworthy compared to content generated by brands themselves (e.g., Boerman, van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2012; Carter, 2016). Social media influencers have been seen to be very effective for brands aiming to increase visibility and product purchases (Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018).

2.3.3 Imitation of influencers

With the development of social media, influencers have become a great source of information and inspiration for new trends and product reviews. Indeed, influencers have great power and influence on how consumers behave and think about products and brands (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). This is why influencers play a very important role in how brands can attract new customers. The content of influencers is very impressive in the eyes of the public and the content they create can easily influence the attitudes of the public. Exposure to influencers' content pushes followers in the direction that they easily start imitating the influencers they consider as role models (Thi et al, 2023). This also easily increases the audience's materialism, which leads to consuming the products recommended by the influencer. As visible characters in social media, influencers are role models for their audience, so many followers may easily imitate their actions and decisions. Followers easily start consuming similar products as their role models (Thi et al, 2023). Trusting other people and their opinions when making purchase decisions is very important to some people, and they may often rely on other people's opinions and comments before making purchase decisions. In previous studies (Kim, Shoenberger, & Sun, 2021; Mena, Barbe, & Chan-Olmsted, 2020), engagement level such as "likes", and "number of comments" were calculated as trust in the online environment. In their research, Kim et al (2021) have also related how influencers' posts on social media, which have gained a large, engaged audience, create trust in the audience. This element is often important for materialistic consumers, whose consumption decision may also be influenced by how they want to appear successful via good accumulation (Kim et al, 2021).

Influencers have a great influence on the purchase decisions of followers, and followers of influencers admire the lifestyles of influencers and trust the recommendations and opinions of influencers (Ruvio et al., 2013). This can also easily lead to followers starting to imitate the influencer or overvaluing material assets. From a marketing point of view, imitation means a desire to imitate the consumer behavior of a role model or exemplar, in order to resemble the role model as much as possible and thereby gain acceptance from others as well (Ruvio et al., 2013). The need for imitation is often strongly related to exposure to content produced by influencers, and the more often influencers' content is

exposed, the more the content affects followers (Lou & Kim, 2019). The probability of purchase intentions increases if the consumer trusts and wants to identify with the influencer they follow (Shoenberger & Kim, 2019). Consumers as humans are fundamentally motivated by the need to belong, which is a great longing and desire to form and maintain enduring interpersonal attachments. People need and look for constant and positively affecting interaction and belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). It can be assumed, based on this information, that by imitating an influencer who acts as a role model, one may want to seek approval from the outside and to belong to a certain group. In addition, according to previous research, individuals with a higher propensity for materialism also appeared to have greater purchase intention and greater engagement with influencers' content through hedonic enjoyment (Kim et al, 2021). According to the Kim et al (2021) study, the role of hedonic engagement in the positive effect of materialism on purchase intention was also significant only if the influencer was trusted a lot. In the same study, it was also found that the role of hedonistic pleasure grew and strengthened when the consumer's need to belong to a certain group or role was at a higher level (Kim et al, 2021.)

Previous studies related to influencers and materialists have highlighted the connection between materialism and the imitation towards public figures. This connection is explained by the theory of social comparison, where the consumer compares herself and her property to another, in order to define her own social rank (Chan & Prendergast, 2008.) This theory according to previous research can be assumed to be applicable to influencers as well. Influencers are considered role models and are looked up to, so this can easily influence consumer behavior or imitation. The formation of social identity can also be seen to be influenced by an individual's relationship with social media influencers and belonging to desired communities (Tajfel, 1981). Social comparison can indeed be seen as a key mechanism that affects the subjective well-being of social media users, and social media is most likely to have a negative effect on those users who have a tendency towards social comparison (Tiggemann et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2020).

Table 1 provides a comprehensive synthesis of key theoretical aspects discussed in the literature review. It summarizes the main findings related to the impact of social media on negative consumption behavior, offering an overview of selected studies and their essential themes. The table aims to enhance understanding of how social media influences negative consumption behavior by condensing the significant themes identified in the literature and illustrating the interconnectedness of various studies.

TABLE 1. Summary of the role of social media to negative consumption behavior.

The role of social media to negative consumption behavior	Authors
People seek information and inspiration through social media to support their purchase decisions	Greenberg, 2010a, 2010b
People face pressure concerning consumption due to social media content	Hayran et al., 2016

Social media creates comparison or imitation of influencers and peers	Song et al., 2021; Thi et al., 2023; Pellegrino et al., 2022
Social media builds and maintains a lifestyle where material possessions serve as markers of social status and validation	Sun et al., 2017
Social media platforms act as catalysts for increased consumption and materialism	Pellegrino et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2019; Frick et al., 2021
A continuous stream of immediate consumption opportunities, which lead to certain consumption-related challenges	Dodoo & Wu, 2019
Frequent use of social media increases consumption	Khan & Dhar, 2006; Wilcox et al., 2011; Pellegrino et al., 2022; Thourunrojroje, 2018
Social comparison affects the subjective well-being of social media users	Tiggemann et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2020
Intensive use of the social media significantly influences compulsive buying	Kukar-Kinney et al., 2009; Sharif and Khanekharab, 2017
The intensity of social media and compulsive buying behavior often leads to a pattern where individuals turn to shopping as a way to escape and mitigate adverse situations or feelings	Trotzke et al., 2015
Conspicuous purchasing habits are frequently linked to social media users who engage in herd behavior to seek validation from others and continuously measure themselves against influencers and their peers online	Pellegrino et al., 2022
Impulsive buyers often buy products that they have previously seen on social media	Pellegrino et al., 2022
The use of social media increases self-esteem and at the same time stimulates the desire to spend	Wilcox & Stephen, 2013
Viewing content on social media can result in unfavorable comparisons and a heightened desire to obtain products or services showcased on these platforms	Lee et al., 2016
Users with higher social media engagement and more positive attitudes toward social media are more likely to develop negative consumption behavior	Pellegrino et al., 2022
The need for imitation is often strongly related to exposure to content produced by influencers	Lou & Kim, 2019
In the digital world, the huge amount of information and the fast pace of social media make users make quick decisions with the help of immediately available information	Flanagin et al., 2014; Savolainen et al., 2021
Individuals who heavily engage with social media tend to be more prone to impulsive buying behaviors	Thourunrojroje, 2018
Social media is most likely to have a negative effect on those users who have a tendency towards social comparison	Tiggemann et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2020

In summary, the literature review indicates that social media influences negative consumption behavior in various ways. Notably, the significance of social media as a source of information and inspiration, and the pressure to consume caused by social media content stand out. This pressure often stems from social comparison, with social media fostering comparisons and the imitation of influencers and peers (Song et al., 2021; Thi et al., 2023; Pellegrino et al., 2022). The literature highlights social comparison, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and negative purchasing behavior. According to the literature, active use of social media increases consumption (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Wilcox et al., 2011; Pellegrino et al., 2022; Thoumrungroje, 2018), and frequently used social media platforms constantly expose users to new products and trends, heightening the desire to purchase and encouraging buying. Social media constructs and maintains a lifestyle where material possessions serve as markers of social status and validation (Sun et al., 2017), reinforcing consumer culture and materialism.

In summary, social media affects negative consumption behavior in multiple ways, emphasizing consumer culture, materialism, and impulsivity. The literature shows that social media usage increases pressures and comparisons, often leading to negative consumption behavior. However, less attention has been paid to the drivers behind negative consumption behavior, the impact of social comparison on consumption behavior, and the connection between social media and the Diderot effect. Therefore, the empirical part of the research will focus particularly on these aspects and aim to gain deeper insights into the perspectives highlighted in the literature review.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter addresses all methodological decisions made during the subsequent stages of this study. Methodological decisions were made to support the objectives of this research. The purpose of the study is to create an understanding of the impact of social media on negative consumer behavior. Additionally, the aim is also to investigate the relatively complex Diderot effect, which has not been extensively studied in this context earlier. In other words, this thesis examines phenomena without seeking to establish general rules. The research method used was qualitative research, and the data collection method was interviews.

3.1 Research philosophy

The research problem determines the research strategy and individual research methods (Hirsjärvi et al., 1997, p.120). Thus, it is the researcher's task to select and justify the implementation methods that best suit the research problem and the quality of the study (Hirsjärvi et al., 2009, p.123). The purpose of this study is to analyze whether social media affects negative purchasing behavior and overconsumption. The aim of the study is to examine a little-researched phenomenon and find new perspectives to deepen the understanding of consumer behavior around this phenomenon. Therefore, the purpose of the study can be characterized as exploratory in nature. Exploratory research seeks to find new or little-researched phenomena and provide new perspectives (Hirsjärvi et al., 1997, p.127). The purpose of this study is not to present straightforward factual information but rather to analytically examine, compare, and evaluate information.

According to Bryman and Bell (2008), methodology is often divided into three different parts: ontology, epistemology, and methods. They state that ontology concerns the nature of reality and what we can know about it. Ontologically, this study best fits constructivism, which sees reality as relative. In constructivism, reality is created by individuals, who have their own

interpretations of reality. However, different subjective realities may have similarities (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p.14). From a philosophical perspective, this study can be considered to lean towards constructivism, where reality is understood as context-bound, and the unique experiences and observations of individuals are emphasized in knowledge construction. Subjectivity and interpretation of knowledge are emphasized in thinking (Goldkuhl, 2012). The aforementioned characteristics related to the purpose of the study serve as grounds for the selection of qualitative research methods. The purpose of qualitative methods is to understand and interpret phenomena. Typical features include the subjectivity of knowledge and interaction between the researcher and the object of observation (Puusa & Juuti, 2011, p.47), whereby the researcher is part of the reality they investigate according to constructivism (Goldkuhl, 2012). Since the research is constructivist, its epistemology is most naturally based on subjectivism. According to subjectivism, research results are not found but created by the researcher, as the researcher makes their own interpretations of reality (Metsämuuronen, 2011, p.218–219). The method is thus a set of specific research methods. A valid method must combine theory, hypotheses, and methodology (Metsämuuronen, 2011, p.215).

3.2 Qualitative research

According to Hirsjärvi, Remes, Sajavaara, and Sinivuori (2009, p.161), the primary objective of qualitative research is to thoroughly understand the phenomenon under study within its own context. They state that qualitative research is an attempt to understand, describe, or interpret phenomena. Therefore, qualitative research often focuses on a smaller sample size and a more detailed analysis of the sample. Qualitative research methods are often used when examining complex phenomena and attempting to answer the question "how." Additionally, the aim of qualitative research is to create a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. When conducting qualitative research, the goal is to understand large entities (Hirsjärvi et al., 2009; Eskola & Suoranta, 1998).

Qualitative research was chosen as the research method because it was deemed to best align with the research objectives. The purpose of adopting a qualitative methodological approach is to achieve a comprehensive understanding of a complex phenomenon, which is also the goal of the research. This is an appropriate research method because qualitative research seeks to gather information about a phenomenon about which there is still little previous knowledge. There is not much research yet on negative consumption behavior, overconsumption, and the Diderot effect, and studying the dark sides of social media consumer behavior requires further research. The aim of the research is to find an answer to the question "how" (Metsämuuronen, 2011; Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Qualitative research often fits particularly well in situations where a broader understanding of the topic is needed. This master's thesis aims to

specifically use qualitative methods to expand understanding compared to previous quantitative research and its diverse research results.

In qualitative research, theory can be approached using inductive or deductive methods. The inductive approach is usually associated with qualitative research, while the deductive approach is with quantitative research. The inductive approach means that theory arises from the empirical observations of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2008, p.11-14). In practice, inductive and deductive approaches are theoretical extremes, and studies usually combine both approaches. In the middle of these approaches is an abductive perspective, which suggests that empirical and theoretical frameworks develop during the research process (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p.24). The goal of the abductive approach is to develop and complement previous theories rather than to test existing ones or build new ones. It allows the researcher to conduct research based on previous results and observe whether the obtained research results add something important (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p.24). In this study, new knowledge is created by combining theory and empirical data. Therefore, the reasoning of the study can be characterized as theory-driven or abductive. In the abductive reasoning model, conclusions arise from the discussion between theory and empirical data (Grönfors & Vilkkä, 2011, p.15-19). This research is based on an abductive approach. Abductive analysis is considered the best approach because there is still little literature on negative purchasing behavior, overconsumption, the Diderot effect, and their connection to social media. The chosen approach can also be seen in this study as an evolution of interview questions and data collection, which has developed over the course of the process.

3.3 Data collection

This paragraph discusses decisions regarding participant selection and data collection. Participants for the study were chosen using purposive sampling, which is recommended to achieve the goals of qualitative research (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Purposive sampling involves selecting participants in a way that provides rich information about the phenomenon under study, and thus the researcher selects participants by assessing in advance how rich and useful the data collected from them could be (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). The aim of this study is to increase understanding of negative consumption behavior in the context of social media. The consistency of the interviewee group is crucial so that all interviewees understand the questions (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). For this study, young adults aged 22-30 who actively use social media and have made consumption decisions activated through social media were selected. The study interviewed young active users of social media and delved into their thoughts and views on how they perceive and believe social media influences consumption decisions, what role they believe social media plays in consumption, and whether they perceive social media as increasing negative consumption behavior. The significance of theory in qualitative research is crucial to understanding what is already known about the topic (Leavy, 2017, p.128).

Therefore, theory was thoroughly examined before conducting the research. Based on theory, various themes were formed according to the research questions. Methodologically, qualitative research has several different approaches, but its essence lies in describing reality as experienced by participants (Adams et al., 2014, p.6). An advantage of interviews is the possibility of guiding data collection because the interviewer is in direct interaction with the research subject (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008, p.23). The interviewer can repeat, clarify, or specify a question if the interviewee does not seem to understand it, which is a clear advantage in the interview situation (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, Chapter 3.1). Additionally, according to Adams et al. (2014, p.97), material in qualitative research is used to understand the deep motives of behavior and emotions.

Interviews can be categorized into different types based on the nature of the questions and their flexibility. Different types of interviews include structured and semi-structured, thematic, and open interviews (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). The more open an interview is, the more flexible its content is. In this study, a semi-structured thematic interview was seen as the best and most suitable interview method because it allows the researcher to ensure that all important research topics are covered and that the research objectives are met. In a semi-structured thematic interview, the questions are the same for everyone, but no predetermined answer options are given (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, p.63). In a semi-structured thematic interview, it is possible to ask specific questions and clarify and deepen them based on the interviewees' responses (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2022). This also allows interviewees to talk about topics that are central to them (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Thematic interviews have themes that are the same for everyone. The interview progresses through these themes without binding the interviewer to detailed questions but allows the interviewer freedom. Thematic interviews are a good way to make interviewees' voices heard, with interpretations of different issues and the meanings given to them being at the center of interaction (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2022). The interviews for the study were concluded when the data began to saturate, and it was felt that additional interviews would not add value to the study. Data saturation refers to a situation where the data starts to repeat itself, meaning a point where new information is not found if data collection continues (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, p.87). To ensure rich responses, precise follow-up questions were asked if the interviewee did not fully answer a question. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure the standardization of the study. Interviews are one of the most commonly used data collection methods in qualitative research (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2009, p.94), the strength of the interview method lies in being able to regulate the conversation according to the needs of the respondents and the situation.

Interviews can be conducted as individual or group interviews (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2022), and in this study, individual interviews were decided upon so that the opinions of others would not influence the discussion. In this study, bringing up negatively perceived consumption behaviors in a group could be difficult for interviewees, and group dynamics were not essential in this study. Additionally, in this study, it was more important to obtain quality and abundant data than a

large number of interviewees. The structure of the interview was developed based on previous literature and themes related to the research questions. An interview guide was formed by examining various forms of negative consumption behavior, materialism, and other drivers of negative consumption behavior, as well as previous studies on social media and social media consumer behavior, which also formed the theoretical framework of the study. To ensure that the interview questions supported the objectives of this study, topics collected from sources were adapted to this study, and questions were formulated as clearly as possible to allow participants to respond as accurately as possible. Questions were also modified because the purpose of this study was not to establish causality but to increase understanding. The interview guide is included in the thesis (Appendix 1), and the interviews were conducted via the Google Meet video call service. The same questions were asked in all interview situations, and all participants discussed each topic. It was the researcher's responsibility to lead the discussion using the interview questions and to clarify questions and answers as needed. Seventeen individual interviews were conducted, and a test interview was conducted before the first official interview to ensure the clarity of the questions. Table 2. below shows the demographic profiles of the interviewees, the duration of the interviews, and the daily use of social media.

TABLE 2. Profiles of the interviewees and the duration of the interviews.

Respondent	Gender	Profession	Age	Duration of the interview	Daily social media usage
1	Female	University student	24	43min	2-5h
2	Male	Employed	30	27min	1-2,5h
3	Female	Employed	26	42min	4h
4	Female	Employed	25	48min	4h
5	Female	Employed	25	55min	3-4h
6	Female	University student	26	47min	1-5h
7	Female	College student	24	46min	6h
8	Male	Employed	27	30min	3h
9	Female	Employed	27	1h05min	3-4h
10	Female	University student	26	40min	2h
11	Male	University student	27	36min	2-3h
12	Male	Employed	30	45 min	2h
13	Female	Employed	27	45min	4h
14	Female	University student	22	50min	3-4h
15	Female	Employed	27	35min	1-3h
16	Female	Employed	27	37min	1-3h
17	Female	University student	25	27min	2-3h

3.4 Data analysis

In this chapter, decisions related to the analysis of the research are discussed. The analysis path in different studies can vary significantly since qualitative analysis can be conducted in many different ways (Bryman & Bell, 2008). However, qualitative analysis cannot be conducted randomly; it is important to keep the research objective, data collection methods, and methodological decisions in mind during the analysis. It is essential to familiarize with various analysis methods and choose the most appropriate ones for the study because the difficulty of qualitative analysis and the lack of a clear technique can affect the reliability of the study (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). The analysis follows an abductive analysis structure, which means that the analysis is based on theory, but new themes may emerge from the data.

Qualitative data analysis can be described as process-oriented, and at this stage, the researcher's role as an interpreter is heavily present (Kiviniemi, 2010, p.79). According to the theory-guided reasoning model, the analysis in this study was guided by the themes that emerged from the theoretical framework, and throughout the study, the theory was closely linked to empirical data, forming the basis of the study's results. The analysis began by reviewing the data, and the material was examined systematically, focusing on one theme at a time. Key expressions related to each theme were noted from the data, which were then grouped into their own sets. The interviews of the study were transcribed verbatim, following the precise utterances of the interviewees (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2022), and thus the analysis was based entirely on the perspectives expressed by the interviewees without the researcher's participation.

After transcription, the interview data were categorized according to themes that emerged from the theory because categorization forms the basis of analysis and allows for interpretation, simplification, or summarization of the data later on (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2022). Although categorization, analysis, and data interpretation are closely related, they are all different tasks (Ruusuvuori, Nikander & Hyvärinen, 2010). Categorization is important, for example, in comparing parts of the data (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2022). The goal of categorization is to systematically go through the data based on the research problem and key concepts (Ruusuvuori et al., 2010). Data categorization was relatively straightforward because it was a thematic interview, so categorization naturally arose based on themes.

Thematic analysis is somewhat similar to categorization and involves segmenting and grouping the material according to research themes. Typification aims to identify similarities within themes, which forms a kind of generalization (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). Theme organization was done together with categorization, and interview responses were categorized into themes, so the next stage of content analysis was typification, where the material was grouped into types. Thus, typification seeks similarities or regularities (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2022). At this stage, summaries of all interview responses were written based on themes, which facilitated the creation of typifications. These summaries were then compiled according to theme and sub-theme, facilitating the creation

of actual type examples. Data were then analyzed using both data-driven and theory-guided analysis or an abductive approach. Although theory assists in analysis, the analysis is not based directly on theory (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018, Chapter 4.2).

After categorization, interview responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is a suitable method for qualitative research. In this study, the data collected from the interviews were coded into different categories developed based on the theoretical background, and the findings were derived from the data. This analysis method combines both empirical and theoretical data analysis methods (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). After the analysis phase, the results were interpreted as comprehensively as possible and compared to previous research literature. To create an overall picture, individual interviews were analyzed first, and then the responses were compared to each other. This method allows for successful thematic analysis through consideration of individual interviews, the overall picture, and the context (Eisenhardt, 1989).

A key aspect of this study is to increase understanding of the influence of social media on negative consumer behavior, and therefore, thematic analysis was used as the analysis method, where quotes collected from interviews were categorized into different categories based on the theoretical background. Thematic analysis enables the identification of themes related to the research problem from the research material, which can be used to compare the occurrence of certain themes in the data. In practice, the goal was to find and then separate the topics related to the research problem from the mass of transcribed interview text. In line with the nature of abductive analysis, thematic analysis requires interaction between theory and empirical data. Organizing themes has been criticized for not inherently demonstrating in-depth analysis and conclusions from quotes and related quotes (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Therefore, quotes should have their own role in the researcher's analysis work. Savolainen (1991, p.454) describes four different roles of quotes; quotes can be used to justify the researcher's interpretation, excerpts can serve as illustrative examples from the material, quotes can add liveliness to the text, and narration can be condensed with quotes.

Table 3 presents the main themes and sub-themes that have emerged from both theory and data. The main themes are formed based on the theory, while the sub-themes have emerged from the data.

TABLE 3. Identified themes and subthemes.

Research question: How does social media influence negative consumption behavior?	
Sub-questions:	Themes & Subthemes:

<p>What drivers contribute to negative consumption behavior?</p>	<p>Theme: Social Media and Consumer Behavior</p> <p>Influence of social media on consumer behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impulse purchases and trends • Inspiration and influence <p>Role of social media influencers and peers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence on purchase needs • Subconscious influence <p>Trend awareness and confirmation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying informed about trends • Confirmation of purchase decisions <p>Theme: Negative Consumption Behavior and Social Media</p> <p>Influence of emotions and situations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional triggers for impulsive purchases • Psychological factors driving consumption behavior <p>Role of social media in negative consumption behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of consumption and overconsumption • Cultivation of materialism culture
<p>How does comparison on social media affect consumers' purchasing behavior and perceptions of their own status?</p>	<p>Theme: Social Comparison and Overconsumption</p> <p>Influence of social comparison on consumer behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional impact of social comparison • Influence on purchasing decisions <p>Perception of ownership and experience through social comparison</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of consumer pressure • Idealization and imitation of influencers <p>Theme: Impact of Identity and Self-image</p> <p>Pressure to present a certain lifestyle on social media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure to conform to social media "standards" • Pressure to own certain products or to appear in a certain way, influencing consumption choices <p>Promotion of identity formation through visible consumption on social media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of identity through material possessions and visible consumption <p>Influence of self-esteem on consumption behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumption is often used to boost self-esteem or seek validation <p>Factors contributing to pressure for consumption on social media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media creates pressure for consumption through the constant display of material goods • Social media fosters a culture of comparison and desire for more

<p>How does social media reinforce the Diderot effect?</p>	<p>Theme: Diderot-effect</p> <p>Experience of the Diderot Effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conscious and unconscious influence on consumer behavior <p>Influence of social media on the Diderot Effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reinforcement of the effect• Social media portrays perfect combinations and influences consumers to desire similar coherence in their purchases
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4 RESEARCH RESULTS

In this section, the research results are presented thematically, with quotes from interviews to illustrate the findings. The themes are based on the theoretical framework, but there are also new themes emerging from the interviews. The first theme addresses social media and consumption behavior at a general level. The second theme focuses on negative consumption behavior in the context of social media. The third theme discusses social comparison and overconsumption. The fourth theme delves into the Diderot effect and its impact. The fifth theme examines the influence on identity and self-image. The results, along with the quotes, are numbered according to the interviews (R1-R17), aiming to answer the research problem.

4.1 Social media and consumption behavior

The first interview theme addressed social media and consumer behavior on a more general level. The aim of the theme was to investigate how social media has affected the interviewees' consumer behavior and whether they have experienced social media triggering them to make purchase decisions. The main findings indicate that the interviewees perceived social media to trigger impulse purchases and create trends. In addition, the popularity of the product seemed to be connected to the perception of the product's quality and it affected to the need to buy.

The more you see something specific content on social media, perhaps then you get the idea that maybe this is something I need or that I should do. (R1)

If you think generally, you make more impulsive purchases and less carefully considered ones. (R7)

If you see a lot on social media, for example, that many people have the same things or many people are hyping up the same product, then you also want to try it because so many have mentioned or hyped it on social media. (R10)

The quotes illustrate that respondents felt that social media triggered impulse purchases. They also perceived the trendiness or popularity of a product to be related to its quality. Trendy products were also perceived to easily influence purchase decisions and create a need for purchase.

Another key finding is the influence of social media as a source of inspiration and influence. Social media is considered a place to seek information and inspiration.

If someone recommends and explains why this product is good, then it affects my own purchasing decision. (R4)

If somehow similar people buy the same type of product, then perhaps you easily think, well, maybe this could be something that suits me somehow. (R11)

You get a lot of inspiration from there [social media]. I feel like maybe for me it's enough to see something and then I'm like, I want that. You see a variety of things without having to search. I like that there are inspiring people from whom you can take influences. (R16)

As seen from the quotes, social media serves as a source of inspiration for purchases. Influencers and peer consumers were perceived to influence impulse purchases, consumption decisions, and consumer preferences. The importance of trends, recommendations, and discounts to purchase decisions was emphasized in the responses. The responses also highlighted the influence of social media on impulse purchases, creating inspiration, and taking influence. All interviewees emphasized that social media arouses desires to buy and creates impulse purchases that might not occur without social media. Some respondents mentioned that social media is the only media they can be reached as consumers, making the role of social media in consumer behavior quite significant. The responses also emphasized how seeing a product multiple times on social media sparks the need to purchase. This was associated with the perception that the product is good because so many others own it. Social media was also seen to provide inspiration, and through it, one can assess whether a certain product would suit them, especially if similar individuals also own the product.

The next key finding shows the influence of social media influencers and peer consumers on purchase needs, both consciously and unconsciously. Based on the responses, it is noted that the influence of influencers and peers in creating purchase needs is very significant, and many follow trends through social media influencers and peer consumers. The responses also emphasize that influences are also taken subconsciously and unnoticed. Some responses also highlighted that purchase needs generally originate from influencers and social media, as well as impulses arising from social media and its content. The influence of influencers and peers on consumer behavior was strongly recognized, and the responses were very similar across respondents. Many conversations also highlighted trend awareness and staying on top of trends through social media. According to many respondents, social media and its content inspire and keep them informed about what is "in" and trendy at the moment. Some interviewees also

mentioned that influencer content provides reinforcement for purchase decisions. The responses also identified mimicry of influencers.

Well, surely as a creation of purchase needs, even if you might want it not to be so, that you follow trends or buy new things all the time, which I've tried to focus on myself in recent years, I still feel that influencers plus peers create such needs that maybe you wouldn't want to admit you have. (R6)

Well, I think they [social media influencers and peers] affect in a way that you get trend awareness and somehow, it's like one channel for you to see what people are using and such, so I think it affects me a lot. (R8)

Well, they [social media influencers and peers] have influences on me at least. I think I get a lot from social media influencers and acquaintances, subconsciously certain styles and clothes, so even if I don't make the purchase decision in that moment and buy it, they stay in my mind, so then when I encounter something similar or that product, then I remember that hey, I saw this and it was nice, so it affects whether I buy it or not. (R9)

The quotes demonstrate that influencers and peers contribute to creating purchase needs significantly. Influencers and peers also help to stay up to date with trends. From the quotes, it is also seen that some influences come subconsciously and might also start mimicking influencers or peers unconsciously. It is also evident that influencers' recommendations are seen as reinforcements for purchase decisions, and they significantly affect purchase decisions.

Table 4 below presents the key findings regarding the theme about social media and consumption behavior.

TABLE 4. Key findings regarding social media and consumption behavior

Influence of social media on consumer behavior	Key findings
Impulse purchases and trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media triggers impulsive purchases. • Trendy products and recommendations influence buying decisions. • Perception of a product's quality based on its popularity on social media.
Inspiration and influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media serves as a source of inspiration for purchases. • Influencers and peers influence consumer preferences and choices. • Unconscious influence from social media content.
Role of social media influencers and peers	Key findings
Influence on purchase needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencers and peers contribute significantly to creating purchase needs. • Trend awareness and following through influencers and peers.

Subconscious influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconscious adoption of trends and preferences from influencers and peers. • Influence of influencers' content on purchase decisions. • Imitation of influencers' behavior and preferences.
Trend awareness and confirmation	Key findings
Staying informed about trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media facilitates staying up to date on current trends. • Awareness of popular products and styles through influencers and peers.
Confirmation of purchase decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencers' endorsements provide validation for purchase decisions. • Influence of influencers' product endorsements on purchase behavior.

4.2 Negative consumption behavior on social media

4.2.1 Influence of emotions and situations

The second interview theme was negative consumption behavior on social media. In this theme, the aim was to delve into negative consumption behavior and factors that lead to such behavior. The main findings indicate that consumer emotions and underlying psychological factors influence negative consumption behavior. Particularly, negative emotions such as feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, and insecurity drive impulsive purchases, with purchases aimed at improving one's state of mind. Many responses emphasized that impulsive purchases are often driven by viral products, trends, offers, and impulse purchases following a specific social media post. For some, the background of impulsive purchases also involved a product that had been seen multiple times on different social media platforms, and after seeing the product enough times, this created a need for the product that was not originally there. Thus, based on the responses, it can be seen that social pressure and the need to belong and gain acceptance from others largely influence consumer behavior.

Some negative emotions and then a thought that maybe this is the solution and then also, if there is someone you admire, or you can think, maybe not jealousy but something like comparison, then somehow maybe you want to, for example, achieve the same situation as the other person so you think that maybe by buying this product or garment or something, then you could somehow achieve the same. (R1)

--for example, if you think about clothes, how you dress affects your own mood, and confidence. So that also sometimes drives it, that you buy maybe too much, like yeah, that I need that even though I don't need it, that it would look good and be nice. Then if you think about those beauty products so if there's insecurity about the skin, then you see a lot of those posts about how to get good skin and then maybe I buy

unnecessary products and don't investigate if they are necessarily good for my skin. Sometimes insecurity drives you to make those purchases. (R9)

Well, a feeling that you'd like to be somehow as good as someone else, or have as good a style as someone else has. For example, if you see someone who has a much nicer style, then you feel like you have to go buy a couple of new clothes, compared to that other person. Not necessarily a feeling of inferiority, but a feeling that you want to step up and improve yourself in that way. (R14)

The responses emphasize that for many, negative emotions such as inadequacy, loneliness, or insecurity drive impulsive purchases or excessive consumption. Some responses also emphasize how new purchases bring confidence, so when one's confidence is desired, it is desired to be fed with new purchases or to pursue a certain emotional state or "improve oneself" through purchases. In certain responses, it is emphasized how some imagine that new purchases will lead to life improvement in a certain way, and purchases may be used as a "quick fix" to improve one's own emotions and "self-development". Some have also made impulsive purchases or excessive consumption due to social pressure or good discounts. In certain responses, admiration for certain influencers or individuals on social media was also emphasized, which inspired buying similar products seen in influencers' social media posts. In essence, it can be stated that in each response, the background of impulsive purchases often involves wanting to achieve a desired feeling, either by addressing negative emotions or simply wanting to achieve an even better emotional state, pleasure, or confidence through the purchase.

4.2.2 Drivers behind negative consumption behavior

The following main findings indicate that certain psychological factors drive consumption behavior. Among these factors, the need to belong and seek approval from others emerged most strongly. Most participants also felt social pressure to engage in certain types of consumption and to stay up-to-date with trends. The results also strongly highlighted the formation of identity and the display of status through consumption.

Well, yes, to some extent, you notice that people spend and invest in style and constantly buy new clothes, so maybe then you also feel a need for it, like should I also update my style or buy new clothes, so maybe if you didn't see those contents, you could be satisfied with your own situation. But then when you see that someone buys or has such a product, then you start imagining that you also need that new product. (R1)

Well, yes, on social media, a kind of illusion is maintained, and you always have to have the newest and coolest products and follow all the trends so strongly, and then maybe it creates pressure that you also have to buy something like new clothes or other products because everyone else has it. (R10)

In a certain way, yes, some specific brands or certain, like you have to have a certain branded product, for example, on social media, it's often seen that everyone has the

most expensive products, so then you also start thinking that maybe I should also buy something like that even if you wouldn't necessarily think about it otherwise. (R11)

Most of the interviewees reported feeling pressure to make purchases based on what they have seen on social media, and most also mentioned that social media creates a certain kind of pressure, with some able to provide concrete examples of how this pressure manifests. A small portion of the interviewees said that social media probably creates pressure, but identifying specific situations or examples was difficult for them. Some responses also emphasized how without social media, such pressures might not arise in the same way. The responses also highlighted how social media maintains a certain illusion and strongly presents material, trends, expensive products, and specific brands. These factors contribute to the pressure experienced by some of the interviewees. Regarding trends, the need to belong to a group can also be observed, as some responses emphasized the desire to stay current with trends or how some products are desired to be bought before they become too common.

The following main findings highlight certain psychological factors that drive individuals to engage in negative purchasing behavior or overconsumption. Responses particularly emphasized the need to belong to a group and seeking approval from others. These themes were present in the majority of responses.

...maybe it's about wanting to be accepted, or if there are feelings of inadequacy, then you try to compensate for it by constantly developing yourself or somehow creating yourself with those clothes or products or anything similar, so maybe then you try to buy your status or somehow change it, so maybe then you try to fix something, even if it improves it. (R1)

Yeah, I'd say the pressure. Maybe just the pressure to be part of the trends and to be up to date, to know what people are talking about and what is trending. Maybe young people want to be part of that, and maybe they haven't necessarily done enough research, so if everyone else uses it, then I have to use it too, even if you wouldn't necessarily think it's a good product for me, but because everyone else uses it, then I have to. (R4)

...some may have that insecurity. What drives it then is that it boosts confidence when you get some new thing or something like that. Probably a desire to belong to a group at some level, so now there's a trend of this style, so you have to get clothes of that style or there's a trend of some make-up or beauty products, and you have to get these so that I'm "in" somehow. (R9)

As seen from the quotes, many mentioned the pressure to belong to a group and stay up-to-date with trends that others are following. Many responses also highlighted feelings of insecurity or low self-esteem, which are attempted to be compensated for through consumption. Responses also brought up identity formation through consumption and displaying status. In a few responses, it was mentioned that attempts are made to compensate for feelings of inadequacy through consumption, and through this, individuals constantly strive towards the ideal self and seek approval through visible consumption. Some responses also indicated that many of these psychological processes are largely unconscious

and occur in the consumer's subconscious, so these things may not necessarily be consciously thought about or recognized. Based on the results, it can be said that the major factors behind negative consumption behavior are the need to belong to a group and negative emotions, which are managed through purchases in order to seek approval from others.

4.2.3 The role of social media in negative consumption behavior

The following main findings indicate that the role of social media in promoting consumption is enormous. Social media platforms constantly showcase new products, thereby triggering impulse purchases. Social media was also seen as a primary channel for reaching consumers and promoting consumption.

A pretty big role, now that most people also make purchasing decisions through social media, so I think it has a pretty big impact on current consumption and that, like, there's so much available and there are always different products, and all companies want influencers to advertise them, and all the time, there are new and better things, so it creates that feeling that you have to try all those products. (R4)

A huge role. You can clearly notice it, if you haven't been on social media for a long time. Then you don't have needs, so it creates a lot of needs. Although, on the other hand, there's an effort to take a stand against overconsumption and everything, like, I like to watch what people buy from thrift stores, such hauls. So, on the one hand, there's a lot of discussion about it on social media, but then at the same time, you might get a fast fashion haul on your FYP, so it's a place where trends come and go, something gets hyped, and everything has to be obtained. (R6)

Well, in my own life, I think it [social media] plays a significant role in promoting consumption. It's one of the biggest channels where, in a way, as a consumer, you could be reached out, so it definitely plays a big role. (R8)

All respondents agreed that social media plays a significant role in promoting consumption. Social media is perceived as a highly commercial platform, and respondents felt that it increases consumption by constantly showcasing new products, often triggering consumers to buy products and creating impulses that may not arise without social media. Social media was also strongly perceived as a factor influencing purchasing decisions and as a place where desires to buy easily arise. Responses also highlighted that social media constantly presents new products and offerings, leading consumers to feel the need to try new trendy products they encounter on social media. One respondent mentioned how they noticed that a moment of "social media detox" reduced their buying needs, making it even clearer to them how social media creates needs. Some responses also mentioned how social media is one of the few channels through which the interviewee can be reached as a consumer. Overall, social media was considered a significant marketing channel that leads to increased consumption and awakening of buying needs. However, in a few responses, the potential of social media to promote responsible consumption was also highlighted, and how social media also addresses overconsumption.

The next main finding was that social media promotes materialistic culture and overconsumption. The results emphasized that products are prominently featured on social media, leading to an increased desire to consume. The importance of algorithms was also highlighted in the results, as well as how social media can also promote and highlight responsible consumption, depending on the type of content one views.

Especially also probably materialism. On the other hand, there are now a lot of non-material trends as well, but you can find so many aspects on social media, so it depends on one's own values, what you follow. There are indeed very materialistic platforms and promote such purchasing behavior, but I believe that, if desired, algorithms and such, what you follow, probably reduce it a bit, but probably depends on what you follow. (R7)

I think so, and it probably then sort of ties in with what I just spoke about regarding belonging to a group, that you notice sometimes yourself getting excited about a product that you wouldn't necessarily actually need. -- young people and people our age have a ton of clothes and all sorts of stuff, so it probably definitely affects that people our age stare at those social media ads, so I think I and probably many others of the same age buy significantly more than we should. (R8)

Surely, I would say so. You see things differently there, when if you lived your normal life without social media, you wouldn't see those products or get to know them or hear praises about all kinds of products or anything. So surely, it would inevitably raise the desire to buy and consume. There's so much content, whether it's some commercial collaborations or any content, it's so readily available. (R13)

The responses emphasized that social media is perceived to increase consumption and materialistic culture. Respondents felt that social media enhances consumption and materialism because there are so many products showcased on social media, and the turnover of products is so high that they believed it affects consumption. The responses highlighted the abundance of product turnover and how social media and its content significantly increase consumption, especially among young people. Some respondents also emphasized that without social media, they wouldn't be aware of so many products, thus not experiencing the same level of desire to make purchases. The importance of algorithms was also mentioned in the responses, and how social media could be utilized much more, for example, in recycling and promoting more responsible consumption.

Table 5 below presents the key findings regarding the theme about negative consumption behavior on social media.

TABLE 5. Key findings regarding negative consumption behavior on social media

Influence of emotions and situations	Key findings
Emotional triggers for impulsive purchases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, or insecurity drive impulsive purchases. • Desire to achieve a certain emotional state or improve confidence through purchases.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social pressure from friends, influencers, or societal trends influencing buying decisions.
Psychological factors driving consumption behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for belonging to a group and seeking approval from others. • Identity formation and status display through consumption. • Pressure to conform to societal norms and stay up to date with trends.
Role of social media in negative consumption behavior	Key findings
Promotion of consumption and overconsumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media platforms constantly present new products, triggering purchase impulses. • Influence of social media advertisements and marketing on consumer behavior. • Social media as a primary channel for reaching consumers and promoting consumption.
Cultivation of materialism culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media contributes to a culture of materialism and excessive consumption. • Products are prominently featured on social media, leading to increased desire to consume. • Algorithms on social media platforms may exacerbate materialistic tendencies but can also be influenced by user preferences to promote responsible consumption.

4.3 Social comparison and negative consumption behavior

The following main findings were related to social comparison and negative consumption behavior. The results emphasize the negative emotions resulting from social comparison and their association with increased consumption. It can be observed that the emotional states caused by social comparison may lead to emotional numbing through shopping, with purchases being sought to achieve a better emotional state.

I have experienced these negative feelings, and it sometimes affects my behavior. When you realize that it can trigger those negative feelings and maybe you can imagine that if you see someone with a certain garment or product. In a way, buying it could lead you towards the same situation as someone else. But at the same time, there is a rational part of the brain that knows that just because I buy this product doesn't mean I'm exactly in the same situation as someone else. But still, some part of the brain also thinks that it's a quick fix, that you can achieve the same point through it, so it's sometimes a balancing act, sometimes you can think rationally about these situations, but sometimes not. (R1)

Well, I have experienced it [jealousy or feelings of inadequacy affecting to consumer behavior] because it also affects the fact that I feel like I need this product too. So, it

might often affect, but it also depends somehow on your own state of mind at the time when you see that update. I've somehow noticed that sometimes if there are updates that, well, now I need it, and sometimes it's like, no, it's unnecessary, that I don't need anything, and somehow your own state of mind might affect it, but it is noticeable that it affects. (R9)

Well, I definitely feel that way because on social media, everything just looks, of course, like the wonderful aspects of life, and everything seems so perfect and just that illusion. So, then you get this feeling like, 'Am I the only one who's maybe struggling or having a hard time?'. So, yes, absolutely. And I do think that this kind of increases consumption because somehow you get this feeling like you're not good enough yourself or somehow don't belong to that group, and it adds to that feeling of insecurity, so then you want to somehow compensate, so you try to buy those similar products or something, so it definitely increases that, I believe. (R10)

Many had experienced a sense of inadequacy and even envy, and these negative feelings were perceived to influence consumption behavior to some extent. Some responses emphasized how negative emotions can be replaced with purchases, even though they are recognized as a "quick fix." Responses also highlighted how social media allows for comparison with others on a completely new and broader scale than before, making it easy to always find new benchmarks through social media, where others seem to be doing "better" than oneself. This was also perceived to influence the desire for something new, fancier, or better than what is seen through social media. Many responses emphasized that everything on social media is an illusion and a facade, and respondents were aware that only the best and most glamorous moments are shared on social media, yet this was still perceived to influence consumption behavior. This was especially the case when feeling lonely or experiencing negative emotions or a sense of inadequacy. The feeling of inadequacy was particularly emphasized in a few responses, and this was perceived to influence purchasing decisions and the emergence of purchase needs.

The main findings regarding situations where comparison to others on social media affected purchasing decisions emphasize, that the need to stay on trend and belong to the group increases purchase needs. Situations where trendy and fancy things are seen on others, create a buying impulse that directs consumers to act quickly and without rational thinking.

Yes, there are probably situations where it's specifically about the need to keep up with fashion and trends. So, probably when you see someone you follow to have the clothes I've been thinking about, then it might come to mind that okay, I've also thought about buying such a jacket, so now that others have noticed it, I should also get it. (R8)

Yes, it's often like you've just seen the garment there, and it looked good, so I might just go and buy it without trying it on to see if it even looks good on me, so it may lead to impulsive purchases. (R9)

Well, I can't think of any specific one, but there have definitely been situations where, for example, I've seen someone else with really nice products or things, and then I've felt a bit of an inferiority complex and then wanted to buy something similar or the same because of that. (R10)

Interviewees found it difficult to name specific instances where social comparison had influenced purchasing decisions, yet most responded that it would affect their buying decisions. From this, it can be inferred that social comparison subconsciously affects purchasing decisions. Some interviewees mentioned that social comparison leads them to want to buy a product in order to look the same as the person they are comparing themselves to. Some said they get inspiration from comparing themselves to others and try on certain outfits, for example, that they have seen others wearing on social media. Others mentioned that being in trend affects their purchasing decisions, and respondents felt that social comparison could create pressure to stay on top of trends. Respondents also mentioned that comparison sometimes leads to impulsive purchases; if a product looks good on the person, they are comparing themselves to, they may feel an impulse to buy it without much consideration. Some responses also highlighted that social comparison could lead to feelings of inferiority, which in turn leads to consumption or imitation of the person being compared to.

The following key findings concern how social comparison on social media affects the perception of what one should own or experience. Respondents felt that comparing their own lives and possessions to others' on social media increases pressure to belong and to own more of the same things as others.

Perhaps even if you have enough clothes and material possessions and your home is full of all kinds of things, it [social comparison on social media] still creates feelings of need, that if you see certain products on many people. Maybe it's still a matter of if something is trending, so you kind of think that okay, if everyone has this, then I also need to have it, so maybe just because the more and the more people see certain products, the more it creates a need. (R1)

Yeah, it [social comparison on social media] does have an impact, like what kind of purchasing decisions you make based on what you see. For example, if I compare myself to social media influencers, often I get the feeling that they have so many different clothes and everything, so why don't I have those, and I should have those too. And you know, maybe it leads to those purchases, and you definitely get a lot of influence from there, for example, experiences, so you get influenced to try them too. If you kind of admire a social media influencer, wow, they do such cool things and stuff like that, so it does affect you to maybe push yourself to do and buy those things, so you try to be like them. (R9)

Yeah, I believe it [social comparison on social media] adds that pressure, that in a certain way on social media, people probably want to appear better than they actually are. They show the best products and somehow everything looks so great, which maybe isn't actually true, so it increases that pressure because it feels like, well, everyone else has it so nice and so fun, why don't I? (R10)

Many respondents felt that social comparison on social media creates a certain pressure to buy things and experience certain things. Many mentioned that they are aware that on social media, many only show their best moments and best products, which may not necessarily be true. However, this is still perceived to increase pressure because social media creates an illusion that everyone else has

great things and experiences, as many do not share their less glamorous or mundane moments on social media. Respondents also felt the pressure to belong to a group, as they highlighted trend products that are seen on many people on social media. This was perceived to lead to feeling the need for the same products and experiences. One interviewee mentioned that social media shows an endless array of possibilities, which easily leads to overspending. Some responses also emphasized the idealization of influencers caused by social comparison, which may lead to imitating the admired figure and striving to be like them.

One key finding was that the results indicate social media encourages imitation of influencers or peers. This can happen both consciously and unconsciously. According to the findings, influencer marketing encourages imitation and adoption of influencers' lifestyles.

Yeah, definitely, even if you don't do it [imitation of influencers or peers] consciously. Maybe it depends on whether you mean consciously or unconsciously, some people might try to adopt everything about a person like their style, hairstyle, and dressing. But I feel like it also happens unconsciously, that if you admire someone, then you sort of notice certain things and it can lead to trying to buy the same things and so on, so I feel like, yes. (R1)

I strongly believe especially younger people who are still trying to find themselves. Certainly, especially among young people, there's a feeling that it's nice to take inspiration from there, but surely also among older people because social media is a place where inspiration is sought, so then hairstyles, outfits, and interior design are imitated from there. So, I believe it [social media] increases imitation, and that's where the phenomena come from, where people join in and create trends, and aren't trends essentially based on people imitating each other and doing things similarly, so surely. (R6)

It definitely affects and causes it. Yeah, absolutely, definitely, everyone wants to sort of copy all influencers and all such people and wants the same products as they have, for example. (R10)

All respondents answered that they believe social media leads to imitation of influencers or peers to some extent. In the respondents' answers, it was highlighted that especially influencers are sought for inspiration, which easily turns into imitation. Some respondents pointed out that imitation also happens to some extent unconsciously, while in some cases, it is consciously done to try to mimic and adopt the same style as the admired individual. Certain responses also emphasized that imitation of influencers is the point of influencer marketing because advertisements by companies are not as effective as recommendations from influencers and peers. Some respondents also highlighted the significance of age in imitation. According to the respondents, younger age and a less strong sense of identity may lead to more imitation, as younger individuals may still be searching for themselves more than older individuals. The responses emphasized the search for inspiration and the desire to imitate influencers by purchasing the same products they showcase on social media.

The table 6 below shows the key findings regarding social comparison and negative consumer behavior.

TABLE 6. Key findings regarding social comparison and negative consumer behavior

Influence of social comparison on consumer behavior	Key findings
Emotional impact of social comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of inadequacy, or envy after comparing oneself to others on social media. • Negative emotions influencing consumer behavior, even though rationality may intervene.
Influence on purchasing decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social comparison leading to a desire to own similar products or experiences as those seen on social media. • Pressure to stay current with fashion trends and social norms portrayed on social media. • Subconscious influence of social comparison on impulsive purchases or imitation of others' consumption patterns.
Perception of ownership and experience through social comparison	Key findings
Creation of consumer pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of societal pressure to own or experience what is portrayed on social media. • Influence of social media in creating a sense of need for products or experiences seen on others' profiles.
Idealization and imitation of Influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idealization of influencers as role models, leading to imitation of their style, preferences, and purchases. • Unconscious or conscious adoption of influencers' behaviors, styles, and product choices by social media users. • Role of influencer marketing in encouraging imitation and adoption of influencers' lifestyles.

4.4 Diderot effect

The following theme discusses the Diderot effect and the interviewees' experiences related to the effect. The following main findings concern the Diderot effect and experiences related to it. The interviewees were not familiar with the term "Diderot effect" beforehand and could not provide a definition of the concept. However, after the definition of the concept was provided, all interviewees recognized the effect based on their own experiences. Interviewees mentioned situations where one purchase led to additional purchases, such as in the case of clothing, cosmetics, technology, or home decor items. Examples included designer lamps, home decor, clothing, cosmetics and makeup products, technology (especially Apple devices), and certain brands and their product lines. Interviewees also highlighted that some products are sold as part of product lines,

making it easy to purchase products belonging to the same line, which complement each other.

Well, sometimes I notice that if I buy clothes, then I sort of realize that if I buy something, I feel like I actually want to keep buying more and renew the whole style and wardrobe, so I notice that I either don't buy anything at all or I feel like buying more all the time. So, I feel like lately I've had this feeling that I don't buy anything because I know that I feel like it would lead to that effect, so maybe I've consciously tried to avoid it, but I feel like it could easily happen. (R1)

Yeah, I mean, with skincare products, for example, you buy one and then you feel like you also need this toner and everything, that these work best together, and then, for example, when buying clothes, if you buy a certain style, then you want more of the same style. And then, I think this applies to interior design as well. Because it's a whole thing, you have to buy all those little things that match. (R7)

--like an example just from yesterday, I said we need a new sofa, and then x just said, we also need a new TV stand, a new TV, and a coffee table if we're renewing our sofa and rug, so it becomes this chain reaction, we need that one product, but then we need a lot of other things around it. I mean, this hasn't happened yet, but it was just from his mouth. When you renew one thing, something else doesn't look good anymore. Then you have to renew that too. Then the next. (R9)

Some respondents were unable to recall previous experiences because they believed they had unknowingly fallen under the influence of this effect, but the majority still believed they had experienced the effect. The responses above show that many respondents are very familiar with situations where the Diderot effect is at play, and many have experienced its influence in various product categories. In all examples, there is a recurring theme that a certain purchase is desired to be complemented by additional purchases in order to achieve a pleasing overall result, such as in home decor or outfit coordination. Some also acknowledge that the purchasing cycle of the effect easily escalates if purchases are made, with some interviewees stating that they avoid buying new products to prevent this effect from occurring.

The next main finding was that social media was found to reinforce the Diderot effect. In the results, all respondents emphasized the reinforcing effect of social media on the Diderot effect.

Yeah, I think so, that if you buy one product, then you constantly see everything you can add to that product and its value to you, so you see that all the time on social media, like, oh, that really goes well with that, so yeah. (R7)

Well, yeah, because everything is so perfect there. All the decor stuff and outfits, so if you even think you want the same, then everything has to match each other, so it affects when you see wholes where everything fits so perfectly together. (R15)

It [social media] reinforces it [Diderot effect], and you see it very prominently on social media. That people do extreme makeovers to their interior design, where everything is changed, when something is changed in the interior design. (R16)

All respondents were of the opinion that social media reinforces the Diderot effect and that on social media, it is easy to see which products go well together, such as from certain brands, or for example, an influencer's clothing or home decor ensemble looks good as a whole, thus influencing viewers to start combining different products in a similar way. Respondents felt that social media has an increasing effect on the Diderot effect, precisely because on social media, they see so many influences and beautiful ensembles, which can easily lead to a shopping spiral when wanting products to match each other.

Table 7 shows the key findings regarding the Diderot effect.

TABLE 7. Key findings regarding the Diderot effect

Experience of the Diderot effect	Key findings
Conscious and unconscious influence on consumer behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of situations where one purchase leads to a desire for additional purchases to create a pleasing overall look or experience. • Examples include clothing, cosmetics, technology, home decor, and certain brands or product lines. • Acknowledgment of a cycle of buying that can easily start if purchases are made, leading some respondents to consciously avoid new purchases.
Influence of social media on the Diderot Effect	Key findings
Reinforcement of the effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception that social media promotes the Diderot effect by showcasing products or combinations that complement each other, thus influencing consumers to desire similar combinations. • Examples include complete outfits, interior design makeovers, and product packages marketed together. • Recognition of how social media portrays perfect combinations and influences consumers to desire similar coherence in their purchases.

4.5 The influence of social media on identity and self-image

The following main findings relate to the impact of social media on identity and self-image. The results highlighted that many people feel pressure to own certain things or to appear a certain way because of social media, and this also affects consumption choices. Social media often portrays idealized versions of life, which lead to feelings of inadequacy and the need to keep up appearances.

Well, honestly, it [pressure to present a certain image or lifestyle on social media affects consumption choices] does. Even though many probably claim it doesn't, but definitely. I also prefer to buy quality stuff, that it's durable, but then, if you post

something on social media, it certainly doesn't hurt if there's a logo of a shirt or something else visible, so it really affects my behavior and surely it's such an identity in normal life and probably also on social media, so you try to kind of polish social media a bit when you rarely publish, so you post from those highlights or from some new purchases. (R8)

Yes, the illusion created on social media creates pressure on oneself to have a certain kind of life or appearance, certain clothes, a certain home. So, yeah, it probably affects buying in that way, that you consume more because somehow the pressure to belong to that group and be somewhat similar to others increases. (R10)

Yeah, certainly. Even though I'm not active on social media myself in terms of posting anything, but still, it creates pressure, but that pressure surely exists in a way, that it's a lifestyle and that one should be somehow certain. So, the pressure is there even if you wouldn't necessarily post about it that much. (R11)

The responses reveal that some respondents feel a certain pressure to present a specific type of content on social media, where everything is polished and only the "highlights" of life are shown. Even some respondents who are not active in posting on social media still feel pressure to live a certain lifestyle portrayed on social media. Thus, social media creates pressure for a certain lifestyle and to own specific things or look a certain way. Respondents also mentioned that on social media, people want to showcase their best sides, and this is perceived to affect the decisions they make when purchasing. Some also described social media channels as being like a diary where they want to share the best moments. However, some respondents stated that they do not feel such pressures.

The next finding relates to social media promoting identity formation through visible consumption, where one's identity is closely linked to material possessions and appearance.

In my opinion, social media has moved more towards people showcasing their lifestyle, and if they have, for example, new designer clothes or bags, they are prominently displayed there. What you see at a general level with many people, it's strongly about showcasing a high standard of living or that you can afford something, so it's highlighted on social media. (R1)

Well, surely many start to build their own identity somewhat around material things and around how they look or what they own, what kind of home they have, so surely it affects that your own identity starts to revolve more around that material. Maybe in a way also, that you kind of keep up a certain illusion of yourself on social media. And reality can be totally different. (R10)

I feel that maybe you can also, when on social media, you belong to certain types of groups to some extent, so then it's maybe easier to identify yourself based on that, like okay, I belong to this group, so I use these things and so on, so I would say, yes. (R11)

Many respondents were of the opinion that social media promotes identity formation through visible consumption. In these responses, a certain need for approval or belonging to a group was also highlighted. One interviewee mentioned that based on social media, one can identify oneself with certain groups, thereby building identity around what one owns. Some respondents said

that this happens unconsciously and subconsciously, but still believe that social media promotes identity formation through consumption. One response also brought up how building identity around material possessions can lead to increasing materialism and consumption, creating an illusion of oneself, which may be completely different from reality.

The next main finding was the impact of self-esteem on consumption patterns.

Well, especially those with lower self-esteem may try to compensate for it with products they feel will get approval from others. This is probably also strongly influenced by the need for belonging to a group. And I also believe that if you have low self-esteem, you get a certain kind of satisfaction to that low self-esteem through new acquisitions, especially if you often get compliments and approval through acquisitions. In this way, consumption is tried to raise self-esteem, but it's then a negative cycle. (R5)

I believe that if you have good self-esteem, then you probably won't consume as much, so you might make more considered decisions and such, so then someone who boosts their self-esteem by wanting to be the same or a certain way because of social media influence probably consumes a lot more, so I believe self-esteem has quite a lot of impact on consumption behavior. (R9)

If you are very susceptible to influences and build your own identity or if your identity is based on a foundation where external factors can greatly influence, then it can have a significant effect. If you build your self-esteem based on what others think of you, then you are very sensitive to influences and taking them in. (R16)

Many respondents brought up the idea that consumption is often used to patch up slightly low self-esteem or to try to achieve a better feeling or pleasure through consumption. Consumption was seen to have a self-esteem boosting effect, but this effect often fades quickly, which can easily lead to a cycle of purchases. Also highlighted in these discussions was the need for belonging and seeking approval. In one conversation, the impact of age on self-esteem and consumption was brought up, and how younger individuals tend to seek external validation more easily, with a greater need for belonging. The responses also emphasized that if a person's identity is based on a foundation where external factors have a significant influence, then consumption is higher. If self-esteem is based on what others think, one is very susceptible to influences and tends to build their identity around material possessions.

The last main finding was the various factors that create pressure to consume.

Well, the fact that especially if you spend a lot of time there [on social media] and the things you see create needs for you. I think somehow that time spent there correlates with the intensity of the influence. Or just thinking about your own life through yourself, so if I'm really into social media and end up in a bit of a depression pit because I use my phone too much and am alone a lot and then just spend a lot of time on social media, you do get a feeling like everyone else is doing better and everyone has all sorts of nice things and nice outfits and so on. So, on the other hand, maybe just that, but why? Well, the things you see create needs. (R6)

Well, probably the illusion underneath in a way. How to describe it as being similar and being part of what's in, so it probably creates pressure to be there on the crest of the wave, to know where to stand, that you haven't fallen behind, that you dress according to the current fashion, so being on that crest creates a bit of pressure, that you have to be active and follow what's in now, what people are doing. So, you stay in there in that so-called development and everything, that you are aware of something. Perhaps staying on that crest is also something that creates pressure for it. And if I hadn't taken any social media influences, do I even have my own style of how I would like to dress or do I just have everything that I've seen on social media, that someone wears such clothes and then I've bought it, so do I even have my own style anymore. (R9)

Probably just the need for belonging. In a way, the pressure to be socially accepted. Social media is so much about presenting oneself and one's identity externally, so it definitely affects purchasing behavior a lot too. Social media is kind of like a look book to your life, so many probably buy things that are perceived as socially admired and accepted. (R14)

The responses indicate that according to the interviewees, pressure to consume is created by the polished content on social media and the illusion that everyone's life looks so perfect based on social media. The pressure to belong was also brought up in this question, and it was felt to create pressure for consumption. The constant showcasing of material possessions and consumption was also seen by the interviewees to increase pressure to consume. This is based on the idea that social media constantly feeds ideas and thoughts about what and how much one should consume. Social media was also described as increasing desires to make purchases. Many interviewees compared the situation to seeing only what their immediate circle consumes, where the norm for consumption, and thus the pressure, would be less. Some respondents also felt pressure, especially when they were feeling slightly negative, and social media seemed to show that everyone else was doing much better, leading to a desire to compensate for their own negative feelings through consumption. The responses also reflected on how the amount of time spent on social media correlates with the increase in consumption desires. In one response, there was even a reflection on not knowing one's own style anymore because it feels like social media brings so many influences that one has followed. The interviewees described social media as a place where they get influences and inspiration but also encounter direct purchase recommendations and advertisements. The most significant factor affecting pressure was the content created by influencers and acquaintances, such as peers and friends. Interviewees felt that this content changes their way of thinking and worldview because through them, they felt they gained information about how others consume and, for example, information about the latest trends. Interviewees felt that without social media and the illusion created by other people's updates about "normal" consumption habits, their consumption behavior would be different, with many interviewees saying it would be less and constant desires to make purchases would not arise in the same way.

Table 8 below presents the key findings regarding the influence of social media on identity and self-image.

TABLE 8. Key findings regarding the influence of social media on identity and self-image

Pressure to present a certain lifestyle on social media	Key findings
Pressure to conform to social media “standards”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media creates pressure to own certain products or to appear in a certain way, influencing consumption choices. • Social media often portrays an idealized version of life, leading to feelings of inadequacy or the need to keep up appearances.
Promotion of identity formation through visible consumption on social media	Key findings
Formation of identity through material possessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media might promote the formation of identity through visible consumption, where one's identity is closely tied to material possessions and appearance. • Some individuals build their identity around material things showcased on social media, leading to increased materialism and consumption. • Social media influences individuals to seek approval and belonging through the display of material goods and lifestyle choices.
Influence of self-esteem on consumption behavior	Key findings
Impact of self-esteem on consumption patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumption is often used to boost self-esteem or seek validation from others, especially among those with lower self-esteem. • Consumption can provide a temporary sense of satisfaction or confidence but may lead to a negative cycle of buying to maintain self-esteem. • Individuals with higher self-esteem may make more considered consumption decisions and are less susceptible to external influences.
Factors contributing to pressure for consumption on social media	Key findings
Factors fuelling consumption pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media creates pressure for consumption through the constant display of material goods and consumption. • Social media fosters a culture of comparison and desire for more, leading to feelings of inadequacy and the need to keep up with trends. • Social media influences individuals' perceptions of what is socially accepted and admired, leading to increased consumption to fit in or gain approval.

5 DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the conclusions and discussion of the study. It provides a summary of the research findings and addresses the main research problem by utilizing sub-problems. The chapter also reviews the theoretical conclusions and practical implications of the research. In addition, the limitations and evaluation of the study are discussed. Finally, suggestions for further research are considered.

5.1 Synthesis of key findings

The aim of this thesis was to increase understanding of negative consumer behavior in the context of social media. Based on this objective, the research problem was divided into one main research problem and related sub-problems. The main objective of the study was to investigate whether social media affects negative consumer behavior. Additionally, the study aimed to explore the drivers behind negative consumer behavior and how social media comparison influences consumer purchasing behavior. Furthermore, the study sought to understand how social media reinforces the Diderot effect. The following research questions were forefronted in the study, and the main and sub-problems of the research were formulated as follows:

Main Research Problem:

- How does social media influence negative consumer behavior?

Sub-questions:

- What drivers contribute to negative consumer behavior?
- How does comparison on social media affect consumer purchasing behavior?

- How does social media reinforce the Diderot effect?

Table 9 presents the conclusions of the study according to the research questions.

TABLE 9. Conclusions.

What drivers contribute to negative consumption behavior?	Conclusions
Pressure to belong and conform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure to belong to a certain social group or lifestyle portrayed on social media. • The desire for social acceptance drives individuals to engage in negative consumption behavior. • Trendy products and recommendations influence buying decisions.
Influence of external factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External influences, such as social media content, influencer and peer pressure, contribute to negative consumption behavior. • Social media fosters a culture of comparison and competition, fueling desires for material possessions. • Exposure to idealized lifestyles on social media leads to feelings of inadequacy and the need to keep up with others.
Self-esteem and emotional fulfilment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals seek emotional fulfilment and validation through consumption. • Low self-esteem drives individuals to seek temporary satisfaction through material possessions. • Negative consumption behavior stems from a desire to boost self-esteem or mask insecurities.
How does comparison on social media affect consumers' purchasing behavior?	Conclusions
Pressure to conform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure to emulate the lifestyles and consumption choices of others showcased on social media. • Comparison on social media leads to a desire to keep up with trends and maintain a certain image. • Comparison creates feelings of inadequacy and drives individuals to engage in excessive consumption.
Influence on consumption patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison on social media influences individuals to make impulsive and unnecessary purchases. • Constant exposure to idealized lifestyles creates unrealistic expectations and fosters a culture of materialism. • Comparison leads to a cycle of dissatisfaction and continuous desire for more possessions.
How does social media reinforce the Diderot effect?	Conclusions

Influence of social media content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media content promotes the Diderot effect by showcasing complementary products and encouraging additional purchases. • Exposure to curated content on social media triggers desires for related products and accessories. • Influencers and brands promote product bundles or sets on social media, encouraging consumers to make multiple purchases to achieve a desired look or experience. • Social media exposes consumers to complementary products and experiences, leading to a desire to acquire additional items to complete a desired aesthetic or lifestyle.
Amplification of consumer desires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media amplifies consumer desires by presenting curated images of ideal lifestyles. • Exposure to influencers content and advertisements on social media increases the likelihood of succumbing to the Diderot effect. • The ease of access to product recommendations and reviews on social media fuels impulsive buying behavior.

5.1.1 Drivers of negative consumption behavior in the context of social media

According to previous literature on consumption behavior and negative consumption behavior, the drivers of negative consumption behavior have been identified as self-concept, materialism, social comparison, and the need to belong. The participants in the study reported in their interviews that the need to belong strongly influences their consumption behavior and also the need to stay on top of trends. It can be seen that the aspects considered as drivers of negative consumption behavior in the theoretical section greatly influence the consumption behavior of the interviewees.

Social media is used as a source of inspiration and information, as noted in Greenberg's (2010a, 2010b) studies. Respondents also felt that social media and its vast content cause a certain amount of pressure related to consumption. This supports Hayran et al.'s (2016) claim that people face pressures concerning consumption due to social media content. On social media, people easily compare their lives and possessions to those of other consumers, where people often show the "highlights" of their lives. This can easily influence consumers to feel that their own lives or possessions are inferior compared to others, as they often compare themselves to influencers and other admirable individuals.

This finding also supports the claim that social comparison, whether upward or downward, affects an individual's self-esteem and emotions (Festinger, 1954; Tiggemann et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2020). Social comparison on social media can increase feelings of inadequacy, which people try to compensate for by making purchases to feel good, gain confidence, and stay on trend. This supports Lee et al.'s (2016) finding that exposure to social media content can lead to negative comparisons and an increased need to acquire products or services

seen on social media. Some consumers also reported consuming in order to keep up with others and stay on trend with, for example, trendy products. This automatically affects consumption behavior and leads to increased consumption. This can be seen as supporting Sun et al.'s (2017) claim that social media builds and maintains a lifestyle where material possessions serve as markers of social status and validation.

Peers and influencers are role models, and consumers want to buy clothes or other items they have seen on influencers, as they want to belong, follow the example, and see themselves as similar to influencers, as noted by Lou and Kim (2019) in their research. The acceleration of fashion and trend cycles also increases the need to consume and stay on trend. Trendy clothes and accessories go out of fashion faster than before, leading to a more frequent desire to buy new items. The impact is significant, especially for consumers who can afford to keep up and who want to show through their attire that they are up-to-date and to display their status or identification with a certain group. This is closely related to self-concept and identity formation. Especially many young consumers may still be searching for their identity, and with social media being so present at every moment, their identity can be shaped by influences from social media. Many respondents also believed that social media reinforces the culture of materialism and materialistic values, as comparing oneself to others and their possessions causes negative feelings, which are tried to be alleviated by shopping, which boosts self-esteem or masks insecurities. The study also revealed new information that the need for social acceptance drives individuals to engage in negative consumption behavior. Based on the responses, it can be concluded that social media promotes a culture of comparison and competition, which fuels desires for material possessions and leads to negative consumption behavior.

5.1.2 The impact of social comparison on consumer behavior

Social comparison on social media significantly affects consumers' purchasing habits and consumption behavior. On social media, consumers easily compare themselves to others, as social media constantly feeds new content that often highlights the lives, possessions, and experiences of others. According to the respondents, it is easy to compare oneself to others and their possessions through social media, which causes many to feel inadequate and experience other negative emotions. Social media allows individuals to compare themselves to others on an entirely new and broader scale than before, making it easy to always find new comparison targets who seem to be doing "better" than themselves. This was also seen as influencing the desire to always want something new and better than what is seen through social media. This supports Pellegrino et al (2022) assertion that conspicuous buying behavior is often associated with social media users who frequently engage in herd behavior to gain social approval from others and constantly compare themselves to influencers and other social media users.

Social comparison can easily create the desire to acquire similar products or services seen on social media. The pressure to conform emerges as a dominant theme, with individuals feeling the need to mimic the lifestyles and consumption choices presented on social media. This pressure leads to a desire to keep up with

trends and maintain a certain image, often causing feelings of inadequacy and encouraging excessive consumption. This supports Lee et al.'s (2016) claim that exposure to social media content can lead to negative comparisons and an increased need to acquire products or services seen on social media. Additionally, comparison on social media directly affects consumption behavior by encouraging impulsive and unnecessary purchases. Continuous exposure to idealized lifestyles creates unrealistic expectations and fuels a culture of materialism, maintaining a constant cycle of dissatisfaction and the desire for more possessions.

Social media emphasizes idealized life and the pressure to present a certain lifestyle strengthens the connection between identity formation and conspicuous consumption. Individuals feel the need to showcase curated images online, leading to increased materialism and consumption as their identities become intertwined with material possessions. Respondents feel pressure because social media creates the illusion that everyone else has wonderful things and experiences since many do not share the less glamorous or more mundane aspects of their lives on social media. In certain responses, the admiration caused by social comparison, particularly towards influencers, was also emphasized. This admiration can lead to emulating the admired person and striving to be like the admired target.

5.1.3 The impact of social media on the Diderot effect

The research provides new insights into the connection between the Diderot effect and social media. Thus, one of the central themes of the study was to determine how social media influences the Diderot effect and its manifestation. According to the results, social media is a key factor influencing the Diderot effect and consumption. Participants in the study indicated that social media increases the Diderot effect and consumption. According to the interviewees, social media influencers and their content have the greatest impact on consumer behavior, especially the aesthetically pleasing sets they present on social media. Therefore, social media influencers have significant power to shape the general perception of what is trendy and what consumers should strive for, which is why they are so heavily imitated. This finding supports Thi et al. (2023)'s claim that social media fosters imitation of influencers and peers.

The interviews provided new information on how respondents perceived social media influencing the purchasing spiral, also known as the Diderot effect. Respondents felt that social media and its content reinforce the Diderot effect by showcasing complementary products and encouraging additional purchases. All interviewees agreed that social media strengthens the Diderot effect and that exposure to curated content on social media triggers desires for related products and accessories. This supports Frick et al. (2021)'s observation that social media platforms act as catalysts for increased consumption. Social media content often focuses on presenting cohesive sets, such as outfits or interior designs, leading consumers to feel the need to acquire multiple items from a particular set because they have seen how well certain items or clothes go together. Consumers aim to create a specific look and thus imitate the already seen sets on social media.

Therefore, social media exposes consumers to complementary products and experiences, leading to a desire to acquire additional items to complete a desired aesthetic or lifestyle. The likelihood of the Diderot effect increases through social media content, as social media is heavily based on material display and fuels impulsive buying behavior. These findings support Pellegrino et al. (2022)'s observations that impulsive buyers often purchase products they have previously seen on social media. Many interviewees mentioned that the Diderot effect is often quite unconscious. However, most respondents were able to recount examples and situations where they had experienced the Diderot effect. Many also mentioned sometimes avoiding purchases because they know that a buying spiral can easily start from just one purchase. Respondents felt that social media increases the Diderot effect precisely because there are so many influences and aesthetically pleasing sets on social media, making it easy to start a buying spiral when wanting products to match each other.

5.1.4 Negative consumption behavior in the context of social media

Social media creates a culture of comparison and competition, leading to the accumulation of material possessions to stay current with trends and achieve a sense of belonging. Additionally, social comparison often results in feelings of inadequacy, driving the need to keep up with others and remain at the forefront, which easily increases consumption. When consumers see the lifestyles and consumption choices of others on social media, they find it difficult not to compare themselves. This comparison generates feelings of not being enough as they are, which in turn leads to excessive consumption in an attempt to attain a semblance of perfection. Furthermore, constant exposure to idealized lifestyles creates unrealistic expectations and perpetuates ongoing dissatisfaction, further encouraging impulsive and unnecessary purchases.

The research also shows that social media reinforces the Diderot effect, where making a new purchase creates a desire to make additional purchases to complement or enhance the original acquisition. It is evident from the study that social media significantly impacts the Diderot effect and consumer purchasing behavior. Interviews indicate that social media content, such as influencer recommendations and curated content, increases the desire to make additional purchases to complement initial ones. Social media's emphasis on presenting cohesive sets prompts consumers to buy multiple items to achieve a similar aesthetic or lifestyle. This reinforces the Diderot effect, where making one purchase creates a desire for more to complete or enhance the original acquisition. Additionally, many interviewees mentioned that the Diderot effect can be subconscious but still drives consumer behavior. Continuous exposure to social media influences consumers to feel the need to replicate seen sets and acquire related products, increasing impulsive buying behavior. This research supports previous findings that social media acts as a catalyst for increased consumption and impulsive purchases. It also demonstrates that social media affects consumers subconsciously and that many feel it enhances the Diderot effect.

Understanding negative consumption behavior in the context of social media deepened through empirical data. Additionally, more in-depth information was obtained about the factors behind negative consumption behavior. New insights were also gained on the connection between the Diderot effect and social media and how social media fuels the purchasing spiral. The significance of social media on negative consumption behavior was found to be substantial, as social media activates the drivers of negative consumption behavior. A new finding, complementing previous research, is the connection between social media and the Diderot effect. This study concluded that social media is a significant factor behind negative consumer behavior, with major drivers being self-concept, materialism, social comparison, and the need to belong.

5.2 Theoretical conclusions

This thesis offers a profound understanding of how social media influences negative consumer behavior. It enriches the existing literature by highlighting the significant negative aspects of social media, such as overconsumption, the reinforcement of the Diderot effect, and consumers' feelings of inadequacy, thus providing a more comprehensive view of social media's role in modern consumer behavior. The thesis deepens the theoretical understanding of how social media acts as a driver for negative consumption behavior. The study emphasizes that the pressure to belong, external influences, and the pursuit of emotional fulfillment significantly contribute to negative consumption patterns. By illustrating these mechanisms, the research enriches the current literature on consumer behavior in the digital age. According to the research, social media increases the culture of materialism and consumption, continuous purchase impulses, and Diderot effect. Previous research has already established that social media platforms act as catalysts for increased consumption and materialism (Pellegrino et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2019; Frick et al., 2021), and this research confirms the findings of earlier studies. Previous literature has also observed the impact of social media on impulse purchases (Pellegrino et al., 2022; Nyrhinen et al., 2023), conspicuous consumption (Pellegrino et al., 2022), and compulsive buying (Pellegrino et al., 2022; Kukar-Kinney et al., 2009; Sharif & Khanekharab, 2017). However, this research provides a deeper understanding of these different forms of negative consumer behavior and offers entirely new information regarding the Diderot effect and its connection to social media. The research found that social media causes increased consumption through social comparison, as people are constantly exposed to others' idealized lives and identities formed around material possessions. Previous research has noted the connection between the intensity of social media use and negative consumption (Pellegrino et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2019; Frick et al., 2021), but this research delves deeper into the underlying factors that make social media easily lead to negative consumption behavior. Social comparison on social media easily leads to negative feelings caused by social comparison, and people try to numb these

negative feelings by consuming and seeking a boost to their self-esteem through consumption.

The thesis deepens the theoretical understanding of the relationship between social media dynamics and key psychological constructs, such as self-esteem and social comparison. It examines how social media platforms exacerbate psychological pressures, which in turn influence consumption patterns, thereby contributing to the theoretical discourse on consumer psychology in digital contexts. The research found that social media creates pressure to consume through social comparison. This confirms the findings of previous studies (Lee et al., 2016). The study also revealed that lower self-esteem can trigger consumption needs, as people want to belong and boost their self-esteem through purchases. This partly confirms and partly contradicts the previous finding by Wilcox and Stephen (2013). According to them, the use of social media increases self-esteem and at the same time stimulates the desire to spend. Previous literature (Hayran et al., 2016) has also found that people face pressure concerning consumption due to social media content, and thus the research's findings support this claim. The study also revealed that the purchase of certain trendy products may be driven by the unconscious desire for acceptance from others and to belong to a particular group. Previous studies have also seen that conspicuous purchasing habits are frequently linked to social media users who engage in herd behavior to seek validation from others and continuously measure themselves against influencers and their peers online (Pellegrino et al., 2022), thereby supporting this finding. By linking negative consumption behavior with self-esteem and the pursuit of emotional fulfillment, the thesis provides a theoretical basis for understanding the emotional drivers behind consumer actions. It highlights that low self-esteem and the need for validation can lead individuals to negative consumption, offering a nuanced view of the emotional aspects of consumer behavior.

The research also provides perspectives for understanding the effects of social comparison on purchasing behavior. It shows that comparison on social media platforms creates pressures to conform and emulate the lifestyles of others, leading to increased feelings of inadequacy and impulsive buying. Social comparison on social media creates negative feelings about oneself and one's possessions, leading people to compensate for these negative feelings through purchases aimed at gaining acceptance, belonging, and improved self-esteem. Previous literature (Song et al., 2021; Thi et al., 2023; Pellegrino et al., 2022) has also found that social media creates comparison or imitation of influencers and peers, and this research supports this claim. Previous research has also observed that social comparison affects the subjective well-being of social media users (Tiggemann et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2020), and this finding is reinforced by the research results. Additionally, Lee et al (2016) found that viewing content on social media can result in unfavorable comparisons and a heightened desire to obtain products or services showcased on social media platforms, and this finding is supported by the research results. This contributes to theoretical discussions on the psychological impacts of social media and its influence on consumption.

Finally, the thesis offers significant insights into how social media reinforces the Diderot effect, where consumers are driven to make additional purchases to maintain a cohesive lifestyle or aesthetic. This theoretical contribution helps explain the role of curated social media content and influencer marketing in promoting continuous consumption, thus expanding the understanding of the Diderot effect in the context of modern digital platforms. Research on the Diderot effect in the context of social media is minimal, so this study provides new information and contribution on how social media strengthens the impact of the Diderot effect. According to the research, social media content promotes the Diderot effect by showcasing complementary products and encouraging additional purchases. The results indicate that exposure to curated content on social media triggers desires for related products and accessories, and social media exposes consumers to complementary products and experiences, leading to a desire to acquire products to complete a desired aesthetic or lifestyle. Social media can be seen to amplify consumer desires by presenting ideal lifestyles. Exposure to influencers' content and advertisements on social media increases the likelihood of succumbing to the Diderot effect. Additionally, the ease of access to product recommendations and reviews on social media fuels impulsive buying behavior and the Diderot effect.

5.3 Practical implications

The influence of social media on consumer behavior is truly significant, and it has been extensively studied for its effectiveness and positive perspectives. However, social media is now such a prevalent part of consumers' daily lives, and its impact on consumers is so massive that it is also important to delve into the negative aspects of social media regarding consumer behavior. Social media is the most significant channel for modern consumers in terms of consumer behavior, and especially for young consumers, this may be one of the few channels through which consumers can be reached. Therefore, companies should recognize and consider in their marketing communications how social media can also cause negative consumption behavior, overconsumption, or a feeling of inadequacy among consumers.

Social media marketing is a very influential way to reach especially young consumers who actively use social media. Influencer marketing and peer-generated social media content were perceived as highly influential and inducing consumption, as young consumers, in particular, feel significant pressure to belong, and on social media, consumers easily compare themselves and their possessions to others. Influencer marketing easily creates trends and mainstreams, and consumers strive to pursue these and stay on top of trends. For this reason, from a business perspective, using influencers in marketing is very effective, as following trends and striving to stay in the mainstream induces consumption. However, the research revealed that consumption often involves patching up low self-esteem, seeking pleasure, or a feeling of inadequacy, which can easily lead to addictive consumption. Therefore, companies should consider

this in their marketing communications to avoid overconsumption. Attitudes towards continuous consumption have changed within a short period, and marketers should pay attention to promoting sustainable choices and implement educational content, from which consumers can learn more about sustainable choices. Companies could initiate awareness campaigns that educate consumers about the psychological effects of social media. These campaigns should highlight phenomena as well as negative consumption behavior, such as the Diderot effect and the pressures of social comparison, helping consumers recognize the triggers of impulsive buying. For example, educational social media posts could serve to disseminate this information widely, promoting a more conscious consumer base.

This could also be effectively implemented, for example, through influencer marketing by choosing influencers who hold sustainable values to carry out marketing communication. Marketing communication methods should be carefully considered, as well as the use of influencers who advertise the product or service. Influencer marketing is a powerful tool, but it must be used responsibly. Collaboration with influencers who promote responsible consumption and authentic lifestyles can help mitigate the negative effects of social media. Brands should seek partnerships with influencers whose values align with ethical consumption, ensuring that their promotions encourage thoughtful and informed purchasing decisions. Responsibility and reducing consumption are now increasingly important values that companies must consider in their marketing efforts. Responsible consumption is receiving a lot of attention nowadays, and companies have also invested in more sustainable production methods and materials and communicating about them. The sustainability of consumption choices, especially regarding material, is very important to consumers, and companies are expected to be responsible.

Brands should also reconsider their social media strategies to reduce the pressure on consumers to conform to unrealistic standards. This can be achieved, for example, by focusing on creating more authentic content. Instead of idealized portrayals of lifestyles, companies should aim to share more genuine and relatable content that reflects real-life experiences. User-generated content could play a crucial role here. By promoting genuine reviews and experiences from real customers, brands can offer a more realistic view of their products.

The study also revealed that product bundling is an effective sales strategy, but it should be approached with caution. Brands should promote complementary products in a way that enhances their utility rather than encouraging excessive consumption. Marketing campaigns should emphasize the practical benefits of bundled products, ensuring that they are seen as value-adding rather than simply enticing consumers to buy more. Ethical marketing practices are essential in this context. Companies must avoid exploiting consumers' insecurities or their need to belong to drive sales. Transparent and honest marketing communication can help build long-term customer loyalty and trust. Furthermore, sustainability is becoming increasingly important to consumers. Developing sustainable product lines and promoting them effectively can address both consumer demand and environmental concerns. Brands should highlight the sustainability aspects of their products, such as eco-

friendly materials, ethical sourcing, and reduced carbon footprints. Incorporating sustainability messages into marketing communications can encourage consumers to make environmentally responsible choices. This not only aligns with growing consumer values but also helps reduce the negative impacts of overconsumption driven by social media.

5.4 Limitations and evaluation of the study

The first limitation of the study to be noted is the limited sample size, which means that the study cannot be generalized to encompass the views and experiences of all young social media users on the subject. With a larger sample size, the results could be more easily generalized. However, the main goal of the study was primarily to increase understanding of the topic, so increasing the sample size is not as crucial. Additionally, the demographic factors of the study participants may also influence the research results. The interviewees in the study were relatively homogeneous in terms of age, residence, education, or profession, so if generalizability of the results is sought, the study group should be more heterogeneous. Moreover, most of the interviewees were women, which may also affect the results obtained. There may be differences in consumer behavior between women and men, especially in the context of social media, as women are known to be more susceptible to influencer marketing. Another limitation could also be the familiarity with the concept of the Diderot effect and the complexity of the effect itself. Literature related to the Diderot effect, especially in the context of social media, is very limited, so the chosen theories support the objectives of the study based on current knowledge.

Ethical considerations have been taken into account throughout the various phases of the study, and efforts have been made to produce high-quality, reliable, and open information. Ethical questions accompany qualitative research at every stage. The research-related choices have been openly disclosed and justified. Additionally, the significance of the choices concerning the final outcome has been assessed. Data collection for the study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles. Ethical conduct requires obtaining consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and considering potential consequences of the research for the participants (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008, p. 20). Comprehensive informed consent forms were provided to the participants before the interviews commenced. The anonymity of the participants has been strictly observed, and individual interviewees cannot be identified from the material.

In the analysis of qualitative research, attention must be paid particularly to the validity and reliability of the study. Validity refers to the ability of the chosen research method to measure what the study aims to measure. Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the repeatability of the study's results, or in other words, the ability to produce non-random results. However, validity and reliability assessments are more closely related to quantitative research, so they do not play as significant a role in the evaluation of qualitative research as they would in quantitative research. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2009, p. 189). In qualitative

research, the researcher's subjective perspective is strongly present. Therefore, assessing the reliability of qualitative research is often more challenging than quantitative research. In evaluating qualitative research, the consistency of the entire research process is often essential from the perspective of consistency (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002). Consistency has been ensured in this study by utilizing peer-reviewed literature in the literature review section and forming the conceptual framework based on carefully selected theories relevant to this study.

Qualitative research also requires the researcher to consider factors that may affect the validity and reliability of the results by acknowledging certain influences and limitations that may impact the research findings. Therefore, the researcher is the primary evaluator of reliability (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Throughout the various stages of the study, attention has been paid to the reliability of the research, and appropriate research methods, interview questions, and interviewees have been carefully selected to ensure the reliability of the study's results. The reliability of the study's findings has been further supported by justifying how interpretations of the results are presented and on what basis the interpretations are made. However, when assessing the reliability of the study, attention should be paid to whether the study can be replicated in the same manner to yield similar results (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The repeatability of this study with exactly the same results is quite unlikely. The study targeted young adults who were not randomly selected for the interviews, as the interviewees were part of the researcher's social circle. Therefore, all interviewees in the study represented somewhat similar value systems and formed a somewhat homogeneous interview group, which may have been reflected in the study's results.

Validity, on the other hand, refers to how accurate and valid the conclusions drawn from the study's results are (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). When assessing the validity of qualitative research, comparisons can be made between the study's findings and previous theories and research results. If the interpretation and information provided by the interviewee correspond to information from a previous source, it can be practically considered that the information confirms each other. Some of the study's findings confirm previous theories presented in the theoretical section of this study. However, this study's results also yielded new insights, providing new information that enriches previous literature on the subject. The sources and their reliability are also essential factors in evaluating the study's reliability. Therefore, evaluating the reliability of sources is one of the factors affecting validity. The sources of the study have been carefully selected, and most of them are scientific sources. It is also essential to note that, especially in research utilizing an abductive approach, validity is assessed from the perspectives of presenting information and utilizing the data, and in abductive reasoning, the data itself is considered to be always valid, even if it contains inconsistencies. (Grönfors, 1982, p. 37).

5.5 Suggestions for further research

It would be interesting to study the Diderot effect specifically in more detail, as there is still a relatively limited amount of research on it. Especially, obtaining more research data on the relationship between the Diderot effect and social media would be interesting, as social media is so prevalent in our everyday lives. The influence of social media on attitudes related to consumption and consumption itself is enormous, so researching negative consumption behavior is important for consumption behavior research. With the rise of responsibility and greener values, it would also be interesting to add a perspective of responsibility to the study of social media consumption behavior. Consumer attitudes are constantly changing, and the trend of sustainable consumption has already gained a lot of traction. Therefore, social media should be utilized to promote more responsible values and reduce consumption.

In addition, the homogeneous and limited sample size of this study opens up the possibility for further research with a larger sample size. It would be interesting to conduct the study with younger consumers as well, as theory suggests that younger consumers are more susceptible to influences and seeking approval, making them also more susceptible to influences and impulses from social media. Teenagers, in particular, are a significant user group of social media and are highly susceptible to environmental influences, and thus, possibly also to negative consumption behavior. For example, interviews with teenagers on this topic would be interesting.

Furthermore, the same study could be conducted with a larger sample size, making the interviewees' group less homogeneous. Therefore, sampling should be expanded in future studies, especially in terms of demographic factors, to more reliably determine whether the perceptions revealed in this study are generalizable. Additionally, it would be interesting to study the views of consumers other than young people and compare them, as young people are clearly the largest users of social media and thus more susceptible to influences from social media.

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APPENDIX 1 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

THEME 1: Social Media and Consumer Behavior

1. Have you ever made purchases based on what you've seen on social media?
2. Could you describe a previous experience where you made a purchase based on social media?
3. How do you feel social media platforms have influenced your purchasing decisions?
4. How do you perceive social media influencers or your peers influencing consumer behavior and purchasing decisions?

THEME 2: Negative Consumption Behavior and Social Media

5. Can you recall a situation where you made an impulsive purchase after seeing a product or service on social media?
6. Can you identify specific emotions or situations that lead to impulsive buying or excessive spending on social media?
7. Have you ever felt pressure to make purchases based on what you've seen on social media? If yes, could you provide examples?
8. What are some psychological factors you believe drive individuals to engage in negative purchasing behavior?
9. What role do you see social media platforms playing in promoting consumption and overconsumption?
10. Do you believe social media platforms promote a culture of consumption and materialism? If yes, how?

THEME 3: Social Comparison and Overconsumption

11. Have you ever experienced jealousy or feelings of inadequacy after comparing yourself to others on social media? How does this affect your consumption behavior?
12. Can you share situations where comparing yourself to others on social media influenced your purchasing decisions?
13. How does social comparison, especially on social media, influence your perception of what you should own or experience?
14. Do you believe that social media leads to the imitation of influencers or peers?

THEME 4: Diderot-effect

15. Are you familiar with the concept of the Diderot effect? (→ The definition of the concept is given at this point)
16. Have you experienced a situation where buying one product led to making additional purchases?
17. Have you ever found yourself falling victim to the Diderot effect after purchasing a new product? If yes, what was your experience like?
18. Do you believe social media reinforces the Diderot effect? Why or why not?

THEME 5: Impact of Identity and Self-image

19. Have you ever felt pressure to portray a certain image or lifestyle on social media? How does this affect your consumption choices?

20. Do you think social media contributes to identity formation through visible consumption? Why or why not?

21. How do you believe self-esteem affects an individual's approach to consumption?

22. What causes social media to create pressure for consumption?