Exploring the impact of shock advertisement on students with culture as an influential factor

MBA Marketing

Dainius Satas
10032448

Dublin Business School

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper could be stated as to investigate the impact that shock advertisement brings to students while using culture as an influential factor. It can be said that this academic paper has three main parts: literature review, methodology and primary research. Throughout the literature review it was established that shock advertisement is a tool that I used within advertisement and marketing communication. With time it is becoming more and more popular. Although shock advertisement works by breaking through societal norms and surprising the target audience with vulgar or vial imagery or other aspects, while it is becoming more popular, people are more likely to be prone to the shock. Thus advertisers are using more offensive or insulting tactics to achieve their goals. There were studies examined that stated that shock advertisement can be deemed positive when it comes to students as an audience. However, there is a lack of research done on the negative impact or aspects shock appeal in advertisement brings. Shock appeal is usually used within sensitive or taboo topics; hence this research is based on them as well. Main issues arise throughout the literature review, that offensiveness of the advertisement can insult, cause distress or disgust and so not carry the intended information. Furthermore, culture can be deemed as one of the factors that can play an influential role. Researcher took upon 14 semi structure interviews to better answer the research questions, analyze the objectives and prove or reject the hypotheses. Throughout the research, the author came to a conclusion that although shock advertisements can be offensive or disgusting they are still more likely to carry out the intended information or the message. Culture can be seen as a factor when it comes to perceiving the impact or establishing intent to change attitudes or behaviour towards a harmful activity. However other factors were established as well that play crucial roles.
1. Introduction

Communication is one of the most human of activities. People communicate daily for multiple reasons and it can be carried out by conversation, written word and pictures. (Blythe 2005, p. 213) Hence, communication is a part of marketing as well, in order to reach the target audience the communication process takes places. It can be summarized as a process that occurs between an organisation and its various target audiences; it is a management process that involves the development and presentation of various messages, followed up with the evaluation of their success and it sets out to influence the perception, understanding and actions of an organisation’s target audience. (Medcalf 2004, p. 2) It is important to understand and analyze how the marketing communication works, what does it consist of and how can it be used effectively and efficiently.

As the marketing communication definition was established above, it is crucial to link it with different tools used to reach the target audience. As Patricia Medcalf (2004, p. 1) explains, marketing communications can be viewed as “promotion” element or tool of the four P’s (product, price, promotion, place). Furthermore, Fill (2009, p. 19) links the marketing communication not only with tools but explains that it has two more important elements: media and messages. Additionally, Fill (2009, p. 19) is quick to state that there are five principal communication tools: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing and personal selling; these tools should not be mixed up with media, because they have different characteristics and seek different goals. The trilogy is completed with messages that are purposely adapted for the target audience. (Fill 2009, p. 19) As established before promotion has a significant role to play as part of the marketing mix and sometimes can be deemed marketing communications in general. (Medcalf 2004, p. 3) A closer look is needed into one of the tools used by “promotion” element – advertising.

Advertisement can be simply explained as any paid form of non-personal communication about an organization, product, service or idea by an identified sponsor. (Belch and Belch 2009, p. 18) As established that advertisement is a communication process at itself, it is crucial to understand the main objectives and the roles of it. Fill (2009, p. 483) states that the main objective is to build or maintain awareness of a product or an organisation. There are many roles of advertising as listed by Patricia Medcalf (2004, p. 193), nevertheless, the most crucial ones to this thesis are the ability to change attitudes and behaviour, address generic issues and to generate awareness. As mentioned before one of the important elements of communication process is the message itself, thus while using
advertising as a tool it has to be determined what the message should communicate. This can be determined though the use of different appeals. Advertising appeals refer to the approach used to attract the attention of consumer and/or influence their feelings towards the product, service, or cause. (Belch and Belch 2009, p.283) There are two main types of advertising appeals that are used to attract attention of the target audience: rational and emotional (Medcalf, 2004, p. 210) In this case, the emotional appeal is more relevant, because it holds the primary concept of shock advertisements and shock appeal that is the core of the dissertation. Many feelings or needs can serve as the basis for advertising appeals designed to influence consumers on an emotional level, such as: love, joy, happiness, affection, security, safety, nostalgia and fear. (Belch and Belch 2009, p. 285)

Going more in depth within the topic, it becomes crucial to understand another emotion or feeling that advertisements are carrying out – shock. Although shock could be related to the fear appeal, it has its own niche and thus a group of advertisements called ‘shock advertising’ was created. As stated by Dahl et al. (2003, p. 269) shocking advertisement attempts to surprise an audience by deliberately violating norms for societal values and personal ideas. In other words, shock advertisement proclaims social values or problems, of health, smoking, driving and other through a different view that could be deemed as social unacceptable. Fill (2009, p. 489) elaborates more explaining that the main use of shock advertising strategy is that it is a good way to secure an audience’s attention and achieve a longer-lasting impact than through traditional messages and attention-getting devices.

From the use of shock advertising the main advantages arises, whereas it is clear that through shocking images or videos people have a longer lasting impact or it raises the awareness it is important to underpin the disadvantages. As Whiteside (2008) states that there is a huge number of complaints regarding shock advertisements, just over 24 thousand in the year of 2007. The author continues to state that some of the advertisements, in this case released in the UK market, were offensive frightening and causing distress. (Whiteside, 2008) So in other words, shocking advertisements, although raising awareness, sometimes can be deemed more offensive or cause distress than inform the viewer.

All of these topics and themes are looked through and analyzed more in depth within the literature analysis part of this thesis. The main questions and reasons of the research arise through the analysis of the secondary data.
Although, it can be said that exploring and analysing shock appeal in advertisements is not a new area or topic, the aim of this thesis is different. The purpose is not to answer the question is there an impact; it is to understand the impact shock appeal has on people and try to establish if an offensive or disgusting advertisement can still be informative. As already mentioned the impact can be different on different people regarding many factors, if you group of people will find it meaningful or the advertisement will make them think, then another group of people can get annoyed, offended or distressed by a shocking images or videos. Hence, this thesis will only add additional crucial information to better evaluate and understand the impact of shock appeal advertisement. It is crucial for the reader to understand that shocking advertising has an impact on the viewers. Although explained the impact may differ because of culture, mindset and other variables, this thesis will concentrate on the negative impact, hence establishing the link between the advertisement being informative and shocking with the advertisement being shocking, offensive, annoying and irritable. Furthermore, this research will use culture as an influential factor when it comes to the impact of shock advertisement. It is important for the reader to understand that this is not a sociological research and the main reasons or objectives of this dissertation are not make culture the main objective of it. It can be said that there are more than one factor that can influence, however due to lack of research connecting the negative impact of shock advertisement and the cultural background of the viewer the researcher deems this research relevant. A broader and in the same way detailed analysis of the factors and impact is made by using secondary data and primary research.

**Research questions**

**Primary research question:**

Does the impact raised by shocking advertising can be perceived as more offensive and annoying than informative?

**Sub-questions:**

Can advertisements that are offensive and cause distress still be a good source of information regarding social problems?
Can there be a line drawn regarding the positive and negative aspects of shocking advertising?

Is culture playing a significant role on people when it comes to the impact of shock appeal advertising?

**Hypothesis:**

1. Advertisements that use shock appeal are more offensive and annoying than informative.

2. People from different cultures are influenced differently by shock advertising.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Literature Introduction

Throughout this chapter a deeper look and an analysis takes place on the topics already primarily overlooked in the introduction. A broad overlook of communication process, marketing mix, promotion, advertising and other topics takes place in order to systematically draw the reader to the most relevant topic – shock advertising. Connections are made while establishing the relevance of communication theory and promotion with advertisement. Through the broad analysis the key topics and issues are established as shock appeal and shock advertisement. Literature analysis raises questions and problems that are directly linked with the methodology chapter further down the thesis. Primary research will take place in order to analyse and draw conclusion upon the outcomes of literature analysis.
2.2 Marketing Communication

2.2.1 Marketing communications Process

As already shortly overlooked in the introduction of the dissertation the process of marketing communication was established. A further analysis takes place to better understand the relevance of communication theory or marketing communications. Dahlen et al. (2010, p. 3) explains that the main concern of marketing communication is engagement; it is a planned, integrated and controlled dialogues with key target audiences to help achieve mutually beneficial objectives. Furthermore, Fill (2009, p. 16) compliments that by saying that above all else, marketing communications should be an audience-centred activity. Hence a clear link appears while defining communication process – it is primarily concentrated on their target audience and their beneficial objectives. While knowing the primary purpose of marketing communication is to meet the needs of the consumers Dahlen et al. (2010, p. 23) further explains that marketing communication could be also acknowledged as skill. The ability to synchronically use different communication methods to reach its primary objective, as stated above, can be deemed as the essence or of marketing communication. (Dahlen et al. 2010, p. 23)

Knowing better what marketing communications are and what could be called their primary purpose; a closer look into the actual process of communication takes place. As showed below in diagram 1.1, the process is best understood by examining Schramm’s model (Medcalf 2004, p. 24)
As further explained by Medcalf (2004, p. 24) this model shows one of the most fundamental aspects of communication – that both the sender and receiver of the message must be active participants in the process for communication to be deemed successful and effective.

In other words, the sender and the receiver should be participating in the process not only throughout the encoding and decoding of the message, but as well through the feedback. As it shown in the model the feedback plays an important role which connects the sender and the receiver even more. Feedback is necessary in order to evaluate if the communication process is successful or not. (Medcalf 2004, p. 30) This model provides a communication process that not only encompasses the receiver or otherwise consumer into the circle, but gives him a primary role providing feedback, which is crucial while implementing necessary changes to make the process more efficient and effective.

A deeper explanation of Schramm’s communication model takes places in order to better understand all of the participants, tools, techniques used and linkage between these variables. Schramm in his model (provided above) differentiates seven participants which at the same are independent and linked together. These participators are: source, process of encoding and process of decoding, message, receiver, noise and feedback. These elements will be explained in detail to better understand the communication process and the creation of it while using different strategies.

Although there are many different communication models established by authors and researchers, they all have common elements that establish the same function. First and foremost the source, Fill (2009, p. 42) describes it in short as an individual or an organisation that has a need of transmitting the message to the receiver. Source can also be interchangeable and used as a replacement for the message sender, and vice versa. In addition to C.Fill, Belch and Belch (2012, p. 149) establishes what could be called as the main purpose of the source/sender of a communication is to share the information that they have with another person or group of people. It is important to pinpoint that the sources is an important part of the communication process, not only the creator of a detached message. (Fill 2009, p. 43)

In order for the person or group of people to actually understand the information that is being communicated, the process encoding has to take place. Blythe (2000, p. 1) explains that humans cannot understand the original concept of the message or information which is being communicated to them, thus it should be translated or ,in this case, encoded into
symbols that carry out the wanted meaning. Several other authors (Fill 2009, Kotler and Armstrong 2008, Belch and Belch 2012) add that throughout the process of encoding specific selected words, symbols, pictures and other attributes can be used to carry out the wanted message with the initial impact. The key of a well encoded message as Belch and Belch (2012, p. 150) continues is to put the thoughts, ideas or other information into a symbolic form for the receiver to understand. The linkage between the participants of the communication process becomes clearer, although they individually play an important part in the cycle, as it shown they complement one another. The sender or the source as explained by the authors above is closely linked with the message throughout the process of encoding. Belch and Belch (2012, p. 150) states that the beginning of the communication process could actually be seen as the encoding of the information. Hence, importance of the encoding process becomes clearer. In order for the receiver to understand the message that is being sent it is crucial to encode it using specific symbols, words or other attributes that is known by the receiver. Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p. 403) summarizes this that the process of encoding should be closely linked or “meshed” with the process of decoding from the receiver.

But while the sender can know how to encode the message properly, it is crucial for him to firstly determine the target audience. By doing that the way the message will be encoded changes, different target audiences rely on different attributes, symbols, feelings, appeals, attitudes and most important, decode the message differently. It is important when defining the target audience to decide what kind of response the senders are looking for. (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p. 404) Although the usual one is a response or purchase of a product or a good, the same methods of communicating applies to social problems: anti-smoking, drunk-driving, road safety campaigns.

Furthermore, already established that the beginning of the communications is the encoding process regarding a specific audience, the source/encoding might not be successful or run smooth, it can have negative consequences to the sender. Chris Fill (2009, p. 42) gives a couple of reasons why the encoding process might not be valuable to the source. Throughout determining the target audience it’s crucial to understand what information might be deemed relevant and important to the receiver. Moreover, not having the ability to distinguish the appropriate information from inappropriate might lead to misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the message by the receiver. Thus, another important factor arises when talking about sensitive subject or social problems – the information provided in the message should be clear and provided appropriately. Another reason why the encoding process might go bad is when sender or the source does not evaluate the level of education or the level of
understanding of the receiver. It leads the encoding process to use symbols or words that are beyond the comprehension of the receiver. (Fill 2009, p. 42) The author explains more in detail that this phenomenon that he refers as the “realm of understanding” is closely linked with the perceptions, behaviour, attitudes and experience of both sender and receiver. (Fill 2009, p. 46)

Summarising, it can be said, that to actually start the communication process the sender/source need to firstly establish a target audience that it wants to reach. By doing so the information or message can be encoded with more ease, knowing the target audience the sender knows their potential attitudes or perceptions regarding products, services or in this case social problems.

When the source determines the target audience and understands them, the encoding process lead to the creation of the message. (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 150) For the message to be created properly there are several different aspects of it that should be taken into account like, message content and appeals, structure and channels. (Fill 2009, Kotler and Armstrong 2008, Belch and Belch 2012). This is the part, combined with the encoding process, where the creative strategy takes place in the communication process. In short a creative strategy is what determines what the advertising message will communicate and what type of creative tactics will it use for the strategy to become successful and for the message to reach and impact the receiver or the target audience. Belch and Belch (2012, p. 256) further explains that the advertising message does much more than only communicates information. The authors are soon to add more that advertisements and commercials appeal to, and often create or shape, consumer’s problems, desires and goals. (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 256) All of the different aspects of the message, listed above, are closely linked with the creative strategy part of the communication process.

When talking about creative strategy and communication process, the best way a sender can express him or create a specific point of view towards his product/service or an issue for the receiver is throughout the content of the message. Although message content and message format can be deemed similar if you look at how Kotler et al. (2013, p. 426) establishes both, but actually they are different individual component of the message that only helps one another while trying to implicate the creative strategy within the communicated information. As the format is more relevant to a specific colour, or headline used, the message content looks from a much broader perspective, still closely linking it with the target audience. Moreover, the concept of “message content” can and is being interchanged with “message appeals” by more than several authors (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, Kotler et al. 2013, Fill
2009, Medcalf 2004 and others), both explaining and trying to answer questions as how can we reach the target audience? What can be done differently? What other things work?

If the message structure and format answers the question of what to say, then the message content or appeal raises the most important question within the communication theory – how to say? (Kotler et al. 2013) In short the message content or appeal can be summarised as the part of the creative strategy where the sender or advertiser decides what kind of an appeal the message should carry. (Fill, 2009, p. 518) From discussion before it became clear that the message structure was more linked with the attitude building and changing within the receiver, hence, message appeal compliments that by directly providing the receiver with one of most usually used appeals by the sender: rational and emotional. (Kotler et al. 426) In addition Belch and Belch (2012, p. 199) are soon to add that choosing the right appeal can be deemed the most important decision a sender can make within creative strategy. Fill (2009, p. 519) further explains the importance of the appeal within the creative strategy by stating, that only if the execution of the message appeal is appropriate and relevant to the target audience’s views, perception and expectations, the chances reduce to have or to maintain a successful communication. There is a split decision between authors and researchers; whiles some may say that using rational appeal makes more sense and strives on the logical thinking of the receiver, others state that operative on the target audience’s feelings can provide some emotional reaction. Nevertheless, many of them agree that the one of the most effective advertising combines both the practical and the emotional reasons, regarding purchasing of the product or service.

Only the main differences between these appeals and their place within the creative strategy will be stated, a deeper look will take place further down the literature review. Rational appeal is usually used with the audience that is more highly involved or self-interested in the product, service or topic. (Kotler et al. 426) Its primary focus is to provide information about the product, ensure its benefits, safety, quality, value, performance or other attributes that could be looked upon from a logical perspective. Advertisements should have logical aspects, arguments and information that would increase rational thinking and clear and quicken the decision making (Fill 2009, p. 520) On the other hand, there is the emotional appeal. By using emotional appeal the sender is trying to reach out or stir up either negative or positive emotions within the receiver for, most commonly, making a purchase. (Kotler and Armstrong 2008) To further explain the emotional appeal use Fill (2009, 521) explains that nowadays more products and services are alike, what makes the unique is actually the communication behind them. Hence, using a different creative strategy, choosing emotional
appeal could make a product stand out more from the market. While talking about sales and purchases, the point being is that through interfering with people’s emotions and feelings they sometimes become attached or overly attached to a product, thus a “soft sell”, based on feelings, can take place. (Fill 2009, p. 521) Kotler et al. (2013, p. 426) further adds that the understanding or expectation is that consumers or target markets often feel before they think. Although it contradicts the attitude forming module where usually people are more likely to think then feel and then make a decision, in this case emotional appeal can make target audience feel before they actually think and come up with change in their behaviour.

Looking closely into one of the aspects relating the two, message and creative strategy, it is important for the message to have a structural approach to it. Authors like Fill 2009, Kotler and Armstrong 2008, Belch and Belch 2012 and others, establish few different types of structure that a message could hold: conclusion drawing, message sidedness, order of presentation. The first one bares the question how should I structure my message? Should the information provided draw a specific conclusion or is it better to leave it for the audience? Some authors and researchers agree that it is better to let the target audience come up with their own conclusions than giving one in advance. (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p. 406) This type of structuring can be achieved by asking questions, raising issues or providing topics for discussion (Does it really take that much time to buckle your seatbelt? Is earth going to clean itself? Do you really think another drink is ok?). By doing that inevitably the sender raises a discussion within the receiver, while trying to influence his attitude towards, in this case, social issue.

However, Fill (2009, p. 517) raises a discussion that audience can more easily understand a clear conclusion already provided within the message. The author follows up by stating that giving the audience the ability to make their own conclusion is depended on several important factors that might not be successfully reached throughout the communication process. If the message is too complex or if it’s referring to a “hard to understand” topic, the audience may not be able to come up with the intended outcome.

Secondly, it is closely depended on how educated is the receiver. A more educated audience prefer to draw their own conclusions and might be irritated with the sender trying to imply their own views. However, a less educated receiver about a specific topic would be more likely affected by a drawn conclusion already, getting the effect and a reaction because of the message. (Fill 2009, p. 517)

Thirdly, it depends on the urgency of the action or reaction to the message anticipated by the sender. If the sender requires an immediate action taken by the receiver the conclusion
should be drawn clearly (Over a hundred people died this month from speeding. Speed kills.)
Looking specifically in advertising that are related to social problems and issues, the intent
usually is throughout the use of a specific appeal (shock, fear, humour) the sender is looking
for a quick and immediate reaction to the problem, hence making a person think, feel, do. In
other words changing the attitude that he receiver has towards a specific issue, problem or
topic (Dahl et al. 2003). Summarising it become clear that advertisements which contains
messages structure to draw the conclusion for the target audience and more likely to take
greater and faster effect on them.

Last but not least, the strategy behind structuring the message should refer to the
involvement level of the receiver to the specific problem. As Arora (1985) explains in more
detail, high involvement can mean that the target audience are more likely to make up their
own minds and probably would reject or not agree with the conclusions drawn for the by the
sender.

The second aspect of message structuring is the sidedness of the messages. It is clear
that the message can be one-sided or two-sided. Many authors state the same attributes to the
sidedness of the message. (Fill 2009, Medcalf 2004, Kotler et al. 2008, Belch and Belch 2012
and others) The one-sided message is used to provide the receiver with the benefits and only
the benefits for a specific product or service. A link could be established with the conclusion
drawing part of the structure, hence a conclusion is being drawn and the target audience are
influenced to think about this product/service in a positive manner. (Kotler and Armstrong,
2008, p. 407) It’s more effective and works better when the audience already holds a
favourable view towards a specific product/service and are less educated. Regarding the two-
sided message, it not only provides the strengths or the product but as well the weaknesses or
shortcomings. This structural type is more welcomed by a highly educated audience that
prefers to make their own conclusions, when they here both sides of the story. (Fill, 2009, p.
518)

As established before, the sender of a socially relevant issue intends to get an immediate
reaction, which in theory should affect the audience’s behaviour. For that reason a well-
structured one-sided message with an already proposed conclusion is much more relevant.
Nevertheless, Belch and Belch (2012, p. 198) strongly state that a one-sided message is
commonly used to clearly show the strengths of the product/service, it could easily be used
within an advertisement regarding social issues or more delicate topics (Wearing seatbelt can
save your life. Be safe wear a seatbelt).
Lastly, the order of the presentation in the message can sufficiently change the structure, meaning and the outcome itself. The structural strategy of the message depends on the strongest and most valuable arguments presented in the beginning or in the end. (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p. 406) The diagram provided below visually explains the difference between the use of strong arguments in the beginning and in the end.


If the sender presents the strongest points in the beginning, this structuring strategy, as Fill (2009, p. 518) refers to it, is called primacy effect. It is directly linked to the involvement of the audience that was discussed in short before. If there is a low level involvement from the receiver, the message might require having a boost in the beginning, thus capturing the audience’s attention. (Fill 2009, p. 518) In retrospect, placing the strong points in the start of the message while the receiver has a strong point of view regarding the product, service, topic or issue may lead to a reducing counter-argument. In other words, the part of the target audience that has specific views established about the sender may not be affected with a strong start, much more; they can be weakened through the message with the minimal points to follow. (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 196)

However, the other way to go is to structure the message with the strong argument in the end, as shown in the diagram 1.2. This phenomenon is called recency effect, this kind of structural strategy refers to the target audience that has more of a positive view towards the sender, and agrees with the same views. (Fill 2009, p. 518) Belch and Belch add that using the strong arguments at the ends brings a stronger and better level of persuasion. Meaning that the receiver should be more affected by the message and persuaded to react, or in general get an effect on his attitudes that influences him to think, feel and do. The target audience that is more common with the recency effect is one that usually has a higher positive level of involvement towards the message.
Summarising the part of message structure strategies, it is important to pinpoint that all of the above discussed facts and different structuring techniques are directly linked with the outcome the sender wants his message to carry. This is the basis of the creative strategy while talking about advertising, the process of encoding the message begins with structuring the message in the way that is the most applicable for the target audience. Hence, a pattern emerges, throughout establishing the target audience the sender can better understand how to encode, structure and format the message that would reach the audience in the required manner. Although, there are many variables like education and involvement level, ability to communicate the message both one-sided and two-sided, pinpointing the presentation of strong arguments chronology and others, it all comes down to knowing your target audience.

Having looked through the content and the structure of the message, in other words already explained what is going to be said within the message, another crucial factor that is directly linked with the communication process and creative strategy is the message channels or media chosen to carry-out the intended information. Many authors establish the message channel as a method by which the information travels or is being transmitted to the receiver, following the encoding process (Belch and Belch 2012, Fill 2009, Medcalf 2004). There are two main types of channels that can be used to spread the information – personal and non-personal.

A personal communication channel as explained by Fill (2009, p. 44) takes places where the interaction can be called face-to-face communication. Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p. 407) are quick to add that the communication does not have to take place only face-to-face, similar results can be achieved by phone, mail or email and online chats; Medcalf (2004, p. 28) calls them as direct marketing media. Furthermore, Belch and Belch (2012, p. 151) adds that an important part of the personal channel are the spokesmen or in Medcalfs (2004, p. 28) opinion sales representatives. Throughout the use of sales reps the source can communicate with the receiver face-to-face within a professional manner. In other words, the communication process will be controlled by the company, while their salesmen contact the target audience which was establish way before the transmission of the message even started (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p. 407). If one part of the personal channel is the spokesmen or sales representatives that are driver by the company, the other ones are a more informal part of the receiver’s daily life. Belch and Belch (2012, p. 151) describes them as the social part of the channel which contains friends, neighbours, associates, co-workers and of course family. These groups of people represent the other important factor of the personal channel, which is word-of-mouth communication. Fill (2009, p. 44) emphasises the importance of word-of-
mouth communication, stating that is highly and extremely influential when it comes to personal communication. Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p. 407) states that the effectiveness of personal communication channels can be summarised by two main advantages that it allows the source to obtain: the ability of personal addressing and feedback. Fill (2009, p. 44) adds that information received through the personal communication channels are much more influential and can be perceived as being more persuasive than information that the receiver gets from the non-personal communication channels. The author explains in more detail why he reaches these conclusions. Chris Fill believes that a personal approach to the communication gives you a more flexible way to deliver the messages, the timing and power can be adjusted to the specific situation. (2009, p. 44) In other words, while there is a personal face-to-face communication, the sender or the appointed person (salesman) can evaluate and adjust according to the situation and how the communication process is currently transpiring. Secondly, the messages can be changes and tweaked in a way to match the target audience’s needs. These kinds of flexible decisions can’t be reached with the non-personal communication channels; hence the decisions are made before the transmission.

As established above, it is clear what are the personal communication channels, what they contain and what are the main advantages that you don’t get while using the non-personal ones. A non-personal communication channel can be described as channels that are carrying a message but without any interpersonal contact between the sender/source and the receiver (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 153) Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p. 409) even adds that a non-personal communication channels do not provide feedback to the sender. Non-personal communication channels are frequently interchanged with the term “mass media” (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 153), it can be said that this terminology is directly linked with the tools or types of media used within the non-personal communication channels. The authors further strengthens this occurrence by adding that the ability to send the message to multiple potential customers at the same time makes it even more relevant to call it mass media (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 153). The authors mainly separate the non-personal communication channels into two mass media types – print and broadcast ads (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 153). However, Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p. 409) add a couple of other types such as display media, that includes billboards, posters and other types of signs and online media(email, websites). It can be said that a discrepancy is occurring. Although online media is used for the personal communication channel, both Kotler & Armstrong and Medcalf agree that it can be used within the non-personal channels as well. Patricia Medcalf (2004, p. 28) even further states that, even though the non-personal communication channels can be more
perceived as mass media as stated before, ambient media, sponsorship and public relations are all used within this type of channel. Without the major and minor media part Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p. 409) include two other aspects that non-personal communication channels possess: atmospheres and events. An atmosphere, as the author describes, is a specifically designed that creates, effects and reinforces the customers learning towards a product or service. Kotler explains the event as a stage occurrence which main objective is to communicate the message to the target audience (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p. 409) In other words, and atmosphere can be describe as a non-physical place that communicates with the target audience by intentionally attracting him to make the purchase, where the event is a public relation tool, like an open meeting, grand opening, show or other type of actual event where the communication with the target audience takes place.

If before the main advantages of the personal communication channels was established, it is important to distinguish what the non-personal communication channels differs, what positive outcomes does it bring and how are these two channels interconnected. As it was stated before, non-personal channels can be interchanged with the term mass media because it can reach a vast amount of potential consumer, therefore which is one of the main advantages; perfect examples might be any broadcasted advertisements on the TV, radio or, in recent times more popular, internet. It becomes clear that the non-personal communication affects the buyer directly, however Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p. 409) implements the non-personal communication as a method to affect the consumer indirectly as well. Authors state that this phenomenon occurs because of the communication causing a more personal approach. They explain this statement by a small communication model, where the information starts to flow throughout the mass media and reach a certain type of people that is referred to as “opinion leaders”, these leaders carry on the information to others. (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p. 409) What the authors are trying to explain that vast majorities of people tend to listen to someone who they deem to be important or more important than themselves, hence the term opinion leaders is introduced. By which, when the opinion leader gets the information communicated by the source throughout the mass media vehicles, he or she continue to spread the message to other people, thus combining both personal and non-personal channels into one communication model. If you link it with the message contents and appeals which were described above, it can be said that this approach would be more relevant when using more emotionally than informational based appeal. Hence, the ability for people to understand fear, humor or show advertising can be reinforced or changed during the combination of both personal and non-personal communication channels. In other words,
whereby the images or videos transmitted throughout the mass media (non-personal) affect an opinion leader, in this case the evolution of Internet is important, which can then personally communicate with others while carrying the same message that was intended by the sender. The Internet plays a bigger role nowadays, because it has become a more popular method of both, personal and non-personal communication. As Belch and Belch (2012, p. 153) explains more in depth, internet is still being perceived as a big part of the non-personal communication process where the potential consumers just taking in the information provided by the companies, organizations or entrepreneurs on their websites without having any personal connection to them. However, with recent years, the Internet is quickly becoming a crucial part of the personal communication process, because of the possibilities to interact with the company or company’s representative online and, most importantly, share the information with other people though the use of social media (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 153).

Another advantage that the non-personal communication channel brings is the actual ability to change or “stimulate” the personal communications by incorporating consumers endorsement or word-of-mouth testaments in their own ads or different types of promotions (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, p. 409). What this means is that, throughout the non-personal communication the same view towards a specific product, service, issue or topic can be carried out by incorporating a celebrity endorsement or the word-of-mouth of an opinion leader.

Although knowing the differences and advantages of both communication channels may help the sender with choosing one that is more relevant to it, there are other criteria that Patricia Medcalf (2004) introduces, before making the final decision. These following factors are at the upmost highest importance while selecting the necessary media/channel.

Firstly, the sender should know is the receiver able to actually have access to the particular type of tool or media used while communicating (Medcalf 2004, p. 28) This means that although communication throughout internet has become more and more popular, the sender should be able to identify if its target audience has access to it and will they be effective. A perfect example could be a target audience of a senior-age group, who are more likely to read the news on the newspaper or watch in on TV than scroll through the websites or social media.

Secondly, this point compliments the first one, it is important to understand if the receiver has any desire to gain access to a specific media (Medcalf 2008, p. 29). Even if there are a lot of people on the internet socializing, they might not use it to communicate with the
sender, look up information or pay attention to any kind of advertising. In other words, the same example as before can be used. Although a person can have a computer at home with an internet access it does not prove that he is using it accordingly to what the sender is anticipating.

Thirdly, Medcalf (2008, p. 29) states that some media tools are not particularly effective while transmitting a specific message. Whereas, if the message could be improved or the sender is hoping for a better impact regarding a precise topic, using visual images can be deemed more effective. If combining it with the message content, an advertisement that has the main purpose to shock people will be much less effective as a radio ad than a printed poster or a video transmitted on the TV or online.

Last but not least, it is important for the sender to know what type of a message is being transmitted and how can it be combined with the target audience. (Medcalf 2008, p. 29) If the sender is promoting a difficult to understand product, service or topic a personal channel might be seen as more appropriate, where a sales representative explain it in more detail than mass media advertising. This point is closely linked with the message structure as looked upon above regarding the knowledge and education level that the receiver obtains.

All in all, when talking about the message in general it can be said that all of the components that were analyzed: content, appeals, structure and channels, are closely linked and co-depended on each other. Nevertheless, the most important influence towards the creative strategy, in regards to the message, is the establishment of the target audience. Throughout knowing how your potential consumers are the sender can change, tweak and incorporate things that are relevant to the specific group of people chosen. Knowing the target audience helps the sender not only to choose the message content in detail but structure the information in the way that is the most efficient and affective choose an appeal, regarding the information transmitted and the mindset of the target audience, and relevantly incorporate a channel by which the message will actually be transmitted. These factors are the background of what can be called the creative strategy when it comes to the communication process based upon the model introduced by Schramm.

While previously the sender and the encoding process was looked upon in detail, it is as important to understand what are the part of the receiver and the process of decoding of the message. Hence, if the sender is the actually forming information and creating a strategy how to communicate it to the wanted target, the receiver is a person or people that actually get the shared information. (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 153) Receivers can be submitted as target
audiences who read, watch and listen to the message of the source and decode it. (Fill 2009, p. 44)

The greatest part of the creative strategy could be called the encoding process, throughout the vast possibilities of shaping, structuring and forming the wanted message the sources gets different possibilities to reach the receiver. None less important is the act of decoding; it’s the process where the receiver transforms the message sent by the source to thoughts. (Kotler et al. 2013, p. 423) While the message structuring and creative strategy can depend on attitudes and appeals, the process of decoding is directly linked to the receiver’s field of expertise. (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 153) In other words, it refers to the experiences, perceptions, views, values or attitudes that the receiver obtains regarding a specific message being communicated or what the receiver brings to the communication situation. (Fill 2009, p. 44) The up most importance is for the encoding of the sender and the decoding of the receiver to match or be alike as much as possible. This way an effective communication process is established. (Kotler and Armstrong 2008, Belch and Belch 2012)

Another important part of the communication process to be successful is the external factors that determine the decoding process and that implicate different outcomes regarding different receiver’s background. One of the external factors that are not fully controlled by the sender is culture. Medcalf (2004, p. 37) explains that culture has a deep impact with the target audiences personal values, perception and behaviour. Hence, although all of these points are looked upon when sources choses his target audience and start encoding the message, the cultural fact can’t be changed in a short time (Medcalf 2004, p. 37). As De Mooij (2005, p. 8) elaborates in more detail, while advertisers are encoding the message a common belief is that if the receiver decodes the message successfully, the communication process might be deemed effective. The author continues to state, when looking into the cultural factor, for the communication process to be fully successful the cultural background of the sender and the receiver should match as well. (De Mooij 2005, p. 8) A common belief that the same message sent all over the world would bring the same results is deemed a faulty one, De Mooij (2005, p. 8) states that it is more likely for the results to be different from what the sources was expecting, hence making the advertisement not effective. Jim Blythe (2000, p. 6) explains the phenomenon of different results from different cultures, summarising it to be due to ethnocentrism. As the author continues, ethnocentrism is an ongoing assumption that other people think and have the same believes as we do. Moreover, J.Blythe states that this human behaviour feature is commonly known throughout the world. Because of ethnocentrism the communication process can easily be misunderstood or even rejected
completely (Blythe 2000, p. 6). Although, De Mooij (2005, p. 8) continues stating that this phenomenon has an impact on buyers behaviour and purchases, it raises a question regarding types of advertising which main objective is not to increase sales, but raise awareness or embrace the “socially responsible behaviour” (road safety, safe sex, anti-smoking) between the target audience. If cultural differences have a big impact in the communication process and the successful outcome, in other words it means that any communication through advertisement might be potentially harmed by ethnocentrism.

Looking closer into Schramm’s communication model (diagram 1.1) it is seen that there is an overlap of the senders and receivers realm of understanding. For a smooth and effective communication process to take place it is critical that the message should be as easily encoded as decoded. In other words, as talked in brief before, the sender should know its target audience, their views or expectations regarding a product, service or an issue and anticipate the reaction wanted. The receiver should clearly understand what the sources is trying to tell him through the message, without any mixed signals or multiple outcomes. The receiver should understand and correctly interpret what the source is actually trying to communicate to him. (Belch and Belch, 2012, p. 153) Summarising, if the realm of understanding match on how the message is created (encoded) and how the message is understood (decoded) it can be said that the communication process will be effective and successful. Thus, the most important factors regarding an efficient communication process can be drawn as establishing the target audience, wisely and appropriately using the creative strategy regarding your target audience and establishing a communication and a wanted reaction throughout the common understanding between source and receiver and modifying the communication process and the creative strategy accordingly to feedback.

A factor that complicates and makes the communication process even harder is often referred to as noise. Noise within a communication process can called a factor that can distort or interfere with the reception of the message (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 154) Fill (2009, p. 46) further ads that noise usually occurs when the receiver is somehow prevented to get all of the parts of the messages that is being transmitted. The author states more that it is the sender’s role to actually keep the noise to a minimum, because there is an all through understanding that every communication encounters noise. Some authors separate the noise into two groups: cognitive and physical (Fill 2009, Belch and Belch 2012, Medcalf 2004).

The cognitive part of the noise refers to the sender’s inability to encode the message in such a way that the receiver might understand (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 155). This happens when the reals of understanding as shown in the Schramms communication model does not
match or are far apart from one another. The lack of common knowledge and understanding usually ends up the source incorporating within the encoding process symbols, signs or words that the receiver are not a custom to or lacks understanding in their meaning (Medcalf 2004, p. 29). Other important reason is that the message is encoded in an inappropriate way, hence causing misunderstanding by the receiver. In this case the inappropriate symbols, signs and words might be used, whereby they still might be looked upon as effective and a specific use to raise awareness, perfect example can be shock advertising, they are being perceived by the end user in a negative way (Fill 2009, p. 46)

Another noise factor is the physical aspect, as Fill (2009, p. 46) states, this occurs when the receiver is physically incapable of decoding the message or can only decode it partially. Some of the day to day examples could be a distraction while watching an advertisement like a phone call or another person trying to talk to the receiver (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 155). The technical difficulties or inabilities can be also called one of the reasons why noise appears. Medcalf (2004, p. 30) explains that if an advertising on TV has some technical difficulties the receiver is more likely to change the channel or switch it off completely, hence regarding the physical aspect.

Last but not least, noise can occur because of deliberately sent distorting and interfering messages by the competitors. As Medcalf (2004, p. 30) further explains it, competitors can send a message that has only the objective to take away from another company’s message, thus the receiver can’t decode the message properly.

Although, there are more than one reason why noise occurs, the company or the sender can be more likely directly responsible regarding the cognitive aspect of it. If the target audience was set accordingly to what the source wants to communicate, the real of understanding between the sender and the receiver will overlap, hence making it easier for the potential consumer to understand and decode the message fully. As stated before, the communication process will always encounter noise, either it is within the physical or the cognitive factor of it, the sender’s part is to try and eliminate as much of the noise as possible or reduce it to minimum, so the receiver can more easily understand the message.

When the message has been sent and decoded by the receiver it is crucial for the source to understand was the communication process successful, did the receiver understood the message correctly and was the effect reached that was anticipated? These questions can be answered by the receiver shoving a specific response from the message of giving feedback to the sender. Belch and Belch (2012, p. 155) explains response as a reaction that the receiver shows after reading, hearing, seeing or other way noticing the message.
A link appears with the message channels chosen when talking about feedback from the customers. As Belch and Belch(2012), and Medcalf(2004) suggest, there is a difference between using the personal communicating channel and non-personal. Looking closer into the personal channels it becomes easier obtain feedback that is directly linked with the communication process at hand. Throughout face-to-face communication or personal selling the receiver has the ability ask questions and respond on the spot with comments and objections towards the product, service or topic being discussed (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 155). However, Bonoma and Felder (1977) are soon to add that verbal communication is not the only one present while communicating in person. The salesman can evaluate other aspect of the communication that is the non-verbal one. In short, the receiver can show its attitude or opinion towards the sender with body language as smiling, frowning or other gestures that may be deemed relevant regarding receivers views. Medcalf (2004, p. 31) adds more by to the topic of personal selling, through which the sender can be more actively involved in encouraging a response from the receiver. The author continues that it is up to the sales representative to actually make judgements on the spot regarding if the message is being decoded successfully and understood by the target audience, evaluating the efficiency of it and change it accordingly (Medcalf 2004, p. 31)

If sending the message throughout a personal channel gives the source a possibility to evaluate it and make changes while communicating, then a non-personal channels provides new obstacles for the sender. Advertisers are not actually having a direct contact with the target audience, hence it makes it much harder to determine how their message was decoded and receiver by the customers, other methods should be applied (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 155). As already looked upon before, to understand the effectiveness of the communication process the sender can get feedback from the behaviour of the target audience. Another form of feedback can come through sales. (Belch and Belch, 2012, p. 155) Authors are soon to add that most of the times it is incredibly hard to determine a direct link between advertising and purchase behaviour. In other words, although sales could be seen as the most often looked upon factor while determining the success of the communication process, a clear relationship between the advertisement and the message sent with the buying behaviour of the target audience can’t be established. Usually to solve this problem the source needs to uptake a research while trying to determine the feedback from the receiver. These other methods might include customer inquiries, store visits, coupon redemption and reply cards. (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 155) This type of feedback is referred to by the authors as research-based; it provides the sender with an analysis of the readership and recall of ads, message comprehension,
attitude change and other forms of response from the receiver. (Belch and Belch 2012, p. 155) The same as in the personal communication, throughout the feedback collected the advertisers can them evaluate themselves the successfulness of the communication process, improve it or make changes accordingly.

Some authors (Medcalf 2004, Ouwersloot and Duncan 2008) divide the feedback into three main stages: immediate, delayed, and no feedback at all. Immediate feedback as explained by Ouwersloot and Duncan (2008, p. 76) has more to do with the behaviour the receiver shows just after he gets the messages. It can be ordering or buying a product, asking questions when in personal communication, sampling or interacting in some other way possible. This kind of feedback is expected from a communication process involved with direct-response marketing (direct mail and email, phone calling, telemarketing). The receiver is required to make a decision on the spot with a purchase or some other action. (Ouwersloot and Duncan 2008, p. 76) The author continues to state other types of immediate response that has less to do with the direct-response marketing, such as: inquiries or requests for information, visit to a store, trying or sampling of a product, or repeating the purchase of a product previously tried (Ouwersloot and Duncan 2008, p. 76)

The second form of feedback as listed by the authors is a delayed feedback. A feedback is delayed means that the impact or a response becomes clear at a later time, however it does not mean that message had no impact on the receiver (Ouwerloost and Duncan 2008, p. 76). The authors further continue to explain that some of the advertisement, like printed ads, might be specifically designed to work over a longer period of time, hence a feedback can appear not immediately but after some time. It is more likely that the purpose of the communication process was not to raise sales but increase awareness or introduces new attitudes towards a brand, product, service or issue. (Ouwerloost and Duncan 2008, p. 76)

The final type of feedback can be called where there is no feedback given by the receiver at all. Although it might sound strange, but Medcalf (2008, p. 30) explains that a “no response” is taken in as feedback by the source when the communication process has ended. Ouwerloost and Duncan (2007, p. 76) ads that usually it is not the type of feedback that the sender is looking for, nevertheless it is crucial and important because it raises questions. Throughout research the sender should become aware why there was no feedback. It might happen do to the fact that the message might have been sent in a wrong place, time or using wrong media channels. It can also indicate that there is too much noise within the communication process and the receiver is not capable of decoding the message fully or that the receiver is not interested in the message at all. (Ouwerloost and Duncan 2008, p. 76)
Summarising, throughout analysing the response and feedback of the receiver a direct link was established with the message channels chosen within the communication process. From the sender’s point of view it is important to be able to adapt to the response provided by the receiver either verbal or non-verbal. Furthermore it is crucial to understand what research should be done to obtain the necessary feedback when it can be gotten directly or immediately. When the advertiser or the sender is provided with some or in some cases no feedback it is crucial that the information must be evaluated correctly. Hence, not only in cases of no feedback the source should be able to determine the level of noise in the communication, the effectiveness of the message and the smoothness of the decoding process form the receiver’s perspective. Factors like time, place, choice of media, message structure, content and channel all play a bit role, with some external forces established above as well, while determining if the communication process was successful and which of these parts has to be changed accordingly to the feedback collected.

Throughout this chapter an important and deep analysis or the communication process took place, in order to establish and understand who it works, what it is and what possibilities does it provide to the advertisers. To better understand the communication process it was established throughout the Schramm’s model, which consists of a sender and a receiver, processes of encoding and decoding, the message being sent, the factor of noise and target audiences response/feedback. It was proven that all of these individual components works separately and support each other. In other words, they have a connection and are dependent on one another: the sender relies on the receiver to decode the message and provide him with feedback. A deeper look took place into the creative strategy that takes place within the communication process, in direct regards to the encoding process and creation of the message. It is important to pinpoint that there are a lot of different methods how a message can become fully created depending on the content, appeal, structure or channels chosen to transmit it. Nevertheless, all of the components of the message analysed are directly linked with the target audience, their beliefs, views, attitudes, behaviour or perception or a product, service, topic or a sensitive issue. The source has the ability to form and select the required target audience, by doing that the creative strategy starts and the encoding process begins, regarding the end customer’s attributes listed above. However, external factors or things that the company or person communicating with the receiver, like culture, are important to take into consideration; the phenomenon of ethnocentrism has to be taken into account that people that come from different cultural backgrounds think and act differently. In order for the communication process to be deemed successful or effective it is important that the sender
not only know the target audience well, but as well understand their culture or have the same cultural background which directly links them as some others call it, real of understanding (Fill 2009, Kotler and Armstrong 2008). Through the real of understanding the sender may incorporate different types of word, symbols, signals or other attributes that would play an important role within the communication process by carrying the intended message with the desired outcome from the receivers.

A further look into one of the main promotional tools, advertising, will take place linking in with the established criteria of a successful communication process and analysing more in depth how culture can have an impact not only on sales, but on buyer’s understandings, attitudes or views towards social issue messages.
2.2.2 Advertisement

In order to better understand advertisement there is a need to define it. As explained by Belch and Belch (2009, p. 18) advertising is defined as any paid form of non-personal communication about an organization, product, service, or idea by an identified sponsor. The average person encounters more than 600 advertisements per day. (Clow and Baack 2007, p. 132) In comparison Blythe (2005, p. 220) explains advertising as a non-personal communication, in that it has to speak to a large number of people, so the message has to be clear for all target audience to understand. Similarities arise, as most important to state that it is a non-personal mode of communication. In other words, throughout advertising there is an attempt to reach vast number of potential consumers rather than voluntary making the communication more personal. Hence a link appears between already above analysed communication process and message channels in specific. Advertising being one of the most common tools used as it could be called within mass media is a part of the non-personal channel. Although as discussed previously, the non-personal channel brings more complex ways of getting feedback, through research, surveys and other methods, it is commonly known to be more distant from the customer and not direct. However, this does not mean that the consumer or viewer does not participate in the process. On the contrary, although it is hard to determine the power of advertisement, as already mentioned there are a lot of different factors when it comes to determining if the advertisement or the communication process was a success; Foxall et al. (2005, p. 98) states that throughout the message signal advertisement can show how the company can depend on customer’s performance of specific responses. Elaborating what the author said, through advertisement and the message being sent there can be an evaluation of the customer’s response and reaction to the advertisement, in other words, feedback. Jobber and Fahy (2009, p. 220) compliments the idea by stating that advertisement is powerful enough to encourage consumers to buy by moving through the stages of awareness, interest, desire, and action (AIDA model). Belch and Belch (2012, p. 19) ads to the discussion by stating that advertising can be looked upon as a valuable and important tool when it comes to providing the target audience with information, about a product, service or social problems, and influencing their perception towards the topic. What can be summarised, that advertisement throughout the implementation of creative strategy within the communication process can be a tool to impact the receiver in more than one way.

Another important factor that was determined in the analysis of the communication process is differences that come out form different cultural background or culture in general.
As already mentioned above, advertising is a non-personal mass communication tool, throughout which the sender is trying to reach a vast number of consumers, hence, usually, it impacts more than one culture. Although the cultural differences were established as a negative aspect of a successful communication process, there are some effective measures that can be taken to minimize the impact of inconsistent decoding of the information being sent by consumers from different cultures. Mooij (2005, p. 139) in short explains the communication process with regards of the impact of culture, as the sender encodes the messages, while looking forward to the required response, through common shared knowledge. The author continues by stating that the receiver uses the same cultural understanding to decode the message properly, making the communication process efficient. By doing so the receiver evaluates the message content and provides the sender with the feedback (Mooij 2005, p. 139). However, the author (2005, p. 140) states that if the advertisement crosses cultures or the sender determines a target audience that is influenced by more than one culture, it will lack the shared knowledge and conventions. Mooij (2005, p. 139) introduces four elements that influence the communication process depending on the culture: appeal, communication style, basic advertising form and execution. Therefore, it can be said that using rational or emotional appeals that are more common to one culture may have an altogether different effect on a target audience that has a separate cultural background.

It is important to understand that cultures may vary not depending on the country chosen by the sender. As already explained, the most important part of the communication process is the determination of the target audience before the message can be encoded and sent. This means that the company or an individual transmitting the information has the possibility to choose the target audiences in regards to the outcome of the communication process intended. Although the sender might identify the common understanding or the culture, per say, in a specific country, e.g. launching an advertising campaign with the symbols, sings or words that are common to the Irish culture and people, nowadays it becomes harder to establish the culture of the target audience. As Medcalf (2004, p. 37) states, that narrow thinking of one common culture as the “Irish culture” might be deemed faulty to due to the changing environment within the country. If the sender assumes that people living in the same country has a common culture the communication process may not be successful or efficient. The author further explains that through the time many different subcultures arose within countries. This is a more increasing phenomenon because of the mobility between countries, immigration and emigration processes. Immigration lead up to an
establishment of many different subcultures from many different countries that impact the understanding and perception towards an advertising (Medcalf 2004, p 37). If we look at Ireland or Dublin, to be more precise, it can be said that the major culture is Irish, nevertheless there is a lot of many different subcultures that impact the way communication process takes place throughout advertising. Furthermore, Medcalf (2004, p. 37) states the importance of not irritating or offending the subcultures. In other words, specific symbols, signs, words or images can be understood differently depending on the culture, if for one culture they could be deemed appropriate, people from a different cultural background might take offence, be irritated or disgusted by a specific advertisement. More so, Pelsmacker et al. (2005, p. 10) because of an increased pressure on advertising by the communication noise and competition, it can lead to the target audience being more irritated and disregard the traditional advertisement at all. That means that advertisements that can be deemed traditional and are not specifically standing out within the field, like not using any appeals or special features, might be disregarded at all.

Summarising in short, advertising is an important tool within the communication process, giving it the ability to reach big number target audiences at the same time. Although the sender can control most of the determination of the target audience process, there are factors that can be incremental, like different cultural backgrounds, in making the communication process an efficient one. Different cultures perceive the same information in a specific way; hence, it is important to understand what can be seen as offensive or outrageous. These differences might be deemed even more important when the sender is communicating information regarding a sensitive topic, like drunk-driving, sexually transmitted diseases or the effect of smoking or drug use. To better understand how advertising actually works and effect the target audience it is important to state some of the roles that advertising carries out through the communication process.

In regards to the role of advertising, although it can uptake many roles, regarding the difference within the objectives, Medcalf (2004, p. 193) states some that are crucial to this thesis. Advertising is used to changes attitudes towards socially sensitive or harmful activities such as drunk-driving, smoking, casual sex and drug-taking. Although the author only mentions a few examples, advertising can be implemented to change the attitudes and behaviour regarding many more social issues. Secondly, advertising can be used to generate awareness. Since many media are seen, read or heard by a large number of people, advertising is an ideal vehicle for generating awareness of new products or services. (Medcalf 2004, p. 194) Even if the author states that it can raise awareness for new products/services, it
can indefinitely raise awareness about current social problems or issues as well. Furthermore, linking theses both roles that are stated above, makes a perfect example of a social advertising campaign, where the sender is trying to actually raise awareness towards a harmful activity and by doing so change the attitudes of the target audience towards that harmful activity (e.g. raisin awareness about the importance of road safety and in collaboration making more people wear their seatbelts or minimize speeding).

More so, it becomes important to understand how attitudes are formed and how can they be changed throughout using specific approaches, symbols, signs or other important imagery. As well it is crucial to state that culture plays a role as well as in the communication process as general but in the attitude formation and changing. Moreover, while establishing few crucial roles of advertising, it is important to state that throughout the years advertisers have employed a wide variety of advertising approaches, otherwise known as appeals. (Clow and Baack 2007, p. 171)
2.3 Attitudes and Appeals

As established in the chapter above, advertising can change and alter attitudes toward a specific issue. Moreover, it has incorporated different appeals to better attract and reach the target audience. Throughout this chapter a closer look into attitudes and appeals takes place.

2.3.1 Attitudes

If already known that advertising can influence and change attitudes, it is crucial to understand what are attitudes and how they are formed. A plain simple definition as stated by Solomon et al. (2010, p. 275) is that an attitude is a lasting general evaluation of people, objects, advertisements or issues. A more scientific and relevant definition, which regards the consumer behaviour is that an attitude is a learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favourable or unfavourable way with respect to a given object. (Schiffman et al. 2010, p. 246) Complimenting, Solomon et al. (2010, p. 275) states that everything towards which one has an attitude is called an attitude object. Fill (2009, p. 148) further states that attitudes are directly linked with the knowledge gained by the target audience from their past experiences, serving as a crucial link between their thoughts and actions or in this instance behaviour in general. To summarise, an attitude could be called a persons positive or negative view, which can be learned, to a specific product, service, object or issue.

When talking about the communication process it become important to understand what power does the sender have when determining the target’s audience attitude towards the information being transmitted? As previously looked through, attitudes play a bit role in the creative process of establishing the message structure. It becomes clear that when establishing the target audience the sender is looking for a person or a group of people that have a specific attitude towards the product, service or issue. Fill (2009, p. 149) explains in more detail by stating that understanding and establishing the attitudes of the target audience towards an intention to act in a specific way (purchase, feedback, change in behaviour) can be deemed the strengths of the belief that this particular action will lead to the outcome the sender was expecting. In other words, if the sender, throughout determining the target audience, is anticipating a reaction of changed behaviour or changed attitudes towards a harmful behaviour (unsafe sex, drunk-driving), understanding the attitudes that the target audience already contain becomes a part in changing them to the outcome the sender
requires. The author summarises, that the focus of the advertising campaign can be
determined by the desired attitudes, whether the sender deems the receiver to need or require
information (learning), associate it with emotional disposition (feeling) or whether the source
wants the target audience to start acting or, in other words, change their behaviour to a
particular way (doing). (Fill, 2009, p. 151)

While knowing what an attitude is, it is important to understand how it is form or what
does it perceived to consist of. As Solomon et al. (2010, p. 277) explains that “most
researches agree that an attitude has three components: affect, behaviour and cognition.”; this
model can be called ABC. Solomon et al. (2010, p. 277) explains every component in short:

- **Affect** refers to the way a customer feels an attitude object. This component is
otherwise directly concerned with the feelings, sentiments, moods or emotions about
an object (Fill 2009, p. 148).

- **Behaviour** involves the person’s intentions to do something with regards an
attitude object

- **Cognition** refers to the beliefs a consumer has about an attitude object.


Furthermore we look into issues that could arise from consumer attitudes. Dahlen et al.
(2010, p. 312) raise an issue about the attitudes towards the communication process and
advertising in specific. The issue is always relevant in advertising is whether it matters if the
target audience likes the communication or not. If people dislike the advertising, will it
negatively affect how they evaluate the product? The authors are quick to explain that it
depends on the product itself. (Dahlen et al. 2010, p. 312) However, it can be said not only
about the product but about advertising in general, hence advertising social problems can
have the same issue in them.
Another important factor that is relevant towards establishing the attitudes of the target audience and changing them is the culture. As Mooij (2005, p. 112) explains, in this instance the cultural side can be separated into individualism and collectivism. The author, continues to explain that collectivism is a more western approach, where people can be more co-dependent on other or be influenced by the actions of other people (Mooij 2005, p. 113).

Furthermore, Mooij continues by stating that a culture of individualists are keen on having consistency between their attitudes, feelings or behaviours, whereas collectivists, already mentioned in short above, are more likely to form their attitudes towards some social norms or identity functions; hence making a less consistent relationship between their attitudes and behaviour in the future (2005, p. 112). In other words, within an individualist culture the sender has more power to predict what the behavioural outcome is going to be, because individualists tend to be more consistent throughout the attitude formation and change process. However, in the collectivism the outcome of the behaviour is much harder to determine because of different social aspects or the phenomenon of social pressure. Lee and Green (1991) explains that what can be called social pressure has a less influential or a weak influence all together to individualists, because they are more likely to stand by their own personal attitudes.

All together, it seems that culture has an impact within the relationship between the components of the ABC model. Whereby one culture can be more self related and their attitudes will most likely match their future actions, another can be more influenced by others such as family, friends or the norms, beliefs and customs of their culture (Fill 2009, p. 156) that can be deemed in a way to be a cultural social pressure.

While concluding, as established there is an affective attitude that consumers possess, which has to do with their feelings directly linked to a specific object. A clear link can be established throughout the target audience’s current attitudes and their action or reaction to a specific advertisement. In regards with those feeling advertising can use different appeals to raise the attitudes of consumers or viewers.
2.3.2 Appeals

The advertising appeal refers to the approach used to attract the attention of consumers and/or influence their feelings toward a product, service, or cause. (Belch and Belch 2009, p. 283) Kotler and Armstrong (2003) name three characteristics that appeals should carry out:

- Having a meaning – appeals should underline the benefits that makes the advertising object more desirable or attractive.
- The appeals should be believable.
- They should carry distinct features, so that the target audience could be capable of differentiate them from other competitor advertising.

There are two main groups of appeals that many authors suggest: rational and emotion. It is important to understand the difference and use of these appeals.

The rational appeals as analyzed by Medcalf (2004, p. 2010) focuses on the “functional needs and expectations of the target audience for the product or service being advertised.” Author Chaudhuri (2006, p. 2) continues stating that:

Products and services are also based on racialization and reason; consumers analyze and process the information in terms o the attributes of products and services in order to arrive at an optional decision concerning their alternative. (Chaudhuri 2006, p. 2)

In other words, the rational appeals focuses on the positive or increased value aspect of the product or service, does it provide better quality, is it more reliable and so on, while comparing the product or service with other products and services.

Knowing what rational appeals are we look into the emotional appeals to better understand the difference. Emotional appeals can be describes the social of psychological need of the target audience for the product or indeed their need to avoid the product, service or action. (Medcalf 2004, p. 211) Chaudhuri (2006, p. 1) compliments the definition by further explaining the emotional appeal:

Emotions such as joy and sorrow are basic, primal motivations in the human condition, and they are also crucial determinants on our choices of products and services and in our processing of commercial messages like advertising. (Chaudhuri 2006, p. 1)
To summarise we can say that emotional appeals are those appeals that closely linked with the consumers’ feelings, social or psychological needs that are displayed towards a product, service or issue. Furthermore, these feelings arise from the message that sender provides the receiver with; perfect example would be advertisements with emotional appeals that display love, fear, self-esteem, affection or sorrow. (Medcalf 2004, p. 212)

However if some authors like Medcalf, Belch and Belch, and Fill separate the appeals into two main groups of rational and emotional, thus perceiving that fear, love and other emotions to be feelings or personal states, Clow and Baack has a different approach. The two authors expand the appeals mentioned before by incorporating fear, humour, sex, music, and scarcity as additional in depended advertisement appeals. (Clow and Baack 2007, p. 171) It could be said that the emotional appeals mostly incorporate these individually established feelings/appeals. Fill (2009, p. 487) sums up emotional appeals by stating that in a sense the sender of the message presumes that the creativity within the ad is more important in many cases, that the actual rational message or information that he advertisements is trying to deliver.

As already talked about there is a difference between the terminology by some authors, stating that appeals can be rational or emotion, or that components of emotional appeal like humour, sex, fear or shock can be seen as individual appeals. It is important to understand what different component of the emotional appeal brings to the process of creative strategy to the message, in other words, how does it affect the message content and the decoding process. One of the most widely used appeals is humour, which should never be mocking or offensive to the target audience (Medcalf 2004, p. 213). However the authors is soon to state that if an emotional appeal, in this case humour is used within a more international campaign, it has to be incorporated in the way to be able to carry the message throughout different cultures (Medcalf 2004, p. 213). Fitzgerald and Arnott (2000, p. 139) further examines appeals throughout different cultures by stating that in order for an international advertising to work, it needs to be able to motivate people from different cultures and countries by the same appeal. Mooij (2005, p. 186) ads, when speaking about humour, that humour appeal is deemed not to be able to travel throughout different cultures, do to the fact that it is usually based on breaking stereotypical taboos or social norms. In other words, what could be seen funny in a United Kingdom culture, can be understood offensive within a Eastern European cultures, or vice versa. The authors summarises by stating that humour the conventions of
culture that cannot be fully understood by those who are from a different culture or do not share the same cultural background (Mooij 2005, p. 188)

Another important appeal that is widely used within advertisements throughout the world is – shock appeal. Too better understand what is shock appeal, how it works, what similarities or common disadvantages it carries, shock appeal will be analyzed in detail.

2.3.3 Shock appeal

Although shock appeal is not listed by many authors it is still a constantly used way to attract the attention of consumers. Moreover, shock appeal could be closely linked with previously mentioned fear appeal. As Clow and Baack (2007, p. 171) explains “fear increases both the viewer’s interest in the advertisement and the persuasiveness of the ad.” Nonetheless, shock appeal, if similar to fear, has different way of catching the viewer’s eye. In a sense, shock appeal as well is similar to humour appeal, because of the way it is constructed – by breaking taboos and socially accepted norms. Dahl et al. (2003, p. 269) explains in more that shock appeal violates the norms of socially accepted views giving it the ability to separate itself throughout the “advertising clutter” and seize target audience attention regarding the message or the issue raised by the sender. As the author further elaborates there is a common belief that the use of shock appeal will influence the behaviour of the target audience. It is deemed that shock appeal will “gain attention, encourage cognitive processing, and have an immediate impact on behaviour e.g. drinking and driving, condom usage.”(Dahl et al. 2003, p. 268) Dahl summarizes shock appeals in a table (Appendix 1.1). Parry et al. (2013, p. 113) continues the topic by stating “shock appeals have been employed in a variety of public health context: seat belt safety, sexually transmitted infections, AIDS awareness and smoking.” Pope et al. (2004) further continues the topic, by incorporating shock appeal to what the authors call provocative appeals. Authors continue to state that provocative advertisement has been summarized as a deliberate attempt to gain attention through shock, and usually work through three main characteristics: distinctiveness, ambiguity and transgression of social or cultural taboos (Pope et al. 2004). In other words, provocative appeal can be in a sense called shock appeal because as already established before it carries out the same functions and works in the same way that encompasses its uniqueness, freedom or interpretation and subject of breaking sensitive socially acceptable norms.
Another important association that shock appeal carries is with a controversial approach, Huhmann and Mott-Stenerson (2008) explains that controversial advertisement incorporates provocative images, words or situations that refer to taboo or other wise social norm breaking subjects (violence, sex, vulgarity, death, etc.) and violates the social values. Medcalf (2004, p. 215) continues the topic by stating that using controversial appeals as shock can lead to the ban of the advertisement, because of the vulgarity or other attributes of the ad that makes it too offensive for the target audience. However, the author is soon to add that in these days the ban of an advertisement can actually work oppositely and bring it more attention and awareness, with a wide spread throughout media and public debate (Medcalf 2004, p. 215). In other words, although the ad can be deemed too offensive by the appointed bodies, it can still raise awareness in the sense of travelling to other type of media, like internet, and through word of mouth.

Another important point arises when talking about shock appeal, if this appeal has the ability to be incorporated throughout different cultures or does shock effect the target audience with the same cultural background in the same way. First and foremost, it is crucial to understand the similarities and differences of shock and humour appeals. As already determined above, both appeals work on the same principal of breaking the taboos or in other words crossing the line of socially acceptable norms. A question rises from the literature review that if humour appeal is not fully capable to travel through cultures and in contrast has a big similarity with shock appeal, does that mean that advertisements containing shock appeal has the same problem? It is important to state that a lack of research has been determined in the field of understanding how shock appeal affects people with different cultural background and what can be deemed the “line” that makes the advertisement not to offensive to still carry the message intended. Virvilaitė and Matulevičienė (2013) continues the topic by stating that what incorporates the socio-cultural aspect of the target audience, by watching an advertisement with shock appeal they the consumers can show positive, negative and both positive and negative emotions at the same time. The authors explain the third component of emotions when the consumer has positive and negative views towards the advertisement at the same time as individual emotional ambivalence (Virvilaitė and Matulevičienė 2013, p. 136). Furthermore, Sabri (2012) explains this phenomenon as a condition where a person displays two contradictory emotions at the same time. In other words, looking from a cultural background it is know that the target audience can encompass positive or negative or even both emotions at the same time, which in a way suggests that
people can be affected positively by a part of the advertisement (words, symbols) and negatively by the other part (vulgar images, offensive signs).

Conclusions can be made that shock appeal is commonly used not only to raise awareness about a brand or a company but in public service announcements or public health and safety issues. Breaking the socially established norms, they gain attention, awareness and seek to change and/or improve the behaviour of the viewer. It can be closely linked with the provocative and controversial use of advertisements because of its similarities and the same actions. It is important to understand that cultural differences have an effect on appeals and shock appeal specifically. Although some research has been done in this field, trying to understand the differences, it is more to do with customer buying behaviour than to the awareness and norms of offensiveness created by advertisements using shock appeal. Furthermore, it is important to understand the use of shock appeal in advertising, how can it be portrayed and does it keep the benefits and objectives that this particular appeal provides.

2.3.4 Shock advertising

As established before, shock appeals functions become clear – gain attention, raise awareness and change behaviour of the consumers; hence a closer look into shock advertising takes places. Gustafson and Yssel (1994) explain shocking advertising as advertisements where the message sent should surprise the consumer by “deliberately violating norms for societal values and personal ideas.” Dahl et al. (2003) explains more in depth stating that: “offense is elicited through the process of norm violation, encompassing transgressions of law or custom, breaches of a moral or social code, or things that outrage the moral or physical sense.” Chan et al. (2007) explains Dahl’s definition in another sense, stating that by defining shock advertising through these different variables it effects, it is no longer only about the product or the service. It opens a broad spectrum of advertisement content and forms (Chan et al. 2007 p. 608). In other words, Chan et al. compliment Dahl’s definition by stating that throughout the research done the ability of shock advertisement become bigger and can consist not only about a specific product or service but, as in this case, a social issue. Fill (2009, p. 489) further compliments Dahl et al. (2003) by stating that shock advertising achieves a long lasting impression, and captures the audience attention. “The surprise element of these advertisements secures attention.” (Fill 2009, p. 489) Continuing, the advertisements that are based on shock appeal gives a sender an indirect idea that an actually shocking
image, video or other for of information towards its target audience, provides him with an ability to get the wanted message across in a better way (Matusitz and Forrester, 2013)

Shock advertisement can be used throughout many different purposes, as already established before, it does not only consist of promoting products or raising awareness about a brand or a company, it can be used to raise awareness about social issues as unprotected sex, smoking, drunk-driving. A perfect example can be the innovative thinking to change the packaging of cigarettes. As Veer and Rank (2012) explain, by thinking of ways to reduce smoking and smoking caused diseases countries started putting shocking graphical warning labels on packs of cigarettes rather than only text-based warning labels. In this case shock appeal was used within the promotion campaign of anti-smoking, where vulgar, shocking and offensive images were used instead of word warning labels on the packaging. Throughout their research authors have established that the implication of shocking images came to have a much intense cognitive effect on the target audience. Furthermore, the intent to quit smoking had increased as well, that proves that a significantly better influence to the target audiences behaviour through the use of shock advertising.

Furthermore, looking closer into Dahl et al. (2003) research where shock, fear and informative appeals were compared throughout the use of printed imagery containing advertisements regarding sexually transmitted diseases like AIDS and HIV, some more positive results come out. The authors were able to prove that not only the shock appeal was the most outstanding, eye-catching an awareness raising, but the one that the respondents most recalled; hence leaving a longer lasting impression. This only strengthens the fact that using shock advertising with social issues affects the target audience more than just a typical advertisement, or as discussed above, text-based warning label. Therefore, the use of shock advertising can be deemed successful to a point while regarding these two studies.

Dahl et al. (2003, p. 271) introduces a model which explains the relationship and effect that shock advertisement creates. **Diagram 1.3**

![Diagram 1.3 A Preliminary Model of Consumer Reactions to Shock Appeals. Source: Dahl et al. (2003, p. 271)](image)

**Diagram 1.4 A Preliminary Model of Consumer Reactions to Shock Appeals. Source: Dahl et al. (2003, p. 271)**
Throughout the diagram 1.3 as shown above the communication process and effect of shocking advertising is explained by Dahl et al. (2003). After the primary exposure, the effect of norm violation and surprise takes places as already analyzed and proven to be crucial for shocking ads by few authors (Dahl et. al (2003), Fill (2009)). Throughout the element of surprise and consumers attention can be captured, awareness can be raised about the issue in hand, consumers can be retained regarding the problem and most importantly their behaviour can be impacted. However, the matter of impact on the potential viewers can obtain positive and negative aspects. Although as Dahl et al. (2003) claimed shock advertising causes offence to attract the attention and change the behaviour, the ad can be viewed as over offensive, causing distress, frightening, disgusting or repulsive. (Dahl et al. 2003), Whiteside (2008)) As Waller (2007, p. 72) explains “causing people to take offense can occur when a marketer undertakes a controversial advertising campaign”. Thus topics like sex, drugs, drunk-driving and other social issues can be deemed controversial while incorporating shock appeal in their advertising campaigns. Additionally, Castellon (2006) explains that if the advertising campaign is not done properly or people get more negative views towards the ad, those objectionable advertisements may provide emotions like disgust, anger or provide the target audience with the emotion of fear and not shock; usually the consumer ends up annoyed and avoiding the product or the company. Matusitz and Forrester (2013) continue by stating that reasons shock advertising can be deemed effective are the same reasons why a negative impact can occur on the target audience. It can violate the social norms by using disgusting, appalling and frightening images or words in such sense that makes the receiver of the message becomes offended and irritated.

Moreover, as previously discussed, the cultural factors have not only an effect on the communication in general but on appeals, and can have an effect on shock appeal to be precise. Waller et al. (2005) further explains that showing advertisements with shock appeal in a culturally diverse or sensitive region can cause offence to part of the public. Author continues that when foreign advertisements are shown in a multicultural country, the ads get a bigger possibility to be offensive. Advertisements that include alcohol, contraception, and underwear, and use indecent language or show anti-social behaviour are more likely to cause offence between different cultural background people (Waller et al. 2005, p. 6). In other words, cultural differences or outcomes of many subcultures in a country influence the effective process of communication, especially when it comes to using shock appeal that is known for breaking taboos and socially acceptable norms.
There is evidently not a lot of research done on the negative aspect or otherwise the aspect of shock advertisements that cross the line and become more repulsive, annoying, irritating or disgusting. Furthermore, although there is some literature regarding the cultural factor within shock advertisement there is still a lack of research on the effect of shock advertisements on different culture or subculture. By research previously done by different authors (Dahl et al 2003, Veer and Rank 2012) it can be said that shock appeal works in advertising campaign, capturing the attention and pushing the target audience to a conscious decision. However the dependence of external cultural factors and establishment when the shock advertisement becomes more repulsive and offensive than it was set out to be can be seen relevant to the concept of shock advertising in general.
2.4 Literature Conclusion

Throughout the chapter of literature review, the process of marketing communication was looked upon, by analyzing Schramms communication model, different components of the communication process was established and links between them were determined. To better understand how shock appeal comes into ads, the tool itself, advertising, was analysed in short providing the vast ability and, more importantly, raising attitudes which can be linked with the use of different appeals in it. The main appeals were establish as rational and emotional. A quick overview of their differences and roles within advertisement took place to better understand them. Furthermore, additional appeals like fear, sex, music, shock and others were established. During the establishing of appeals shock was singled out and explained in more depth for the reader to understand its approach and differences from other appeals. A link between shock appeal and shock advertising was made, hence shock ads are carrying the same important aspects that shock appeal creates. The main reasons of shocking advertising was established as to draw attention, surprise the audience by violating the socially accepted norms and implement change in the target audience behaviour. However, because of lack of research on over the board, too much offensive, disturbing distressing ads that possibly annoy, irritate and frighten the viewer, additional research needs to be done. Cultural differences were presented not only within the communication process as general, but specifically effecting shock appeal and shock advertising.

There are several main issues that can be determined throughout the secondary research. First and for most it is crucial to understand what makes a communication process effective. While the sender has the ability to encode the message in the way he wants, it all comes down to the established target audience. Hence, the sender can incorporate different tools or appeals within the communication process. Some studies have been used to underline that shock advertising can be effective, although it still begs to differ if people deem shock appeal in advertising as a successful way to attracting their awareness and changing attitudes. Secondly, as discussed previously, shock advertising works by breaking through established social norms or values. It can be done by showing shocking imagery, symbols, signs or text-based material. However, although shock advertising can be deemed positive because of the different approach it brings, it can get a negative aspect as well. There is a fine line between the advertisement being offensive and over-offensive. Therefore, one of the main issues raised by the literature is that an over-offensive, vulgar or hurtful advertisement can’t carry the message it was intended to, can be disregarded or even change the behaviour of the target
audience in a way that they become repulsive not only to the ad but to the company or product advertised. Furthermore, it is important to understand the impact that shock advertising has when it comes to social issues. If it can be used to promote products and services, author’s state that it is becoming more popular while establishing the potential danger of drunk-drinking, unprotected sex, smoking, taking drugs and other harmful activities. Thus it is important to understand the impact that shock advertising makes on the target audience when applied to socially responsible advertising, in a way linking it with the vulgarity and over-offensiveness. Last but not least, during the literature review, culture was established as one of the factors that can trigger different responses to shock advertising in specific. Although the researcher is trying to establish the so called line that shock advertising may cross within the social norms to become over-offensive, cultural background of the target audiences can be deemed a relevant factor when it comes to the respondents attitudes or change in behaviour. In spite of the fact, that there are studies and literature to support the effectiveness of shock advertising in general and with socially sensitive topics, as established in the literature review, the lack linking the negative aspects shock advertising raises for the target audience and the cultural factor makes ground for the provided research.
3. Methodology

3.1 Methodology Introduction

Throughout this part a closer look takes place into the methodology necessary for this research. The philosophy, approach, strategy, samples, data collection instrument, limitations, and other important factors were established.

3.2 Research Design

The research design is based on the model created and modified by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2011). This model is called the research ‘onion’ and incorporates every aspect that is necessary for determining what kind of research it will be. As Saunders et al. (2012, p. 159) explains “research design is the general plan of how you will go about answering your research question(s).” Punch (2006, p. 48) further explains that the research design is the link between the research question and the data.

Diagram 1.5 the research ‘onion’ by Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill. Source: http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-nuUhP85DZ4Q/Tp1DOaV28II/AAAAAAAAbfM/a3vV2NtujM/s640/Research+Onion.jpg
Following the research ‘onion’ the philosophy, approach, strategy, samples and data collecting methods are established.

### 3.2.1 Research Philosophy

It is hard to determine the one and only philosophy used in the research, because there are many similarities, of course and difference, between them. Hence, the researcher establishes a mix of *Positivism and Interpretivism*. There are several crucial reasons why this philosophy is chosen and not others listed in the research ‘onion’.

Firstly, to explain why this philosophy is picked, what *positivism* is, is going to be established. *Positivism* as described by Saunders and Lewis (2012, p. 104) is mainly concerned with studying “observable and measurable variables in certain controllable conditions and to describe the reaction of these variables to treatment applied by the researcher.” Furthermore, Neville (2007, p. 6) adds that there is some sort of trust in the fact that people respond to different “stimulus, forces, rules (norms) external to themselves and that these can be discovered, indentified and described using rational, systematic and deductive processes.” So in other words, positivism is more of a scientific approach based on rational thinking, where people, it is believed, might be influenced by some sort of external forces, or in this case norms and social issues.

Throughout *positivism* approach, the hypothesis arises from an existing theory, which are tested and then confirmed or denied (Brid Lane, 2014). Saunders and Lewis (2012, p. 105) adds that there are situations where the proposed theory may not or cannot be confirmed by the findings. Although *positivism* is linked by Saunders et al. (2012, p. 135) more with the quantitative method; the author is quick to explain that this philosophy can be within the qualitative method as well by testing hypothesis with the data collected in in-depth interviews.

Moving on to the *interpretivism* philosophy, as explained by Saunders and Lewis (2012, p.106) it “relates to the study of social phenomena in their natural environment.” In other words, *interpretivism* is a study of people and their own points of view towards a specific issue or problem; hence it is crucial that the view is understood by the researcher. Moreover, Saunders et al. (2012, p. 137) introduces two ‘intellectual traditions’ of this philosophy: phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. As author explains they both are closely linked...
with the people view of the social surroundings or the world around them and influence of interaction with other people.

This mix of philosophies not only provides the researcher with the link with his research questions, but strengthens and helps with the process of data collection. While mixing these philosophies the researcher can remain objective and use strategies that can be deemed relevant for the research; hence qualitative method is going to be used throughout this research, as established before that is supported by the philosophies chosen.

3.2.2 Research Approach

In this research the **Deductive** approach is used. Deductive as explained by Saunders and Lewis (2012, p. 108) it is an approach “which involves the testing of a theoretical proposition by using a research strategy designed to perform this test.” Moreover, author adds that the research question should be defined while using general theory that exists already. (Saunders and Lewis 2012, p. 108) In other words deductive approach gives you the possibility to understand the theories that currently are established and raise questions or hypothesis to achieve any required further research. Saunders et al. (2012, p. 145) further explains that the hypotheses can be directly linked and formed from a theory or theories. In this instance two hypotheses are formed:

1. Advertisements that use shock appeal are more offensive and annoying than informative.
2. People from different cultures are influenced differently by shock advertising.

Furthermore, deductive approach can be closely linked with the philosophy mix chosen; hence deductive approach has a strong relationship with the positivism philosophy.

3.2.3 Research Objectives

Research objectives are directly linked with the secondary research provided above and the issues that were determined during it. The objectives will be split into few main objectives and sub-objectives for the purpose of better research.

**Objective 1**: Explore the impact of shock advertising in general on students from different cultures.
**Sub objective 1:** Explore the general impact of advertising on students

**Sub objective 2:** Determine the respondent’s views towards shock appeal as a tool used in advertising.

**Sub objective 3:** Establish the effectives of shock appeal in advertising about harmful behaviour (drinking, smoking, and road-safety)

**Sub objective 4:** Determine the positive and negative impact that shock appeal brings within the advertisements

**Objective 2:** Explore the negative impact of shock advertising on students with different cultures

**Sub objective 1:** Determine the factors that make an advertising that uses shock appeal less effective.

**Sub objective 2:** Determine, in respondent’s views, how shock advertising can become over-offensive or too vulgar.

**Sub objective 3:** Determine what negative impact does a shock advertisement about harmful activities brings

**Objective 3:** Explore culture as a factor that change the attitudes and behaviour towards the advertisement

**Sub objective 1:** Determine cultural background as a factor when it comes to shock advertising

**Sub objective 2:** Explore negative impact throughout shock advertising while using culture as a factor

**Sub objective 3:** Explore the impact of shock advertisements about harmful activities with culture as a factor.

### 3.2.4 Research Strategy

A research strategy as explained by Saunders et al. (2012, p. 173) can be generally defined “as a plan on how a researcher will go about answering her or his research questions.” In other words, while choosing the strategy the researcher tries to explain how he is going to answer his research questions. Because the researcher has incorporated the
Knowing the difficulties while choosing a strategy for qualitative methods, firstly we establish what kind of study it is. A more acceptable study would be explanatory. As Saunders and Lewis (2012, p. 113) explain explanatory studies look at the “explanation behind particular occurrences through the discovery of causal relationships between key variables.” Thus the researcher tries to establish the relationship between shock advertisements and impact to people from different cultures from the ads. Furthermore, explanation may be centralized upon different attitudes or beliefs that could be hard to quantify. (Saunders and Lewis 2012, p. 113) As it is relevant to this research, different beliefs and most importantly attitudes to the shocking advertisements are researched.

In this case the researcher takes semi-structured interviews. It is linked with the necessity to understand the reasons of for the participants’ attitudes or opinions regarding a specific issue, in this case shocking ads.

Regarding the time horizons, cross-section will be used, due to the lack of time provided, 2-3 months.

3.2.5 Selecting Respondents

For this specific research a purposive sampling was chosen. As Saunders and Lewis (2012, p. 138) explains – purposive sampling is used particularly to select a small sample when collecting qualitative data. As already mentioned above, in-depth interviews will take place to collect the qualitative data needed, hence using purposive sampling narrows down the respondents and acts as advantage.

The respondents chosen for this particular thesis are students, aged 21-26 years old, that come from different cultural backgrounds. The reason for choosing students is that young people are more affected and impacted by shock advertising. As Dahl et al. (2003, p. 278) explains young people usually perceive shock advertisements to be ‘cool’ to a point, and have a different attitude towards them. Furthermore, a lot of the shock ads are directly communicating to younger people, social issues that are raised can be linked with a younger audience as well: smoking, unprotected sex, drunk driving, diseases. Secondly, students from different cultural backgrounds are selected to better evaluate the impact of the ads and confirm or deny the determined hypothesis. As Shyan and Waller (2003) summarise, by
using students in a research that could be called cross-cultural and incorporating purposive sampling should lead to the establishment of cultural differences if they exist between the respondents. Furthermore, the researcher not only selects samples by their age, as explained culture has an impact as a factor on the selection process as well. Moreover, the last demographical element by which the researcher is selecting his respondents is gender. Although the research is not based to analyse if male or female participants have a different impact by shock advertising, it is important to state that some authors have agreed with this perception. Swani and Gulas (2013) states that women tend to be more offended than men by alcohol advertisements, indecent language, nudity, sexism, racism, and other antisocial themes. So in essence, because the research is directly linked with shock advertising for social issues the researcher believes that choosing more female than male respondents can give a better reaction, while trying to determine the negative impact of shock advertisement.

The researcher is proposing 8-14 semi-structured interviews to be held. In his belief to better understand cultures influence to this specific problem, the author feels that more respondents would only help determining this influential factor.

3.2.6 Selecting Advertisement samples

It is important to understand what advertisements were chosen for this research and why. As already mentioned above, there are three main groups of shocking advertisements that are shown: anti smoking, drug use, that is separated into fake drug use and actual drug use, and road safety, which are separated into drunk driving and speeding. The researcher believes that these are the most relevant topics that should be selected due to the common social problems nowadays. The social problem of sexually transmitted diseases was disregarded due to the fact of extensive research already done in this field; hence there is not a lot of room for a new research. There will be 6 different advertisements shown to the respondents. All advertisements are in video format and take under a minute.

Furthermore it is important to state why these advertisements were chosen in specific. Although there are plenty of shocking ads on the internet that covers the social problems already stated above, the author thinks that these ones stand out of the field due to their uniqueness. If most advertisements show shocking images, these ones show reality and what will happen if you partake in these harmful activities. Moreover these advertisements have a storyline and a plot that makes you think more about the social cause being advertised. Last but not least, because in this research culture is stated as a factor, these advertisements were
chosen because of their country of origin. The ads are separated by the country they were shown at, USA, UK, New Zealand, Ireland; thus making it more relevant when talking about cultural differences.

3.2.7 Research Ethics

Throughout this research there are several ethical issues that can arise. As Rudestam and Newton (2007, p. 276) state that might be reveal themselves “while using specific subject in social science research are the need for fully informed consent to participate and the need to emerge from the experience unharmed.” In other words, it is directly linked with the respondents’ willingness to participate, in this case, in a topic that could be deemed sensitive and the possibility of being morally harmed because of the shocking ads. Furthermore, an ethical issue would be to actually present the topic to the respondents in none a threatening or harmful way. (Lee 1999, p. 102) The researcher should be able to interest the respondents in the participation and control the situation, by control in this case researcher means stopping the interviews if the respondent is not comfortable with the shocking advertisements. Moreover, the process should be presented to the participants in detail with no crucial information left out for them to only realize it during the interview; that might result in stopping the questioning process. It is important to state that the results will be anonymous to a point with only the respondents’ age, gender and nationality revealed, due to the importance of sampling.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

As previously stated the data will be collected through the uses of semi-structured interviews. This instrument was taken to better evaluate the participants attitudes, views and opinions towards the issues raised in this thesis. (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 378) One of the most important factor in while choosing interviews is stated by Manson (2009, p. 63) where the author states it is suggested that “people’s knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which your research questions are designed to explore.” Hence, throughout the process of qualitative interviewing the views understandings, opinions, and the impact of shock ads will be explored and evaluated.
It is important to establish that there are other data collecting instruments that are related to qualitative approach. One of these instruments is focus groups. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 150) explains that nowadays focus groups are a really popular tool to used while doing consumer research. However, the researcher believes that a semi structured interview will be more relevant to this research, due to some advantages that it brings. Regarding focus groups, Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005, p. 142) are soon to state that one of the biggest disadvantage is that the results and answers of the focus group respondents can be influenced by one another, hence making the data collected to be less important and relevant to the research. Moreover, the authors continue by stating that semi-structured interviews will often help to obtain information that can be more personal, attitudinal or about “value-laden” matters (Ghauri and Gronhaug 2005, p. 132). Thus, if one of the main reasons of this research to establish the impact that shock advertising has on the target audience, throughout, as already discussed, impact on their attitudes and behaviour, semi-structured interviews are more likely to establish this factor. Additionally, focus groups have more of a discussion approach to the research, whereas by doing semi-structured interviews they will be based on pre determined questions with space to elaborate and probe the respondents. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005, p. 132) explains that although semi-structured interviews have similar qualities to an unstructured interviews, they differ because the sample size, respondents and most importantly questions has to be determined before starting the interview process. In other words, although the semi-structured interviews provide enough space for a small discussion, because it is situated only between the interviewer and interviewee there is no other people to factor the respondent’s answers.

Another important factor that justifies the use of semi-structured interviews is directly linked with shock advertising. As already explained, shock advertising is based on taboo and social norm breaking, and is becoming more and more popular to use within socially sensitive matters. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005, 132) elaborates, while the semi-structured interview gives you the chance to find out the attitudes and the views of the respondent, it can be perfectly applicable when the attitudes or views are related with an socially sensitive topics like drug abuse, drunk-driving or anti-smoking campaigns. Because the researcher establishes culture as a factor for the impact of shock advertising it is important to understand what advantages does the process of interviewing brings to this factor. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 80) summarises in general, there is a long lasting history of using interviews to determine cultural sociology. Although the research is not going into the cultural depth, because it is more based on the negative impact of shock advertising, because
culture is a factor, in essence, interviews have an advantage while establishing the cultural link.

Furthermore, not like questionnaires, interviews provide the ability to, as Saunders et al. (2012, p. 378) puts it, ‘probe’ answers. In other words, the researcher has the ability to go deeper into the participant’s answers and ask him to elaborate, explain or build on it. Semi-structured interview has the ability to carry out some probing through the course of it. (Silverman 2006, p. 110) The probing process in itself is important in this case, due to the fact that the participants will be exposed to several different types of shock advertising. Moreover, the probing process as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 95) can be detailed oriented, when the interviewer asks additional questions to the answer, elaborative when the interviewer asks the respondent to answer the question in more detail and clarification, when the interviewer actually participates by explaining the questions or the topics in more detail so the respondent will understand it fully. Throughout this research it is important to pinpoint that the clarification probing is relevant, hence the questions will be based upon advertising in general and specifically about shock appeal or cultural differences that can be hard to understand for the respondent. The ads will be separated into three main groups: anti smoking, road safety and drug use. These video ads will be shown to the respondents after some general questions regarding shock advertising. After they had time to watch the ads and evaluate them further questioning regarding the advertisements and the impact it gained will take place, where the probing process provided by the semi-structured interview will take place. The researcher will try to gain as much of relevant information from the participants.

The process on interviewing is explained by the Diagram 1.5 provided below. This process in researcher’s opinion will be the most relevant one in determining the impact of shock ads and finding any cultural differences. The interviews will be held face-to-face.

![Diagram 1.6 Interview process. Source: author](image)
The researcher believes that firstly asking general questions about shock advertisement, cultural aspects and other important factors may show different patterns appearing even before the advertisements will be shown. Furthermore, some of the questions will repeat before and after the showing of ads to better understand the effect of the advertisements shown.

Some practical issues arise while collecting the data. While the ethical issues were evaluated above, it is crucial to add that one of the most important issues that rise is the interpretation of the results. Thus researcher should be deemed objective and not in any case try to interpret or twist the results to get the necessary answer.

Access as well is an issue, because the researcher wants to interview more than a few different cultures, it could be difficult to find young students that are willing to participate in, presumably, a sensitive topic research. Therefore, if the researcher is not able to contact the person needed for this study or the respondent does not have time to spare for a face to face interview, live video conversation will take place.

**Implementation issues**

Regarding sampling, as already mentioned it could be difficult to find participants that show willingness to participate and watch shocking ads for the cause of this thesis. Furthermore, as stated above it might be perceived hard to come in contact with many different cultural respondents that come into the criteria of the sample.

While talking about the method of implication, the interviews will be held face-to-face in order. This raises an issue of time consumption and as previously stated actually adapting the research for many people with different cultural background.

**3.4 Data Analysis Procedures**

Qualitative data can be collected in two ways: text and non-text (Saunders and Lewis 2012, p. 167) The text data is primarily easy to understand, however problems may occur during the interview: the researcher won’t have time to write everything by hand, the researcher will lose focus of the interview or other similar problems. Non text data could be retrieved through audio, video and image. (Saunders and Lewis 2012, p. 167) The researcher used an audio recording device to capture the respondents answer quickly without wasting any precious time. After the interviewing process the author made transcripts, turning the audio data into text-based information which was used in the analyzing process.
Throughout the interviews there are two main aspects that the researcher is trying to find:
A similar opinions or views about shock advertising from people with different cultural background; a difference in the impact these advertisements have on people from different cultures, or if there is any. Hence, researcher will look for patterns remerging throughout the interviews and when found conclusion will be made.

3.5 Limitations of Methodology

There are several limitations to the methodology. Firstly we have to consider the limitation of time. Being a Masters dissertation it does not provide enough time to have a more deep research done. However, thus specific instruments like semi-structure interviews were chosen to better collect the data in the time frame given. Secondly, there is a limitation of money, although it is more of a general one, not regarding to this specific topic.

The most important limitation is regarding the sensitive topic that is being researched. Although shock advertising, as explained throughout, is offensive and vulgar, people may react differently to it. Due to the fact that the researcher is using more then one sensitive topic like, smoking, drug abuse, drunk driving, and others, participants might be in their own way sensitive to these themes provided. To minimize the aspect of sensitivity and increase the willingness to participate in the interviews the researcher explains in detail the process of the interview thus the respondent might choose before starting it if he wants to participate or not.

Another limitation could be that there is only one researcher. Doing 14 individual semi structured interviews take time, hence it could be linked with the time limitation as well. Because there is only one researcher the data collecting and analyzing part of this research took much longer that the author expected.
4. Data analysis and findings

4.1 Introduction

Throughout this chapter the main results of the primary research done by semi structured interviews will be established. To better analyze and understand the results objectives were established. The results will be provided in coloration with the objectives, moreover hypothesis were raised and will be incorporated into the analysis process. Throughout the use of semi structured interviews, researcher managed to have 14 different interviews with 9 females and 5 males. As already mentioned above, females are more likely to get shocked, hence the number of woman participants is higher. Furthermore, there were guideline questions prepared for the semi structured interviews, however it is important to understand that they are only guidelines and are not the exact same questions that the respondents were asked. The researcher used probing to start a small discussion and added or subtracted questions where he deemed are necessary to gain more data. The collected data is separated by the representing objectives and is provided below.

It is crucial to mention that due to the specific nature of this topic and research, the author feels that the discussion part of this thesis and the data analysis part are closely linked together and hence they will be connected into one paragraph of the dissertation. By doing so the author will be able to not only analyze the findings but discuss what they bring to the research field, how are they limited and how can the outcome be evaluated.
4.2 Objective 1

Explore the impact of shock advertising in general on students from different cultures.

To better evaluate this objective it was separated into several sub objectives that are more detailed.

4.2.1 Sub-objective 1.1

Explore the general impact of advertising on students.

Before going into more depth about shock appeal or shock advertising in specific, the researcher deems it is important to understand the general impact that advertising brings to the a specific group – students. The concentration towards students, as proven already in the methodology, is due to the fact that they are more affected by shock advertisement. Using the guideline questions the researcher tried to establish how students perceive advertisement, what impact does it have on them and what does the impact depend on?

Soon enough patterns appeared, almost every student believed that advertisement is the way to introduce a new product into a market or make one know about a specific product or a service. However, when it came to the impact that and advertisement has on the respondents there were a lot of different opinions. Summarizing, the main impact comes from the roles of advertisement established in the literature review; it not only increased the intent to purchase, but provided information about the product and also made people aware of different types of products a services out there. However the biggest impact was still the intent to purchase one of the respondents in her own words state that

“If I don’t see the advertisement of the product I am much less likely to buy it.”

Furthermore the researcher tried to establish the variables on what does the impact of the advertisement depends. As it seems, most of the time respondents are directly impacted by the advertisement if it is linked with their needs. For example, if you need a new phone and you see a lot of advertisements about a new brand that is in your price range, that brand becomes one of the possible options you will choose. Another factor that influences the impact is not only if the person needs the product, it is actually if they want it. In other words, you don’t need to buy new perfume but you want to. Some respondents explain this phenomenon
due to the social factors in their life, like friend having something and you want to have the same or because society deems the product fashionable you are more likely to buy it.

4.2.1 Sub-objective 1.2

_Determine the respondent’s views towards shock appeal as a tool used in advertising._

While previously the impact of advertising and variables that affect it on students was established, this sub objective goes more into detail about the use of appeals and specifically shock appeal as an advertising tool. Because this objective is more detailed about the advertising appeals and shock appeal, some of the respondents may not be familiar with the concept of advertising appeals. Hence the author provides a handout (Appendix 4) that has the appeals separated into emotional and rational one; the researcher is soon to state that this thesis is directly linked with the emotion appeals. As researcher perceived many of the respondents that were not studying in the advertisement or marketing field were not capable of explaining what appeals are without the handout provided, however after looking through it, all of the participants could explain what they are and more specifically link them with advertisement. Respondent number 5 summarises the emotional appeals by stating:

“I think most of the advertisement tries to make an emotional connection, otherwise your feelings do not change and it impacts you much less.”

Although the most popular choice was humour, stating that you can see it daily in a lot of ads by the students, shock appeal was frequently mentioned as well. All of the respondents could easily determine what shock advertisement are in their own words and state general views towards it. As it seems while talking about shock in advertisements, most of the respondents were able to state what in their own opinions were shocking. The researcher provided the participants with the types of shocking elements used in shock advertising by Dahl et al (2003) (Appendix 3), in case the students could not list what shock advertising is and how it shocks them in their own words. The results showed that visual vulgar imagery was the most common shocking attribute that this appeal carries. In specific more than half of the respondents directly linked vulgar images to blood, dead bodies or severed limbs. All in all it could be said that although there were mixed opinions about shock advertisement, the general view towards it was more positive. However, the interviewees pinpointed that in may vary depending on the product, company, cause or the ad itself, whether it carries a positive or a negative view. Even more so, there were some specific taboos that would make the
general view towards the advertisement negative such as race, religion and gender equality. The researcher determines that females are more prone to have negative views when it comes to these taboos. Hence one of the limitations of this research is established. Due to the fact that the impact can vary determining on the product, company, cause or the ad itself, when picking sample advertisements the researcher, although felt they were justified and stood out of the crowd, limited the impact. In other words, other advertisements or sensitive topics being advertised could have a different outcome or impact.

4.2.1 Sub-objective 1.3

Establish the effectiveness of shock appeal in advertising about harmful behaviour (drinking, smoking, and road-safety)

As already discussed in the previous sub objective, the general views towards shock advertisement were established and factors influencing these views were mentioned in short. Shock being one of the appeals in advertisement, as many other, can be used for both commercial and social causes. Throughout the secondary research the author was able to determine that shock advertisements are frequently used for social problems or harmful activities, hence the relevance of shock appeal within this kind of advertisement becomes important. The respondents were asked not only to specify their views towards advertisement about social problems that carries shock appeal but as well how effective does it make it to be or do they believe it to be more effective than traditional advertising or other appeals. Even thirteen respondents stated that they believe shock appeal is effective while used in advertisements about harmful activities and social problems. Going more into detail, the majority belief was that shock advertisement catches the viewer’s attention by the use of shock, hence making the advertisement stand out more and makes people think about it. It is important to mention that participants mention some factors that can make the adverts less effecting. Almost half of the respondent believes that shock advertisement about social issues will not be effective, even more they call it harmful, when it comes to age groups. In other words, the overall views is that this appeal should be effective and work on adults without a problem, but when it comes to kids, the students mention that either they do not understand the advert and the message being sent or they might be damaged by the violent images.

Respondent number 3 while talking about shock advertisement in social causes states that:
"I think children get more affected mentally when they are growing up."

It seems to be an overview that age is a big factor when it comes to the effectiveness of the advertisement, thus making it not only shocking but carrying the information intended. While talking about effectiveness other variables were mentioned such as placement of the ad, the cause being advertised and culture. The relevance of the cause is mentioned more then once, in other words, if the advertisement is targeting a specific group or people (smoker), a person who has never smoked would be more likely to pay less attention or disregard it.

Furthermore, when the respondents were asked to compare the use of shock appeal to any other appeal or traditional advertisements when it comes to harmful activity advertising, there was a unanimous agreement that shock appeal works better. As it seems, although there were few factors mentioned above, the participants believe that throughout shock the information is being carried out much more successfully and people are more likely to pay attention or be more cautious when it comes to drunk-driving, smoking or taking drugs. Respondent number 1 makes a clear comment:

“I wouldn’t pay a lot of attention if it was a normal advertisement”

Hence it can be summarized that shock throughout the semi structured interviews majority of the respondents deem shock appeal as effective when it comes to social problem or issue advertising. Furthermore it is a unanimous belief that this appeal is much more effective that others or than traditional messages.

4.2.1 Sub-objective 1.4

Determine the positive and negative impact that shock appeal brings within the advertisements

As already mentioned before the respondent were shown 6 different shock advertisements. To better understand what kind of impact does shock appeal bring within the advertisements the respondents were questioned before and after watching the advertisements. It was previously established that the interviewees had a more positive view to shock appeal as an advertisement tool, but when it comes to specifically taking about the impact it brings there were much more independent opinions.

Before the respondents watched the advertisements they were asked to talk about the impact they got from the last or the most memorable shock advertisement they have seen. Almost every participant could recall and advertisement or advertising campaign that
shocked and left an impact. All of the mentioned ads were directly linked with harmful activities and the most popular one was anti smoking. Here two different groups of opinions rise. The people who are not smokers were even more put out of the idea to start smoking and got shocked or by the advertisements. However, the people who are actually smoking at the moment, although felt shock and though about how smoking can impact their future, were more likely to continue smoking than to change their behaviour.

Respondent number 6 actually states that she gets a different affect from shocking anti smoking advertisements:

“I have read that actually after watching something shocking about smoking the opposite effect happens and you want to smoke more. At least every time I watch an anti smoking ad I want to smoke more.”

Therefore it could be said that the impact can be dependable more on the person and his attitudes towards something, than just a generalized opinion about harmful activities. Majority of students still held a more positive impact and explained that through shock they were more attracted and it made them think more about the consequences.

After the respondents watched the shocking advertisements, patterns started appearing in their answer. In other words, majority of the participants were quick to specify that although all of the advertisements were shocking in one way or another, the ones that shocked them the most was the ones that students deemed are targeted to them. For smokers one of the most shocking one was the anti smoking, for people who like driving fast – the speeding adverts. It became clear that the impact was more positive than negative; interviewees stated that they are more likely to reduce smoking, be aware when they are on the road or thing before doing something harmful. However, the advertisements that the participants though did not communicate to them directly, like drunk-driving, taking drugs, were pushed to the side and disregarded. Some of the respondents explain that they are not partaking in these harmful activities now and it is their own opinion, the advertisement does not impact their decision to decrease or increase the level of harmful activities in their life, when it comes to the advertisements that the participants think are not targeted to them.

In general the impact of shock advertisements were more positive before and after watching the ads provided, thus the researcher will look more in depth into the negative aspects that shock appeal carries out in the next objective. In could be said that although the results were more one-sided, it has a contribution to the general are of shock advertisements, by analysing peoples perception and impact and finding out that many think and feel alike.
Throughout this objective the author was able to look into from a more general side and got more detailed and narrow to the use of shock appeal in advertising. As it was proven already that there is more of a positive impact from advertisements that uses shock appeal, the researcher deems it necessary to investigate the negative impact and aspects, while liking them with the research questions. The final results and findings of this objective will be provided in the Conclusion section below.

4.3 Objective 2

Explore the negative impact of shock advertising on student

As previously looked through in short it was determined that respondents have a more positive attitude towards shock advertisement and the impact it brings keens to be more positive as well. Because the purpose of this research is to look at the negative aspects that shock appeal has in advertisements it is important to analyze it more. Several sub objectives were established to better analyze the results.

4.3.1 Sub-objective 2.1

Determine the factors that make an advertising that uses shock appeal less effective.

While previously proven that shock appeal has a positive affect when it comes to advertising harmful activities or social problems, the researcher throughout probing and starting discussions was trying to establish the factors that would make shock advertising less effective in any way. As it seems the respondents were able to mention several crucial factors that they believe can make the advert less or not at all effective. One of the most important factors was the timing the advertisement was shown. If it is a long term advertising campaign that uses shock appeal, most of the respondents believe that it looses the shock element and blends in with the other ads. More then one participant stated that the feeling of shock is only for the first few times, if you see the same advertisement constantly it will not carry the same impact as it did the first time. Respondent number 8 believes that the feeling of shock can only happen once:

“In my opinion the state of shock is a temporary and one time thing, you only get shocked once by the same thing so it becomes not interested the second time.”
Furthermore, the content of the advertisement was named as a factor as well. What that means is if the content exaggerates or makes the social problem advertised non realistic, the interviewees believe it will make it much less effective. Respondent number 5 summarises the problem in her own words:

“When talking about shock appeal I think if it’s realistic, like if it’s showing the truth like smoking may kill you, speeding may kill you then it works properly, but if they exaggerate the problem in my opinion it may cross the line and be more offensive.”

Hence, exaggerating the problem or making the advertisement non realistic does not only make it less effective but can lead to people taking offence to it.

The same factor that was talked about in the first objective comes out again; the advertisement will be less effective if people feel they are not targeted by it. Therefore, if a person is fully aware of the danger of taking drugs and is committed never to partake in this harmful activity, the advertisement will not affect him at all and could be deemed ineffective. Determining the factors that influence the effectiveness of a shocking advertisement can not be deemed important to this specific research but to the whole area that shock appeal in advertisement surrounds.

4.3.2 Sub-objective 2.2

Determine, in respondent’s views, how shock advertising can become over-offensive or too vulgar.

This sub objective is directly linked with the biggest issue raised throughout the literature analysis. Furthermore, research questions and one of the hypotheses are closely linked with the establishment of this sub objective. If from the secondary research it was determined that advertisements that use shock appeal can actually be offensive, especially when it come to sensitive topics, such as drunk-driving, drug abuse or smoking, the primary research helps to reveal if it actually offends people and if so, how does shock advertisement offends or insults them.

As already mentioned in short in the previous sub-objective, one of the reasons for taking offence to a shock advertisement is the exaggeration of the situation shown and making it too unrealistic to occur in real life. Respondent number 2 explains it in his own words:
“Some people can get annoyed or become more sceptical if an ad exaggerates the consequences.”

So it could be said if the advertisement is more realistic, it would have the possibility to be less offensive or not offensive at all.

All of the respondents were asked if they think that shock advertisement could be deemed over-offensive or insulting in anyway. Out of 14 participants 10 stated that in their own opinion advertisement that uses shock appeal and are directly about sensitive social issues can be seen as offensive and insulting in different ways. The other 4 interviewees don’t think that this kind of advertisement style would be offensive to them, but are soon to add that other people could take offence depending on their own understanding and attitudes.

If the majority of the participants think that shocking ads would be offensive to them and other agree it could be shocking depending on the person it is important to understand how can it become too offensive insulting or too vulgar. The researcher summarises the answers into two groups: advertisement content and social or cultural factors.

When it comes to the first one, as already talked about in short within the first objective, the content of the ad itself, for example images, symbols, signs, text based information and other variables, can offend or insult people. While trying to determine what attributes can shock people in a way the researcher found out what could cause people to take offence or get insulted. Visual imagery was one of the most common answers when it came to things that would shock you in the advertisement. Moreover, the same attributes that carry out the shocking visual effect, such as blood, dead bodies or detached limbs were mentioned as one of the factors that make the advertisement offensive. Furthermore, most of this kind of imagery carried out the feeling of disgust throughout majority of the respondents after watching the advertisements. Although the some interviewees you thought that visual impact can make and advertisement too offensive state that a lot of people get used to these images quite quickly, due to the increased levels of shock in the society nowadays, they are soon to add that the offensive and disgusting images keeps them from getting the full message. In other words, when some of the participants felt disgusted while watching the sample advertisements they paid much less attention to the problem being advertised and the information provided. Although all of them understood the cause that was advertised, for example do not take fake prescription drugs, the informational part of the advert was affected by the disgust and/or offensiveness. After watching one of the advertisements that was about taking fake drugs, because of the visual impact majority of the respondents said they felt
disgusted. The advert shows a man taking a rat out of his mouth, to what respondent number 1 commented:

“The one with the rat, it almost made me puke.”

Additionally, throughout on the spot questioning and probing the researched was able to establish that the respondent did not care or paid attention to the cause or the harmful activity being advertised or the ad itself due to the high level of disgust she felt.

The second factor mentioned were social a culture influence. When it comes to the social influence, more than half of the participants believe that attribute like age, societal norms, attitudes towards something or influence by social pressure can play a part while making an advertisement that uses shock appeal especially about sensitive topics offensive or disgusting. In addition, many interviewees believe that there is a link between your own attitudes and values that you have grown to not only the offensiveness of the advertisement but shock advertisement in general. Hence, the respondents state that culture can be a factor when it comes to understanding the message that a shock advert is trying to send and making it less or more offensive. Respondent number 5 gives an example about cultural differences when it comes to the offensive or insulting part of the advert:

“Take for example Italian and Indian cultures, how Italians portray women in their advertisements would probably be offensive for the Indian culture and vice versa.”

Respondent 10 further ads:

“Cultural background plays a role while understanding the offensiveness and vulgarity of the ads.”

So as it seems, the interviewees believe that culture can actually be a factor while determining why or how was the advertisement over offensive. Moral standards and societal norms differ from culture to culture, hence making so advertisements offensive in one specific culture but not another.

It is important for the purpose of this research to state that after watching the advertisements, the majority of the respondents did not feel offended or insulted. The main other emotions except shock were disgust, sadness or sorrow. Although they were not offended by the particular ads that the researched showed and mostly felt disgust, mainly all of the respondents still kept their opinion that shock advertisements could be offensive in a way. Additionally, it is important to evaluate if hypotheses 1 was proven or rejected in this matter.
**H1:** Advertisements that use shock appeal are more offensive and annoying than informative.

Although there was a majority agreement that shocking advertisements can be offensive, all of the respondents believe that adverts using this specific appeal are still more informative at the first place. Some crucial factors were mentioned, that it depends on the ad or personal perception, attitudes towards the issue or cultural background. All of the interviewees personally stated that after watching the advertisements, although some of them were disgusting, they were still informative in one way or another. Moreover, some of the respondents believe that shock appeal actually helps to carry out the message or portray the information in a better way. As respondent number 4 summarises:

"It carries the information and it does actually give you the minor shock feeling, if you just read the information from the screen you probably wouldn’t get the same impact.”

Due to the findings the researcher can state that advertisements that use shock appeal are still more informative than offensive, insulting or vulgar. Therefore H1 can be rejected and proven to be wrong. The shock and the slight offensiveness as it seems only strengthen the informational part of the ad itself. In addition, this answers the main research question, as it can still offend but be more informative. Moreover, it becomes clear that even though the advertisement can cause distress, be disgusting or offend the viewer in one way or another, it still carries out the information intended, hence making it a successful communication process. However, it has to be said that, although this group of people that took part in this research did not take offence and believes that shock advertising is more informative, other people can be influenced by factors already discussed above and have a different view; making it another limitation of this research. It seems to be that different people will react differently to the same advertisement, so this limitation will not only occur in this research but in many others due to sampling.

**4.3.3 Sub-objective 3:**

Determine what negative impact does a shock advertisement about harmful activities brings

When talking about the impact that shock advertisement about harmful activities bring, it was already mentioned that mutually the respondents agree that it is a successful and
efficient tool to use to try and solve the problem. Nevertheless, due to the issues raised in the secondary research the author tries to determine the negative impact this kind of appeal can bring while linking it with sensitive topic advertising or if there is any negative impact at all.

While discussing in specific about the impact that shock advertisement brings when connected to sensitive topics and harmful activities only one respondent directly stated that after watching the sample advertisements he got more of a negative impact than a positive one, mainly due to the fact of feeling disgusted and sad. Nevertheless, other participants admitted that although the advertisements shocked, made them feel disgusted or even were disturbing, in the end they had a positive impact. It becomes clearer that the shock appeal in advertisement only strengthens the information being sent, as the majority of the interviewees felt positive due to the fact that the sample adverts made them think more, more aware and cautious about their actions when it comes to, mostly, speeding and smoking. Although there were sample advertisements about drug abuse and drunk driving mainly every respondent were not affected by them, stating that they do not partake in these harmful activities. In addition, they said that it did not carry any negative impact, it just did not make them think more, that the advertisements that participants though were made to target them more (anti-speeding and anti-smoking ads).

Similarly the impact on their attitudes and behaviour in regards of change was established. The advertisements that the participants though were more targeted directly to them made them think more and be aware of the consequences. Furthermore, the same groups appear as previously stated of smokers and non smokers, where the non smokers were more affected by the ads and show more willingness to change, the smokers were more reluctant. Although showing intent to change their attitudes when it comes to the issue of smoking, there was intent of change in behaviour established as all of the smoking participants stated that they would not quit smoking and would maybe think to smoke less. Whereas talking about road safety and speeding, there was much more of a positive response in regards to changing their attitudes and behaviour. Almost every interviewee stated that after watching the sample advertisements they are more likely to change the attitudes and think twice before breaking the law and speeding, due to the horrific consequences shown in the ads. Most than half of the respondents that were willing to change their attitudes were willing to change in behaviour as well, they would not only think before doing it but try to stop speeding due to the sample advertisements. As respondent 13 sums it up:

“I felt bad because sometimes I speed while I’m driving and after watching the ad I felt like I should change my behaviour.”
All in all it seems that the impact that shock advertisement about sensitive topic or social issues brings is more of a positive one than a negative. But respondents were more impacted and affected by advertisements that they thought were targeting them more. Not only was the impact more positive, but by exposing the participants to several sample shock ads the researcher was able to determine their intentions on changing the attitudes and changing their behaviour. As it comes out to be, it is directly linked is the advertisement is relevant to the specific person or not. If the person feels that the advertisement is relevant or targeting him, the research proves that there is more intent to change the attitudes and the behaviour. However, when the person feels that the advertisement is not directly targeting him, he is more likely to pay less attention to the advert or disregard it completely. Another cause for a limitation of the research can be determined. As the author did not separate the respondents into any groups like smokers, non-smokers, or people who tend to speed or not, there is a less of a connection between the sample participants and sample advertisements. Nevertheless, the author reminds that this is not a sociological research and there is no relevance in the sense of trying to determine if and advertisement is too offensive and less informative and specifying the sample respondents into groups.

Throughout this objective the negative aspects and impacts of shock advertisement within sensitive topics or about harmful activities was established and determined. As it seems the participants of this research felt more positively and impacted in a way that enables them to change their attitudes or showing intent of changing their behaviour when it comes to the harmful activity advertised. A direct contribution can be deemed as the research proved that shock appeal in advertisements actually is effective and can be deemed more positive impact having that negative. This research goes hand in hand in some of the research done by other authors that were looked through in the literature analysis part. The author feels that he was able to critically establish the limitations, answer the according research questions and prove the relevant hypothesis throughout this objective making in an important part of this research. Although the results show different outcomes than the stated hypothesis, is it now wrong or irrelevant. In this case it only strengthens the research by stating that information travels better through shock advertisement even if it is offensive. Some more relevant conclusion will be provided in the Conclusion section below.
4.4 Objective 3

Explore culture as a factor that change the attitudes and behaviour towards the advertisement

Throughout the secondary research the author determined that culture can be taken as a factor when it comes to determining not only the impact gotten from the advertisement but as well the change in attitudes and behaviour following the impact. Several broad questions were the base for incorporating culture as a factor. First and foremost, the researcher used the separation of culture into two main groups of individualism and collectivism as already explained in the literature review. Mainly all of the respondents saw themselves as individualists, who base their decisions on their own opinions and experiences. However, when talking generally about the culture they are from there was a mutual agreement that the collectivism is more popular or is becoming more popular in their countries due to immigration or implementation of other cultures and sub-cultures. Culture is only one of the factors that can influence the impact and the effectiveness of shock advertisement, the authors specifies again that this is not the main issue of this academic paper and it is not a sociological research, hence it is only a small part of the general research. This objective will be analyzed in more depth using several sub-objectives provided below.

4.4.1 Sub-objective 3.1

Determine cultural background as a factor when it comes to shock advertising

Although throughout the literature analysis it was determined that culture or cultural background can be taken into account as one of the factors that influence different impact or change in attitudes or behaviour, the researcher deems it relevant to establish this factor using primary research as well.

When the respondents were asked if they believe that culture can be a factor or can it influence the impact of shock advertisement on a person there was a unanimous yes. It can be said that all of the respondents believe that cultural and societal norms, values that were gained while growing up and cultural perception can all influence not only the impact gotten but push the person to take change within his attitudes or behaviour. Moreover, it seems that
by dividing the culture into groups of individualists and collectivists the researcher spark some discussion. More than one respondent believe that is directly linked with what kind of a person you are and what kind of a culture you have. For example an individualist is still more likely to be impacted the same way in many different cultures, whereas a collectivist would be more likely to take in the social or peer pressure before making a decision.

Even more so, if a shock advertisement does not match the societal or cultural norms it begs to differ if it is effective at all? Respondent 3 summarises it by stating:

“I think in my state where I come from if they put an advertisement against the culture of the state I think the government would ban it, because it was against the cultural background of the people.”

Hence it can be said that culture, cultural background, societal norms and social pressure can be linked as factors that can influence the person when it comes to shock advertising. Nevertheless, it is important to pinpoint that cultural norms does not apply in every case, do to the increasing immigration and adaptation of other culture, sub-cultures are raised that are individually and collectively different from the main culture. As well it is important to understand, proven by the respondents as well, that it may more depend on the person rather than the culture as a general factor, however the all round agreement is that culture can be taken as a factor. Although you might argue that your personal experience, views, opinions and attitudes were formed by you growing up in a specific culture, this could only be taken in as a though. The researcher is not analyzing the extent of cultural influence and is only taking culture as one of the factors. It can be said that different outcomes would have been achieved if the author would have taken a different influential factor, several factors than just one or just concentrated on the main issue without establishing other factors that could influence it.

4.4.2 Sub-objective 3.2

Explore negative impact throughout shock advertising while using culture as a factor

As already established that a culture can be a factor that influences the impact that shock advertising can bring to the viewers, the researcher tries to better establish the negative aspects of this impact. In more specific, the author is referring to one of the main issues raised in the conclusion of literature review, that shock advertisement can be too offensive
vulgar, insulting or disturbing; hence if already analyzed in general in the previous objective the researcher takes another perspective linking it with culture as a factor.

Again it becomes clear that the separation of culture into individualist and collectivist becomes an important part while establishing the negative impact of shock advertising. Most of the respondents when asked to think how social pressure would affect them when it comes to adverts with shock appeal about sensitive topics were soon to state that in general they would listen to the opinion of their family, friends, government or other bodies. However, none of them went on a limb and stated that it would actually impact them in any specific way to change an attitude or their behaviour. It’s clearer that the impact is gained more through the advertisement itself or the issue that is being advertised. When talking about the negative impact linked with culture as a factor a similar outcome as in the general analysis of the negative impact is determined. Even 12 respondents believed that culture and specifically social pressure can be stated as a factor when it comes to a shocking advertisement being too offensive or insulting. In other words, although most of the respondents see themselves as strong opinionated individuals, they believe that pressuring something by trying to implicate other opinions can change the perception and the impact of a shock advertisement. However it has to be said that social or peer pressure, banning commercials or sending message about the negative side of a specific advert can lead to the opposite reaction that would have been expected. Respondent 7 claims:

“Actually if somebody tells me not to watch the advertisement because it as insulting I would definitely watch it just because I would like to make my own opinion about it.”

Therefore it can be said that although the participants stated that culture and social pressure plays a part in determining if an advertisement is too offensive or insulting, they are not the only ones. Many interviewees were soon to add that it depends on the issue or the social problem being advertised. It comes down to the same factor that was discussed above already, if the people watching the advertisement are felling targeted or not. If they feel that the ad itself does not carry out any relevance to them, neither the culture nor the social pressure will play any part in the impact, because usually there will not be any. Respondent 6 when talking about over offensiveness dependence on culture added:

“It may vary depending on the issue and the person.”

Summarising it can be said that the mainly all of the respondents believe that cultural background can influence the perception of a shock advert being too offensive or vulgar. Furthermore, social pressure can play a part when determining if the impact that was gained by watching the advertisement is negative. Although it can work in an opposite way, where
the social pressure pushed the person to actually watch the advertisement even if it is perceived insulting or even banned in its culture. However, it is important to state that culture is only one factor that can influence the impact or even change in attitudes or behaviour. It can be said that culture is playing a role, however this researcher feels that it is not as significant as the personal values that was proven to be one of me most influential factors when it comes to shock advertisement impact. Several important factors as the content of the ad or the advertisement itself and most importantly personal views, attitudes and opinions play a big role while determining the negative impact of shock advertising.

4.4.3 Sub-objective 3.3

Explore the impact of shock advertisements about harmful activities with culture as a factor.

Before exploring the impact of shocking ads about harmful activities or sensitive topics the researcher firstly determined if the participants of this research have encountered shock advertisement before in general. Almost every respondent stated that they had encountered some advertisements that used shock appeal and were about social issues like anti smoking or drunk driving. Furthermore, the respondents believe that all of the issues that were used in the sample advertisements, provided by the researcher, were relevant and common in their countries and cultures. In addition, when talking in specific about sensitive topic or social issue shock advertisement in their own culture 10 respondents stated that this type of advertising is common and frequent in their culture. One of the other respondents thinks that shock advertisements are becoming popular with time:

“Maybe in the past 4-5 years they have become common in India, before they wouldn’t have put this kind of ads on TV because people would not appreciate it, probably because of my culture. But now they are becoming more usual, people find ways to watch it, so it’s not that big of a deal I think.”

It could be said that change in culture itself is because of increased immigration, arrival of new sub-cultures and influence from them on the main culture. As the respondent stated, shock appeal was not used in her culture because the societal norms would not deem it normal. People would not appreciate it because the culture implements that showing these kinds of ads could have a negative impact.
When analyzing the impact that the respondents got after watching the sample ads and taking into account the cultural factor some crucial patterns and aspects were determined. As previously mentioned the participants of the interviews deemed culture as a factor that can influence not only the impact or change in the attitude or behaviour but as well how offensive, insulting or vulgar the advertisement can be. The researcher analyzed the impact that the participants had after watching the advertisement using culture as one of the main factors. There are several crucial findings that were determined by questioning and probing the interviewees.

Firstly, a link between the commonality of shock appeal advertisements in a specific culture and the impact can be established. As previously mentioned some of the respondents did not encounter a lot of shock advertisements in their own culture while growing up. These participants expressed a bigger impact to the shocking advertisements stating that it is disturbing and disgusting to a point, but makes them think and sparks the intent to change their attitudes or even their behaviour towards the harmful activity advertised. On the other hand, respondents that were more used to this type of advertisement only separated a couple of sample adverts that they saw as carrying out the shock effect and making them think. It becomes clear that people who are more used to shock appeal are more likely to deem it more normal than offensive.

Secondly, the same attribute as discussed already in previous objectives are mentioned again. While there were 6 samples advertisements covering areas like anti-smoking, speeding, drunk-driving and drug abuse, the impact differed on people due their perception of being targeted or not by the advertisement itself. Smokers were more impacted by the anti-smoking advertisement, however only showed intent to reduce smoking but not quit. People that are used to speeding were more affected by the speeding advertisement, stating that it made them think how speeding can not only affect them but others that are innocent in the act. Accordingly, the advertisements that the interviewees felt were not directed to them, like drug abuse ads, did not carry any specific impact. The respondents agreed that the information part of the advertisements that, as they though, were not targeting them in specific was clear and that it carries out the message, but because the participants had no intent in taking drugs or associating themselves with people who do they were more likely to disregard the advertisement.

Furthermore, the content of the advertisement itself has been determined as being a crucial factor by the participants when it comes not only to the impact or the change in attitudes or behaviour but in determining if the ad was offensive and insulting or not. Again it
can be linked with the exposure to shock advertisement in their own culture. Whereas people who were more used to seeing shocking imagery or shocking ads were less impacted by the content of blood, dead bodies and other sensitive or disturbing aspects, even though a lot of them stated that these attributes, specifically gross visual imagery, makes the ad stand out and be more offensive, than people who had not experienced a lot of shock advertising.

Finally, one of the most important criteria that was determined throughout the research while exploring the impact of shock ads was the personal attitudes, views and opinions. It seems that a person’s individual opinion or an attitude towards a sensitive topic or a harmful activity was the most important factor when it comes to the impact. Although there were similarities or as it could be said patterns, where majority or the respondents were disgusted by a specific advertisement or felt sadness or sorrow for another sample ad, while elaborating their answers it became clear that the impact the interviewees obtained was due to their personal values, views and attitudes. As well there were discrepancies where one or two respondents found the sample advertisement to be more funny than shocking or did not feel the intended impact, it still came down to their own perception and opinion. Although it seems that personal values, norms, views and attitudes can be named as one of the biggest factors, one could argue that most of the personal attributes like societal norms, personal views, attitudes and opinions can be directly linked with the cultural background and the culture that these participants grew up.

After establishing the impact and people’s perception about shock advertising about sensitive topics or harmful activities, there are some inconsistencies when it comes to the second hypothesis raised by the author.

**H2: People from different cultures are influenced differently by shock advertising.**

Although the participants agreed that culture can be a factor when it comes to the impact of shock appeal advertising about social issues or problems and it can make it over-offensive or insulting, when analyzing the impact that they respondents got after watching the sample advertisements it was proven more to do with they personal attitudes, exposure to shock in a long term and content of the advertisement itself. In other words, people perceive that having a different cultural background could actually be an influential factor when it comes to shock appeal in advertisement, however this belief was determined to be not true, because the respondents reacted similar to the sample advertisements and the author was able to
determine other factors that became critically important in this research. The main factor that influences the impact was determined as the personal views, opinions and attitudes towards an issue, problem or advertisement. Although it can be said that culture and cultural background has an impact on the personal values, views and opinions while growing up, because the culture was taken only as factor that could influence the impact and not the only reason why it may differ, the researcher feels that H2 is more rejected than proven. In addition, although the participants were from many different cultural backgrounds there impact towards the sample advertisements were more similar than different, hence making the hypothesis 2 as a rejected one.

Summarising it can be said that, culture can an may be a factor when it comes not only to the impact, change or attitude or behaviour but the offence or insult gotten from the advertisement, throughout this research the author has established that cultural differences are less important that individual values, views and opinions that a person holds. Hence a limitation can be proven to be that the researcher actually chose culture and not persona views as an influential factor. However, there was not a lot of research done linking the impact of shock appeal and cultural background, hence making this research relevant and contributing. It can be said that although culture was determined as a factor, it was deemed not the most influential one. This does not mean that the research failed in any way, on the contrary these findings prove culture can influence and be a factor, but there are other more important factors. Moreover, it was not a sociological research, hence it was not made to find out how other factors or cultural background can directly impact the target audience. These findings only gives way to further research and recommendations to carry on, linking it more with the other influential factors determined within this research and making it more from a sociological perspective. The full conclusions of this objective will be provided in the Conclusion section below.
5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore the impact of shock advertisement on students using culture as an influential factor. For the research to be deemed successful and relevant the author separated the work into two main groups: secondary and primary research. Throughout the secondary data analysis the authors was able to establish the research questions and objectives that were directly linked with the analysis. The main issues were raised that gave reason and relevance to the primary research of this dissertation. Furthermore, hypotheses were established to help in answering the research questions and establishing objectives. Moreover, appropriate data collecting instrument, samples of respondents and advertisements used in this research were determined in order for the primary research to fully answer the research questions and prove or reject the raised hypotheses.

Throughout the literature review the authors was able to establish the importance of marketing communication and its role while trying to reach the target audience. Furthermore, Schramms marketing communication model was analyzed as the broad basis of this dissertation. Going into more detailed literature, the author explains advertisement as a tool used while communicating with the potential consumers, linked it with appeals and more specifically shock appeal. A crucial analysis of shock appeal and its role in advertisement was done, throughout which the main issues or fields that lack research were established. The researcher found that although there are proven studies that shock advertisement carries out a positive impact when it comes to changing attitudes or behaviour when it comes to a specific social group – students, there was a lack of research determining if shock appeal used in advertisement can be deemed more offensive, insulting, vulgar or cause distress than carry out the intended information. Therefore, main research question was determined while trying to establish if the impact is more offensive or informative. As looked upon closely, shock advertisement works by breaking the social norms and views with what could be vulgar or sometimes offensive imagery or other aspects, especially when it comes to sensitive topics or harmful activities like smoking, road safety, drug abuse and others. Hence, research sub questions were determined to better analyze if a shock advertisement bringing a negative impact can still carry the intended message. Culture was determined as a factor that could be called influential when it comes to the impact that an advertisement brings. Specifically when
talking about sensitive topics, culture can play an important role, thus the researched tries establish if there is any influence when it comes to culture and the impact of a shocking advertisement and what is it.

The researcher feels that one of the best ways to summarise the findings or the primary research is directly linking the research questions, objectives and hypotheses that were determined through the literature review. When talking in general about the impact that shock advertisement brings or is it effective when it comes to sensitive or taboo topics, it can be said that although most of the respondents were shocked by watching the sample advertisements, the adverts that could be deemed effective or carried out an impact was those who were directly linked with they personal behaviour. In other words, participants could easily remember and get the message that was being sent by those advertisements that were relevant to them, for example, smokers were more impacted by the smoking advertisements, people who tend to speed – by the speeding ads. It all comes down to if the person feels targeted, some of the respondents stated that if they do not feel targeted, because they do not partake in this specific harmful activity they are more likely to not have an impact or the intent to change attitudes or behaviour, or disregard the advertisement, but not the issue advertised, completely. It could be said that personal perception, experience and views were determined as factors that influence the impact a shock advertisement carries out.

Secondly, the researched tried to establish the line between the offensive and informative part of shock advertisement. Although mostly every participant stated that a shock advertisement can be insulting or offensive, but when it came to the impact they individually received, the advertisements that the respondents viewed were not too offensive, vulgar or insulting to them. It is important to mention that more than half respondents felt disgust when watching a particular advertisement and even some of the lost focus on the information that was being sent. Nevertheless, most of the respondents could clearly understand the information or the message that was being sent throughout all of the sample advertisements, proving that although interviewees think that shock advertisement can be offensive, it is still more informative and impacts by making you think, become more aware or change your attitudes or behaviour towards the issue that is being advertised than only offensive or insulting. In a way, advertisement that caused disgust to some respondents caused distress as well. Several participants lost focus of the message being sent because it was too intense to watch the advertisement fully. However, given some time after watching the sample adverts even those respondents that felt disgusted about the advertisement (the ad was about taking fake drugs, a visual impact of a man taking a rat out of his mouth was the
part that caused disgust) they were able to state what was the message being sent and understood the information and consequences of the harmful activity advertised. It could be said that the impact of disgust or distress was merely seconds or minutes and the informational part reached the participants when they came down after the intended primary shock. Therefore the first hypothesis that was raised was proven rejected by these findings.

Although the researched tried to draw a line between the negative and positive aspects and impact of shock advertising, it became to be more dependable on an individual than on a group of people. In other words, a boundary between what one can call offensive and insulting and another one could see as a perfect way to carry out the information about a specific harmful activity was fluctuating due to the personal perception, views, opinions and attitudes of the participants. As it seems, personal perception of people if they are feeling targeted or not, their views or attitudes towards a sensitive topic were a big influencer when determining the difference between the negative and positive aspects of advertisements that use shock appeal. It is important to mention that other factors play an influential part as well, such as: content of the advertisement, age, societal norms and culture.

When talking specifically about culture as a factor, all of the participants agreed that culture does play a part when determining the impact of a shocking ad. However, when discussing more in specific, after the respondents watched the sample advertisement, culture was not the main influencing factor when it came to the impact or the offensiveness of the advertisement. It seems that, although people do believe that cultural background, societal norms and social pressure can influence on only their opinion or attitudes but in some cases even their behaviour, respondents tended to be more individualistic and valued the impact by their own experiences, perceptions or strong opinions. You can state that culture plays an important role while implementing the societal norms, views and opinions when a person is growing up, however this research was more directly linked with establishing the offensive and insulting part within shocking advertisements and determining if they overpower the informative one. Due to these findings the researcher feels that the second hypothesis was rejected as well.

Summarising, it can be said that shocking advertisements can be too offensive or insulting, however they are still capable of carrying the information of the message intended. Although the author established that culture can a factor that influence people to perceive shock appeal in advertisement differently, personal values, norms, opinions and attitudes were established as the most influential factor when it comes not only to the positive or
negative impact of the advertisement but as well to the intent to change attitudes or behaviour.

5.2 Recommendations

The author believes that this work could be continued if reflected to the limitations it had. If continuing the work, the author believes that there could be more work done on other factors that could influence the impact the perception of shock advertisement in the literature review. Furthermore, because as established one of the most influential factors was the personal attitudes, views or opinions, the author suggest taking this factor as a main one and extending the literature analysis; thus providing new issues that could be combined with the research already done.

In addition, the author suggest if continuing to determine the offensive part of shock adverts while linking it with the informative, a broader sample size should be selected to get a better understanding. Even more so, more sample advertisements could be incorporated regarding other sensitive topics or harmful activities that were not analyzed in this research.

If continuing in determining if culture plays a part as a factor when it comes to influencing the impact that shock appeal advertisement carries, the author believes that choosing two main cultures can be more successful in determining not only if the culture is a factor, because it was done in this research, but establishing in more specific how does it influence the impact. There are possibilities to continue a multicultural research, but in that case as the author already mentioned, sample sizes should be increased accordingly to each culture.
References


Mason, J. 2009, Qualitative research, 2nd edn. London: SAGE Publication


Appendices

Appendix 1 Learner Engagement and Reflection

Throughout this dissertation the author feels he gained in general much more academic and practical knowledge that could be used while studying further, in his professional or personal life. The researcher feels that while writing this dissertation he gained knowledge how to structure and properly write a Master degree paper. Furthermore, better understandings on how to determine what is relevant or not within the literature, how to better analyze it and how to start discussions while using secondary data.

When talking specifically about the academic part of this paper, the author gained a much broader perspective and vital knowledge, which he will use in his professional carrier in the future, about marketing communications as a process in general. By analyzing the components, roles that they take and how they work, the author gained a detailed view on how actually a company or a person is communicating with other companies or people. Moreover, throughout analyzing Schramms communication model, the writer was able to take in specific information on how the message is encoded by the company and then decoded by the target audience, which was helpful when going into more detail within the literature review. A better understanding about advertisement as a tool of marketing communication was gained. Most importantly, the researcher gained crucial knowledge about appeals used in advertising on how they are used, how they differ and are similar in the same sense. The most crucial part was directly linked with shock appeal and shock advertisement in specific. Before starting this research the author only knew broadly what shock appeal was and how was it used in advertisement. Throughout extensive literature review the writer gained a broad perspective of knowledge regarding the advantages and disadvantages that this specific appeal contains. Previously done studies were examined to better understand how can shock appeal is used, its effectiveness and impact on social groups, in this case students. Throughout determining the author has learned that there were some areas that, it could be said, lacked research in them, hence it gave way to the primary research part of this dissertation. Throughout extensive reading and with the help of a beneficial literature analysis the author broaden his already had knowledge when it comes to raising issues, determining research questions, establishing objectives and hypotheses.
While already the author had previous experience on how to do formal structured interviews, in this case he gained pivotal experience and a better understanding on how to make, lead and analyse a semi-structured interview. The researcher broadens his understanding on how to make preliminary questions that are directly linked with the objectives, hypotheses and research questions. While it was a new process, he gained much needed information on how to act and to lead a semi-structured interview. Additionally, the researcher never before had done a questioning type called probing, which lead him to gain more data, helped him to explain questions and topics and helped him to ask additional detailed questions that broaden the answers of the respondents. The author had first hand experience on how to transcript the collected data, make it into text-based information and analyze it objectively. Furthermore, due to the fact that this research is based on a sensitive topic, the author was able to learn how to better portray the questions, when to stop and take a minute for the respondent to relax and how to better analyze the general situation and the participants attitude towards a specific advertisement. While analyzing the collected data, the author gained more knowledge on how to be objective, unbiased and truthful at any part of the data analysis process.

Throughout the whole time this research took place the author had a big help from his mentor and was able to meet and discuss the progress several time. Throughout the meetings the researcher gained invaluable experience when it comes to writing a Masters Degree quality thesis. Moreover, the meetings not only helped him with structuring his work in a specific way but determining the relevance of information that is directly linked with the analyzed topic. Throughout the meetings the student responded to the feedback gotten from the mentor and added or changed the sub topics or areas discussed within his dissertation. Through this experience the author learned how to listen better, take in the feedback and make it work in his advantage and adapt and change accordingly to the situation.

When talking about the general experience while writing this academic work, the authors feels that he gained a broad spectrum of knowledge which he is going to use not only in his professional but as well in his personal life. General and detailed academic information was gained throughout an extensive literature analysis and review. More practical approaches how to deal with people and how to communicate while one on one made the interviewing process go smoothly; learned techniques like probing or transcription of the information was a crucial part when it comes to determining the outcome of this research. All in all the author believes that he gained a huge amount of academic and practical knowledge which helped to take this research to a better level.
### Types of Shock Appeals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offense Elicitor</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advertising Exemplars</th>
<th>Published Reactions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disgusting images</td>
<td>References to blood, body parts or secretions, orifices, especially urinary/fecal, gases, odors, disease, parasites, bodily harm (e.g., dismemberment), death and decay</td>
<td>Playstation, United States, 2000 Television commercial wherein chef wipes steak around toilet bowl rim and adds rolled up nose pickings as garnish in preparation for serving.</td>
<td>Bob Garfield, Advertising Age advertising critic, coins new term for such advertising: “advertentities” (Garfield, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual references</td>
<td>References to masturbation, implied sexual acts, sexually suggestive nudity or partial nudity</td>
<td>Reebok, United States, 2000 A guy sucks snake venom out of his friend’s leg in a position that is mistaken for totality by an onlooker.</td>
<td>CBS rejected the advertisement, which “struck some adults as repulsive” (Vranica, 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profanity/obscenity</td>
<td>Swear words, obscene gestures, racial epithets</td>
<td>Holsten Pils, United Kingdom, 1996 Print advertisement depicts smashed bottles of the product accompanied by the word “sh*t.”</td>
<td>Advertisement deemed part of “yobbo advertising” trend—the desire to shock an audience to attention by whatever means possible (Cooper, 1996).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulgarity</td>
<td>References to crude or disabuseful acts by humans or animals, such as nose picking, farting, licking, humping, or drinking from the toilet</td>
<td>Smartpeep, United States, 1999 Woman “lets rip a flat-house blast” of gas while waiting for date to join her in car.</td>
<td>Pushes the limits of bad taste (Vagnoni, 1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impropriety</td>
<td>Violations of social conventions for dress, manners, etc.</td>
<td>Adidas, Canada, 1992 Magazine advertisement depicts all-nude male soccer team.</td>
<td>Sports Illustrated rejected the advertisement because the male nudity was considered offensive by the magazine (Advertising Age International, 1993).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral offensiveness</td>
<td>Harming innocent people/animals, gratuitous violence or sex, alluding to people or objects that provoke violence (e.g., Hitler), violating standards for fair behavior (e.g., shooting a person in the back), putting children in provocative situations (e.g., sexual, violent), victim exploitation</td>
<td>Diesel Jeans, Italy, 1998 Television commercial features a soldier who is shot in the back by a German sniper while protecting a friend wearing Diesel jeans.</td>
<td>Written complaints to British Advertising Standards Authority; the press tags the campaign “controversial” (Financial Post, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious taboos</td>
<td>Inappropriate use of spiritual or religious symbols and/or rituals</td>
<td>Benetton, 1994 Depicts a priest and nun kissing</td>
<td>Campaign designed to shock and provoke (Marketing Week, 1994)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1 Types of Shock Appeals. Source: Dahl et al. (2003)

The author summarises the above table in his own, smaller version, to better adapt while questioning the respondents. Furthermore, the researcher feels that without giving specific examples he is more objective and unbiased when it comes to the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shocking variables</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral offensiveness</td>
<td>Harming innocent people/animals, gratuitous violence or sex, alluding to people or objects that provoke violence (e.g., Hitler), violating standards for fair behaviour (e.g., shooting a person in the back), putting children in provocative situations (e.g., sexual, violent), victim exploitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious taboos</td>
<td>Inappropriate use of spiritual or religious symbols and/or rituals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2 Summary of Types of Shock appeal.

Appendix 4: Types of advertisement appeals
The author explains that this research is more to do with the emotional appeals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Emotional</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rational</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humour</td>
<td>Profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shock</td>
<td>Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arousal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nostalgia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.3 Made by author, based on Fill (2009), Belch and Belch (2012), Medcalf (2004) and other author separation of appeals.

Appendix 6: Research participants
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Andorran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lithuanian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4 Research participants by age, gender and nationality. Source: author.

Appendix 6: Guideline interview questions

These questions were only used as guidelines, although some of them were asked directly or similarly as they are established here, other ones were not asked at all or were changed by the answers the respondents were giving out. The author believes he did not cross any lines, were objective and unbiased throughout the whole research.

Interview preliminary questions

1. Age

2. Gender

3. Nationality

Before showing the ads:

1. Could you describe what advertising is in your own words?

2. How does advertising impact you? (Awareness, purchase, changes attitudes)?
3. On what does it depend what impact does the advertising have on you? (Your needs, the product, the company)

4. Do you know what are appeals used in advertising? Can you name some of them? (If not these are some of the appeals many authors specify, this research is based on emotional appeal. While looking through the list can you recall if you have ever seen any advertisements with the emotional appeals like humour, shock, etc.?)

5. Do you know what shock appeal or shock advertising is, describe in your own words?

6. What are your views regarding shock advertising as a type of advertisement?

7. Do you remember any examples of shock advertisement that you have see? How did they affect you? What was the company, product or cause advertised?

8. In your own opinion, what would you describe as being shocking in an advertisement? (A list of shocking attributes within the advertisements is provided below, if you can’t name in your own words what was shocking for you).

9. Have you ever seen a shocking advertising regarding a social issue (smoking, drinking, drunk driving)? Impact of it to you?

10. Do you think that using this type of appeal (shock appeal) within social issue advertisement is effective and a good approach to the problems?

11. Do you think that shock appeal can be over-offensive or insulting?

12. How would it change your attitudes or views regarding the product, company or issue being advertised if it was over offensive or insulting? (Pay less attention to the ad and/or the issue, disregard the ad and/or the issue?)

13. What would better fit your culture: individualism or collectivism? (Individualists are people who tend to keep their own opinion, for example, they see an anti smoking ad, they change their attitudes and they change their behaviour because of their own
opinion. Collectivists – people that have their opinion influenced by social pressure from their family, friends, government, society or societal and cultural norms).

14. How social pressure from family, friends or others changes your attitudes or behaviour?

15. Would social pressure play a part in determining that advertising is over-offensive, insulting and vulgar? (Let’s say your family members think that an advertisement is insulting, do you consider there opinion or take their side?)

16. Did you encounter a lot of shock or even shock advertising while growing up?

17. In your opinion, can culture be stated as a factor when it comes to shock advertising? People from different cultures can understand the ad differently?

18. In your view, offensiveness and vulgarity of the advertisement depends on the cultural background of the consumer? People from one culture can be more offended that people from a different culture?

Questions after watching advertisements

19. Do you remember the advertisements and the causes they were advertising? Can you tell me which of the ads shocked you the most? What was the ad about?

20. What was the impact you got from the advertisements? (Feelings, emotions, reaction)?

21. Would you consider changing your behaviour or at least attitudes after watching these advertisements shocking advertisements? Why did you make this decision?

22. Do you remember any advertisements that in your eyes could be called offensive, or was over-offensive or insulting to you?
23. Can you recall what made the advertising too offensive? If none of the ads were offensive, hypothetically, what do you think would shock you in the advertisement?

24. Does it change your perception of the issue advertised because the advertisement was too offensive? Are you more likely to pay less attention to that specific social problem?

25. Do you think shock appeal in advertisement is more offensive and disgusting than informative? What makes you think like that?

26. How did the advertisements using shock appeal affect you when it comes to the cause they were advertising? Did they make you think, be more conscious, more aware, change attitudes or behaviour towards something?

27. Can you state any other emotions that you felt while watching the ads?

28. Would you agree that using shock appeal in advertisements that are about social problems are more effective than other appeals or more traditional approaches?

29. Would you say that similar advertisements are common in your culture? Regarding social issues and problems, through shock appeal.

30. Would you say that causes and problems established within the advertisements are relevant and common in your culture? What are the main ones, how do they impact you and your country?

Appendix 7: Sample advertisements
Disclaimer!

The advertisements chosen by the researcher for this dissertation were professionally done by the advertising companies and representing bodies. The author of this paper has no copyright to these advertisements. More importantly, the author does not claim any entitlement or recognition towards these ads, the ideas, context or individual components that makes these ads what they are. Advertisements were found online, where they can be publicly accessed. The author uses these specific ads to help in making his research, hence he informs all of the respondents that all of the advertisements are not his and he has no material or other value of them.

Advertisements used

All of the advertisements are provided with they original links to the internet page Youtube, additional links and a play list link, furthermore CD copies are attached to the printed submissions to save time and have multiple choices of viewing the advertisements.

Road safety 1:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vri1nR_gdoo or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1uh7jTit7U&list=UUNLpjjiI-MeUgBTBrYmRHg

Road safety 2:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YAeONUxdX8 or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOflk-paSPo&list=UUNLpjjiI-MeUgBTBrYmRHg&index=1#

Anti smoking ad:
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=shocking+anti+smoking+ad&page=1 or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dm2sZh28eqM&index=6&list=UUNLpjjiI-MeUgBTBrYmRHg

Drug use ad 1:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwu7L38glcQ  or  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0B1y6KeJUQ&index=4&list=UUNLpjjiI-MeUgBTBrgYmRHg

Drug use ad 2:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skZKOUAnHiM  or  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9ijMqyeaUY&index=3&list=UUNLpjjiI-MeUgBTBrgYmRHg

Drunk driving:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpYq9CBZoKQ  or  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRRNp7Ov-Dk&index=7&list=UUNLpjjiI-MeUgBTBrgYmRHg

Play list link:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcic-M_WMI7O1cuZLpyfWbSHkmRqLVfqP