Subvertising - Conceptualization, Motivation, and Outcomes

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Abstract

There is an exponential increase in events involving subvertising both online and in the real world. Though popular media are increasingly discussing the topic, there are gaps in the academic literature on subvertising, as it is very limited. The purpose of this study was therefore to close these gaps by investigating the conceptualization of subvertising, the motivation for engaging in subvertising, and the outcomes of it, both for subvertisers themselves and for those that are targeted.

The study was carried out using a qualitative inductive approach, in which grounded theory was used to obtain and interpret data. The data was gathered from secondary data, as news articles and YouTube videos were collected from popular media. A thematic narrative analysis was used to get an understanding of "*what*" rather than "*how*", and to focus on the themes around which articles are told (Reissman, 2008). The data collected was coded according to Gioia's methodology. This helped the authors generate categories and subcategories that were used to answer the research questions.

The findings of the study revealed that the conceptualization of subvertising can be explained by the definition, target, type, defense, and evolution. The motivation for engaging in subvertising can be explained by the environment, inclusion and diversity, capitalism, and social. Lastly, the public, government, and corporate helped explain the outcomes of subvertising. The intergenerational justice theory was used to support these findings, as it can be linked to the underlying reasons for subvertising.

The study presents five theoretical implications where the authors discuss how they are contributing to the literature on the topic, and consider five practical implications they are providing to subvertisers and other activists, corporations, governments, and the public in general.

This study is of great novelty because it is filling the gaps in the existing literature on subvertising because of its comprehensiveness that looks at the conceptualization, the motives, and outcomes. It provides a clear definition that separates subvertising from other similar concepts by specifying its boundary conditions, which have previously been vague.

Acknowledgment

This thesis marks the end of a two-year-long journey to obtain our master's degree in International Business. It has been a meaningful period where we have grown both academically and personally.

Getting to this point, where we are completing our master's degree with a thesis that we are proud of, would not have been possible without Amandeep Dhir, who has been our supervisor. Amandeep has continuously supported us in the process of writing this thesis and guided us past every obstacle we have faced. His knowledge has been of tremendous importance to us.

In addition, we are grateful for the journalists and individual media content creators in popular news forums for their research and work that covers topics of relevancy. Without their contribution, we would have had no data to work with.

As this chapter closes, we are hopeful for the next chapters to come.

Kristiansand, Norway

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List of Acronyms

COP   Conference of the Parties

DIY   Do-It-Yourself

EU   European Union

GDPR   General Data Protection Regulation

IJT   Intergenerational Justice Theory

RQ   Research Question

TNA   Thematic Narrative Analysis

UK   United Kingdom

UN   United Nations

1 Introduction

This section presents the background of this study, covering the relevance of the topic, the urgent need to study this, key research gaps, research questions and objectives, theoretical framework, delimitations, and finally the structure of this study.

1.1 Background

Advertising is something we surround ourselves with almost anywhere we go. Huge billboards and posters scream "*sale*" and nearly force you to buy their products and services. By watching your favorite show on television, you are interrupted by commercial breaks that are trying their hardest to catch your attention (Cheng & Riffe, 2008, p. 192). Public spaces are taken over by powerful corporations showing off their efforts towards the environment and sustainability (Nagar, 2015, p. 153). Do consumers have a choice to not look at advertisements? If consumers are forced to look at the advertisements, is it not fair to question powerful corporations and have the right to answer back? This is what subvertisers are working with.

Subvertising is the act or movement of altering or completely changing the intention and meaning of advertisements (Lekakis, 2021, p. 741). Subvertisers are those activists that engage in these activities, look at advertisement as a problem in today's society, and aim to take back public space. The uprising of consumer culture and the emergence of subvertisers as a form of activism has provoked debates around the role of advertisement in society, and the effect it has on consumers. Several governments and cities share the same view as these activists. In 2007, the Clean City Law was enacted by Sao Paulo in Brazil, banning all forms of outdoor adverts as they were classified as a form of visual pollution. Less than a decade later, Grenoble, a city in France, also banned outdoor advertising to free the public space from advertising so that areas for public expression could be developed (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 47). To get a ban or stricter regulations on advertisement is the goal of subvertisers.

Prior literature reveals that subvertising is a creative act that disrupts day-to-day life to tackle environmental, political, and social issues that are of urgent importance to our society (Lekakis, 2021). This type of action can cause an emotional response, and encourage people to question the source of advertisement (Britland, 2020; Nelson et al., 2020). An example of this is from Paris in December 2015. In total, 600 art pieces were replaced by around 80 subvertisers

that came together to expose "*corporate green-washing*" (Heilpern, 2016). The invasion included attacks where advertisements for the aviation, automotive, and fossil fuel industry were tampered with to catch the attention and responses of by-passers. The United Nation's annual climate change conference, which in 2015 was named COP21 and held in Paris, gathers delegates from around the world intending to reach a binding agreement on reducing carbon emissions (O'Neil, 2015). One of the groups behind the subvertising attack on COP21 argued that climate talks should not be left in the hands of politicians and corporate lobbyists, as they are the ones behind this problem in the first place (O'Neil, 2015).

The attack on COP21 is just one example of a subvertising attack. Popular media have increasingly been discussing various incidents where subvertisers have targeted special events or companies, as the attacks are happening more frequently than before. However, if we look into the academic literature on subvertising, there are gaps. The literature on subvertising is quite limited, and most of the literature that the authors found was conceptual in nature. Today, there is an absence of a definition of subvertising that explains what it stands for and lack of a clear boundary condition that separates it from other concepts that share similarities. Understanding what subvertising stands for and its boundaries are important so that one can delineate a definition of subvertising. However, it is not only the definition and the boundaries that are critical. After doing a literature review, there seems to be a lack of understanding as to why activists are engaging in subvertising and the outcomes of it for both subvertisers and the targeted parties. It is important to study the definition and conceptualization of subvertising with a focus on understanding the motives and outcomes of it. The authors believe that this kind of awareness would enable scholars and practitioners to better understand the phenomenon, which is important as this is part of citizens' initiatives and political activism. For the brands and companies that are targeted, and hence concerned about the increasing subvertising attacks, understanding the phenomenon is important to prevent future attacks, and to learn how to defend themselves.

This study therefore provides a topic that is of great importance to multiple stakeholders, such as brands, corporations, activists, and governments. Trying to give the readers an understanding of this issue is what this study is all about. Figure 1 illustrates the aim of this study, which is to conceptualize subvertising by focusing on creating a clear definition,

understanding what the motives for engaging in subvertising are, and what the different outcomes of it are. These three things combined will provide a better understanding of the conceptualization.

Figure 1. Overview of the Goal of the Study
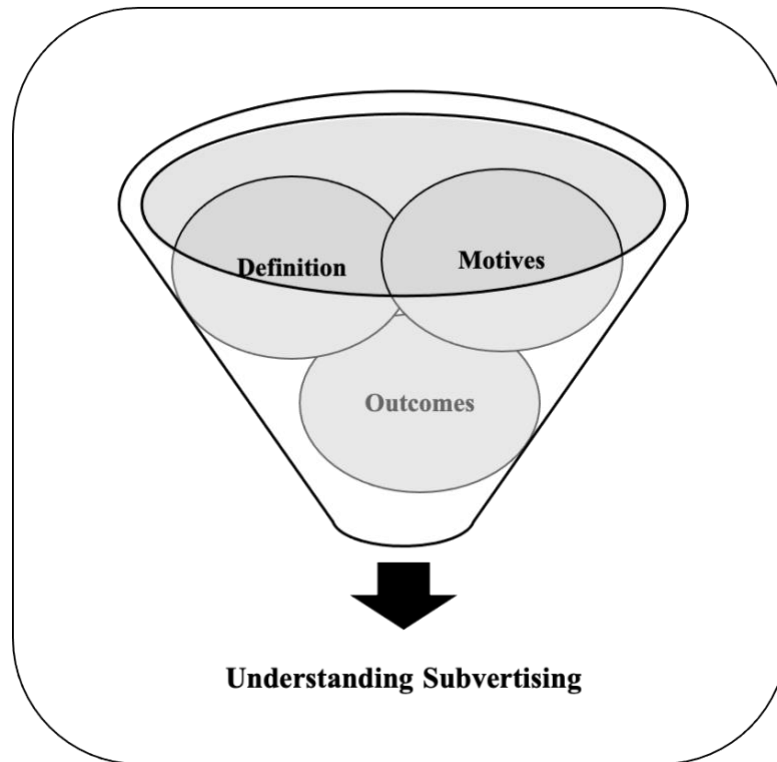
1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

Since there was no consensus on the definition of subvertising in prior literature, and because several other concepts have been used interchangeably with subvertising, it has been challenging to bring the research on subvertising forward. The goal of this study was therefore to focus on conceptualization, which refers to clearly defining subvertising and its conceptual boundaries concerning how subvertising is similar or dissimilar to other concepts so that the overlap with other concepts is clear. The second goal of this study was to understand the motivations behind engaging in subvertising, and what the outcomes of it are, in terms of those who participate in subvertising, and those that are targeted.

Two research questions were therefore constructed (see Figure 2): **RQ1** How does popular media conceptualize subvertising? **RQ2** What are the various motives and outcomes of subvertising?

Figure 2. Overview of Research Questions of this Study
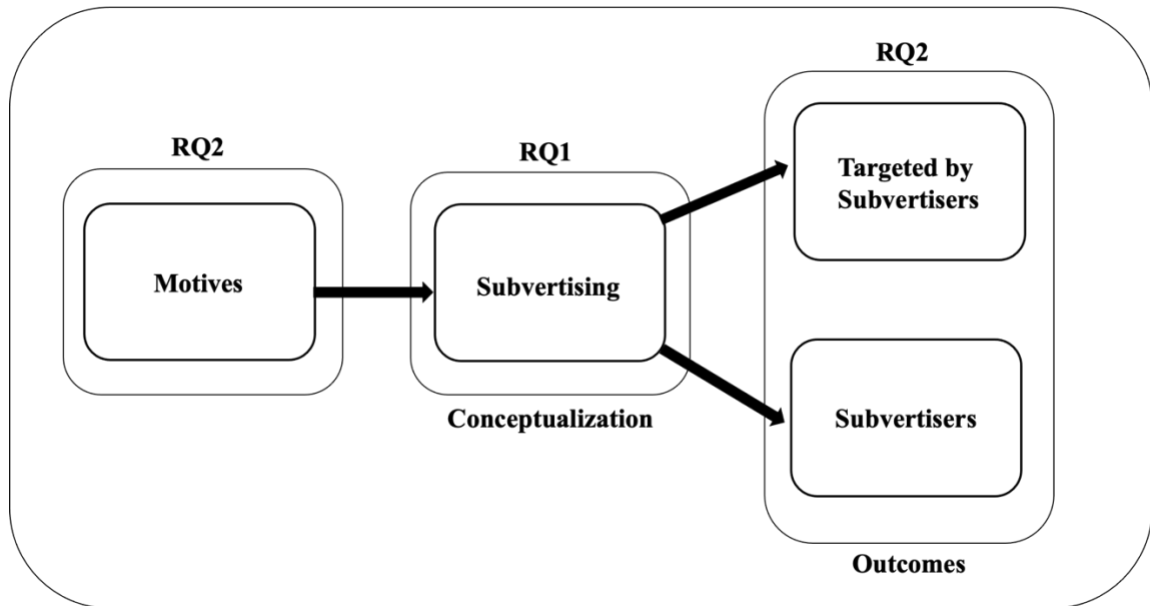
1.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in this study is based on the principles of the intergenerational justice theory (IJT). The theory is used to help clarify the concept of subvertising, and its motives and outcomes. To the authors' best knowledge, to date, no other academic research has utilized the IJT to better understand the conceptualization of subvertising. The IJT is based on that we have a responsibility to forward a specific amount of resources to future generations so that they are left with the same opportunities as the past and current generations (Hendlin, 2014, p. 8). However, theorists have different opinions regarding what needs to be left to future generations to secure them justice. On one hand, weak sustainability theorists believe that technology and other forms of capital can substitute natural capital as long as all the needs of future generations are met. While on the other hand, strong sustainability theorists believe that replacing technology and other forms of capital with natural capital is not acceptable and fair, as technology cannot replace natural resources (Hendlin, 2014, pp. 7-8).

Figure 3 offers an overview of the IJT and explains how the current generation has a moral responsibility and obligation to consume and transfer a relative amount of resources to the future generations as the previous generations left the current one with.

Figure 3. Intergenerational Justice Theory
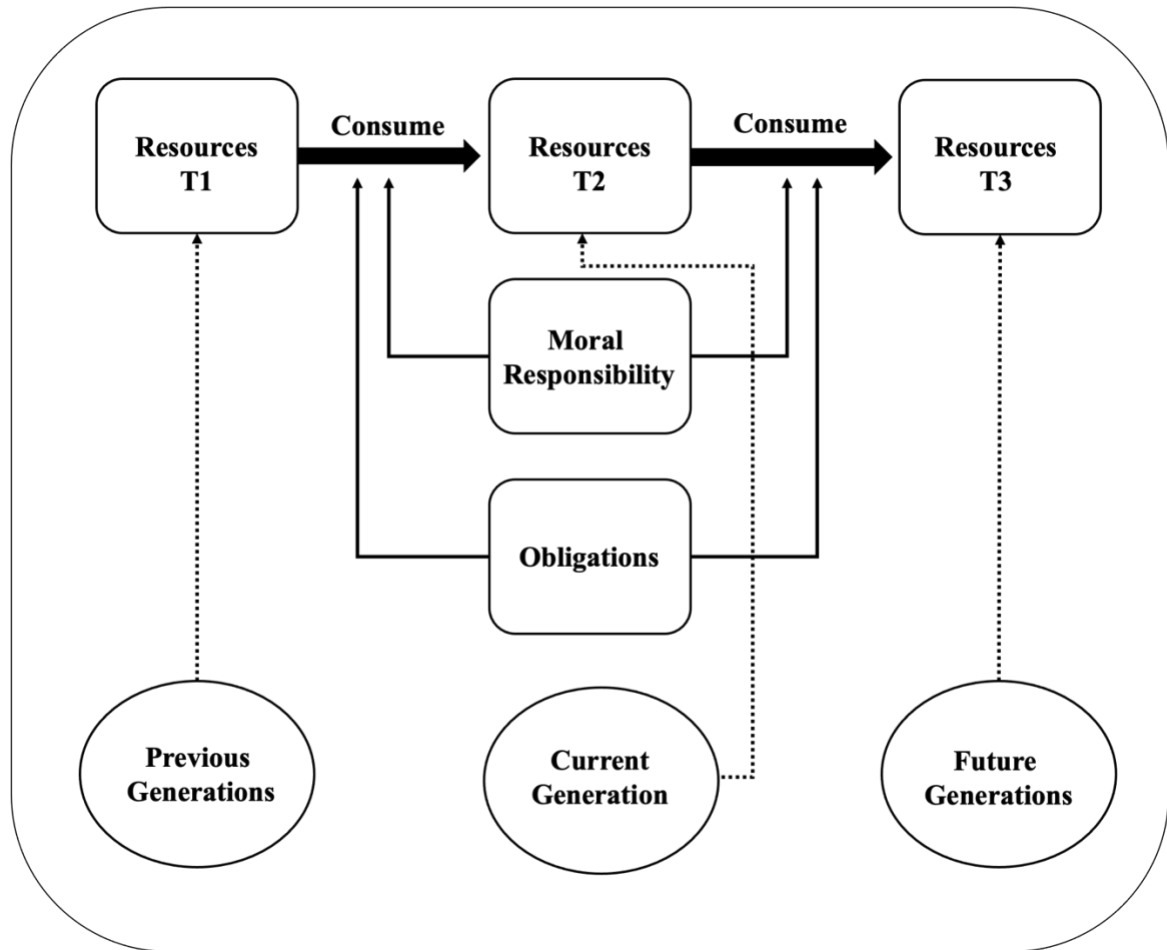
Note. *T3 > T2 > T1* where T1 is time 1, T2 is time 2, and T3 is time 3.

The IJT is grounded in the principles of justice as the theory, as mentioned, is all about securing justice between present and future generations, justice between young and old, and justice between family generations (Tremmel, 2009, p. 4). Public discussions on IJT normally revolve around financial, environmental, and cultural policies amongst other things (Tremmel, 2009, p. 9), to make sure that the current society has policies that are considerate to the future generations. Parallels can be drawn to subvertising, as activists that engage in subvertising are demanding justice, and works to address social and ecological issues by exposing corporations

that are greenwashing their operations, and by holding those in charge accountable for unfulfilled promises and poor management of resources. Due to the similarities, the theory was used as a lens to understand what subvertising is, how it happens, why it happens, and when it happens, so that conceptualization of subvertising could be done.

The theory was also used to understand the motivation for engaging in subvertising, and the outcomes of it. Like the IJT, subvertisers feel a moral responsibility and obligation to secure justice by not letting advertisements, corporations, and those in charge act in a way that is not in the common public's best interest. Subvertisers are hoping for an outcome where industries are becoming more considerate of the environment and not only profit-oriented, and consumption is being reduced so that we stop consuming more than we need. On the other hand, they are fearing the outcome where our actions through overconsumption and ignorance have gone so far that they cause damage to the planet's natural resources and the environment that are irreversible.

1.4 Delimitations

Delimitations refers to limitations that authors set when conducting research (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018, p. 157). These should always be reported to improve the quality and interpretation of the findings (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018, p. 161). The study aims to better understand the conceptualization of subvertising and its boundaries, with a focus on understanding the motives and its outcomes. To achieve such focus, the authors made three choices concerning the delimitations of this study. The first was to create a boundary that was linked to the research questions. The second was choosing a specific method and keywords. The third was to set a criterion for the language of the data, and a time span for the data collection period.

The authors found three gaps in the prior literature. First, as mentioned previously, prior literature on subvertising is quite limited since there are only a few existing studies. Second, the existing studies, which are limited, are mostly conceptual, where they give an overview of certain issues, but which lack empirical evidence. Strong empirical evidence is therefore missing in the literature as to why subvertising is happening, and why activists are engaging in it. Third, most of the available literature is event specific, meaning that it has looked into certain situations where conferences and governments such as COP21, Turkey, and Porto in Lisbon have been

targeted. Because of this, there is an understanding of the subvertisers' motivation for acting in a certain way, and the outcomes of the attacks, in those events. However, due to the literature not being comprehensive, and covering all aspects of the phenomenon, there are at the moment missing studies that give an overall picture of subvertising and attacks that have happened. Such studies are needed so that one can better understand the concept of subvertising and the overall motives and outcomes of it.

Due to these gaps, the authors conducted a thematic narrative analysis (TNA) on popular news media on subvertising. TNA examines the content of the story and themes around which stories are told and focuses on "*what*" is being addressed rather than "*how*" (Riessman, 2008). The authors relied on data from the popular press, online media content, and other publicly available online content that was relevant. To find literature from the three different sources, the search was limited to the following four keywords that were drawn based on an exhaustive review of the existing literature: "*brandalism*", "*culture jamming**", "*ad busting**", and "*subvertising*". The search was narrowed into those four terms, as the three first concepts are used synonymously with subvertising. By including the synonyms, the authors obtained richer data, while also getting additional information that would give a better understanding of what subvertising is and its boundaries. Additionally, limiting the keywords was done purposely to reduce the search results and to get material that had a precise focus and would help to answer the research questions.

The authors utilized a specific criterion while collecting qualitative data, which was that at least half of the content had to be in English for it to be included in the study. Data that was not relevant or did not help answer the two research questions were not included. The authors did not incorporate any time restrictions on the collected data, meaning that everything that had been published about subvertising until the last day of data collection period was included. The data therefore covered a timeframe from February 1999 to April 2023. The data collection period spanned from the 16th of January 2023 to the 25th of May 2023. News articles and videos published after this date were not included in this study. The data that did not specify a date of publication was marked as n.d..

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The study is divided into five chapters, each of these serving a specific purpose to answer the research questions. The first chapter introduces the thesis, which explains the background, research questions and objectives, the theoretical framework, and delimitations. The second chapter presents the conceptualization of subvertising before the relation of similar concepts are being introduced and discussed later in the chapter to distinguish the concepts from each other. The third chapter outlines the research methodology and explains how data was collected and analyzed. For this qualitative study, a thematic narrative approach was used with data collected from the popular media. Furthermore, the quality of the data and how the authors ensured accuracy are discussed. The results of the study are examined in chapter four. In the last chapter, the authors discuss the results of the study by reflecting on the different research questions and by answering them, before explaining the theoretical and practical implications. Finally, it concludes with the limitations of the study and suggestions for future studies.

2 Literature Review

A literature review is the selection of available documents about a topic that are both published and unpublished (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020, p. 64). To get an understanding of the topic, to know how it has been researched previously, and which issues needs to be addressed, it is important to conduct a review of the literature (Hart, 2018, pp. 2-3). Literature is a key resource to justify an approach when selecting a method, and when trying to prove that the research contributes something new to how one sees things. However, a literature review can only be a helpful resource when it is of quality. For it to have good quality, it must have breadth and depth, and be consistent, exact, clear, and effective (Hart, 2018, p. 2).

In this study, the literature review started by examining existing literature on *"subvertising"*, by using an academic database called Scopus. Scopus is a well-known database that was developed by a high number of research institutions and academics. Those who developed it claim that it is the "*largest single abstract and indexing database ever built*" (Burnham, 2006, p. 1). The result after the first search on Scopus suggested that there were only 15 published academic articles about "*subvertising*", which consisted of journals, conference papers, book chapters, and reviews. The 15 articles, which were carefully examined and read thoroughly, disclosed that scholars have used different terminologies to present subvertising. These terminologies were "*culture jamming*", "*brandalism*", and "*adbusting*", and have been used interchangeably with subvertising in the existing literature. The three new sets of keywords, in addition to subvertising, were used to do another search on Scopus. The search result revealed that there were 102 articles published on these topics. Both searches were conducted on the 13th of January 2023 and covered a timeframe from 1974 to 2023. After careful examination of these 102 articles, it was found that 66 of these were English peer-reviewed journals. When investigating these articles, it was discovered that most of these studies were conceptual and that empirical evidence is limited.

The literature review consists of two parts. First, the authors introduce subvertising and what has been written about it in the existing literature. Then, similar concepts that are used interchangeably with subvertising are introduced, and how they are relating to each other is addressed. In the final part of this chapter, the theoretical background is presented. Here, IJT is discussed as it has been used to understand subvertising and its motives and outcomes.

2.1 What is Subvertising?

Subvertising has in the literature been described as either a movement or a set of tactics used by activists (Lekakis, 2021, p. 740). Subvertising consists of the words "*subvert*" and "*advertising*". To subvert means to manipulate, change, and turn a situation around and look at it from another side (Toly, 2004, pp. 35-36). "*Advert*" is a casual word for advertisement and means "*turn towards*" when used as a verb (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2020, p. 8). By giving information or generating positive feelings, advertising is designed to turn us to a product or service (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2020, p. 8). Advertising has been around since the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, but advertising as we know it today is believed to have begun in the nineteenth century. It was the New York Sun, a newspaper, that challenged the model at the time and became able to support itself through paid adverts in the late 1830s. The newspaper started to see its readers as a product rather than customers and sold them to advertisers to generate revenue (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2020, p. 4). According to Dr. Robert Heath, who is an advertising researcher, advertising works on a subconscious level because it can create a reaction in us even though we are not actively aware of it, or cannot recall it (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 26). Raoul and Bonner (2019) write in their book about subvertising, that advertising is good at creating needs amongst people but is bad at meeting their promises. Opponents of advertising are acting against it because they believe that advertising is dominantly shaping the cultural values of society (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, pp. 28-32). People living in a capital city see thousands of advertisements a day (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 26). Throughout the decades, different activists and groups have used techniques to reduce the power advertising has over peoples' lives. Subvertising, which is one of them, aims to interrupt and modify urban advertising space and take control of it (Dekeyser, 2021, p. 309). Activists that get involved in these acts are often referred to as "*subvertisers*".

The definition of subvertising is not clear in the academic literature and varies across different sources and contexts. As there are multiple interpretations and definitions of the phenomenon, it adds to the complexity of understanding its exact nature of scope. One definition used in the literature is "*Subvertising (aka culture jamming) is the act of subverting advertising 'correct', distort or completely replace its meaning*" (Lekakis, 2021, p. 741). This definition highlights what subvertisers do but does not explain how or where. Another definition is by

Dekeyser (2021), which is describing subvertising as "... *the practice of enacting illicit, material interventions into billboards, digital advertising screens, bus shelter advertising and a wider plethora of spaces that make up the outdoor advertising landscape.*" (p. 310). This definition gives more insight into the physical aspect of subvertising but is marking subvertising as an illicit activity when it can be argued to also be legal.

Activism is the act of trying to make both political and social changes, and not accept the world for what it is today. It is deliberate actions that can be done through demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, and civil disobedience to attain social change (Cammaerts, 2007, p. 217). The role of activists is to challenge the status quo, and they use the tension between how things are versus how it should be to motivate changes (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, p. 397). The function of activism can be many. For example, it can be informational, where the goal is to inform people about issues, and it can have the function of raising issues or seeking solutions amongst other things (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, p. 398). However, one of the most frequently discussed functions of subvertisers is to combat consumerism. Most people think of consumerism as the act of buying things. However, consumerism is much more than just buying and consuming products. It is also about how companies convince people what their needs are, and how they try to influence consumer behaviors through advertising. People's needs are no longer fundamental necessities such as water, food, and safety. In society today, there is a shared thought that one need materialistic things to gain status such as nice clothes, expensive cars, and big houses. To feel that they participate fully in society, people shop because they are convinced that they need to do it (Woodson, 2013, p. 111). The literature argues that subvertisers are not simply for or against consumerism and advertising, rather they aim to disrupt the influence of advertising, and it also presents different ways of resistance where the concern is about public well-being, democracy, and the environment (Lekakis, 2021, p. 754).

Scholars argue that subvertisers are altering the message of advertisements to take back public space from brands as they consider advertising to be visual pollution (Somerville, 2019, p. 110). Visual pollution is described as outdoor advertisement, amongst other things, that has an overloaded effect of clutter, and excess of graphics and objects in the landscape (Chmielewski et al., 2016, p. 801). Prior research suggests that frequently used strategies by subvertisers are removing or changing advertising on billboards, graffiti, and media pranks (Dekeyser, 2021, p.

309), with the use of slogans, parodies, and photoshop (Frederick et al., 2016, p. 171). These alterations are made from corporate and political advertisements to make a statement (Gatti et al., 2015, p. 672) to promote topics such as human rights and environmental protection (Somerville, 2019, p. 99). Furthermore, the reach of their activities extends beyond physical spaces, as subvertising efforts are often shared online. One example is from a subvertising group that has shared a guide on how to open the advertisement shell on bus stops to replace the advertisement (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, pp. 58-64) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Instructions: Bus Stop ad Spaces (Brandalism, 2016)
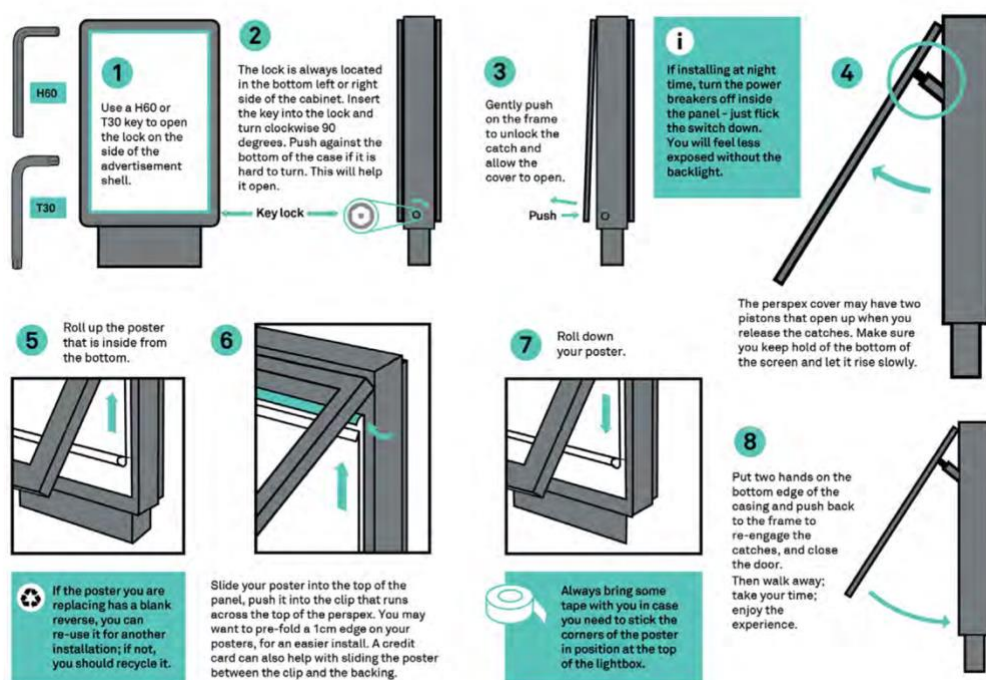
Scholars further suggest that various activities or strategies used in subvertising are aiming to reveal certain corporations' flaws and their hypocrisy (Frederick et al., 2016, p. 171; Somerville, 2019, p. 99). Examples are corporations' profit-oriented mindset, aggressive lobbying tactics, and greenwashing tactics. Greenwashing can be explained as an act of spreading misleading or wrong information about a company's environmental practices or the benefits they offer (Baum, 2012, p. 424). The concept of greenwashing was first coined by Jay Westerveld in 1986 who described the hypocrisy of hotels trying to benefit financially with their environmental stewardship, by having guests reuse towels but at the same time not making

changes in areas such as waste recycling (Pearson, 2010, p. 39). The topic is still of relevance today, as more and more consumers are becoming concerned about the environmental impact of the products and services they use (Baum, 2012, pp. 425-426).

The outcomes of subvertising in the literature have been questionable. Frederick et al. (2016) study examined whether women exposed to thin-ideal media commercials that are tampered with report better body image. The outcome of this study concluded that subvertising had no significant effect on body image, questioning the effectiveness of using subvertising to improve body image. Debord, the Situationist leader, believed in the 1950s and 1960s that subvertising would not be able to jam a culture (Gilman-Opalsky, 2013, p. 3). One study argues that "*Subvertising at its best is like a skip on a record that the needle passes over with a minor interruption*" (Gilman-Opalsky, 2013, p. 3). However, subvertising has been suggested to possibly be effective for both artists and activists to raise awareness about the negative impacts consumerism and the advertising industry has on the environment (Lekakis, 2017).

2.1.1 Concepts Related to Subvertising

The four main topics and search words for this study, culture jamming, subvertising, adbusting, and Brandalism, have been used interchangeably in the literature. To avoid confusion for the reader, Figure 5 was constructed. This diagram is a concentric circle diagram that shows how subvertising and similar concepts are related. The diagram starts with culture jamming in the outermost circle, which is the concept that the remaining three originate from. Next comes subvertising which is the main topic of this study. Then comes adbusting, before Brandalism is placed in the innermost circle. Each of these four concepts will be explained in detail.

Figure 5. Concentric Circle Diagram of Subvertising and Related Concepts
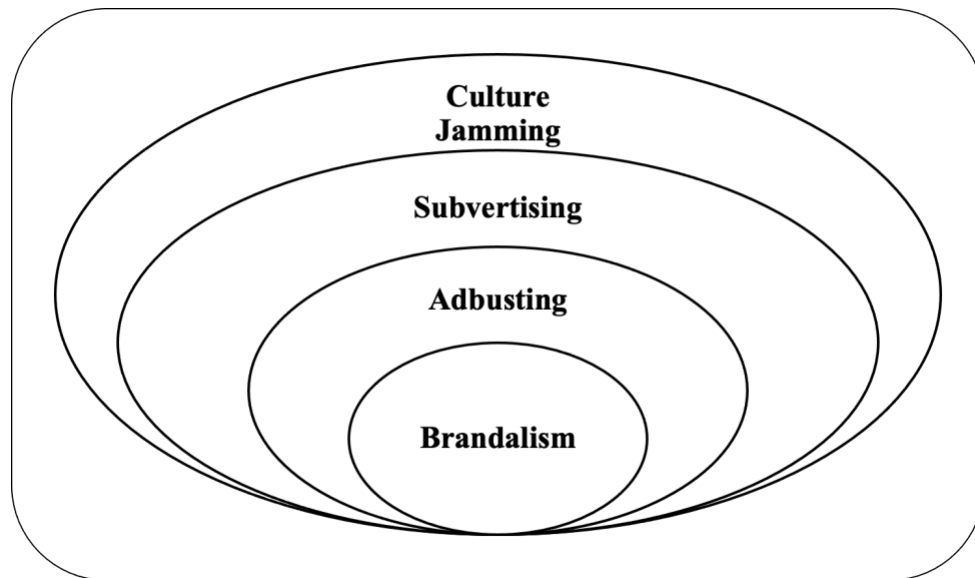
Culture jamming originated in 1984 when it was coined by the band Negativland (Wettergren, 2009, p. 2). Defined as an organized, social activists' effort, culture jamming is an expressive outlet (Carducci, 2006, p. 129), where the activists imitate and satirize commercial messages (Carducci, 2006, p. 117). Culture jammers consist of media activists and groups, who seek to disrupt the messages that promote global capitalism. Corporations are using branding techniques developed by marketing firms, whose goal is to persuade the public to trust the brand and its products. By targeting people's emotions, the attempt is to achieve unconditional trust in the brand. The use of calculated emotional appeals limits people from making rational choices (Warner, 2007, p. 18). To challenge and question these types of messages, culture jammers use a tactic called rhetorical sabotage by altering the corporations' use of images and emotions (Warner, 2007, p. 19). As with corporations and advertising firms, culture jammers also seek to trigger the audience emotionally. By altering images, it creates unexpected events or pieces of information. The goal is that this will generate a moral shock amongst the viewers so that emotions like fear, shame, shock, and anger will arise. Such feelings are the foundation of creating social action (Sandlin & Callahan, 2009, pp. 93-94).

Activists seek to bring noise into the signal, by interrupting, sabotaging, pranking, or blocking the power structures that are controlling cultural life. Many modern culture jammers

believe that their work is based on the Situationists, which were experimental artists based in Europe during the 1950s and 1960s (Harold, 2004, p. 192). They subverted existing political and commercial words to reclaim them. Their main strategy was détournement, which can be translated as "*detour*" or "*diversion*". Guy Debord, who was the leader of the Situationists, believed that people's lives were being run over by "*spectacle*". Détournement was a strategy used to reduce that spectacle. This could be done by, for example, rephrasing conversations between characters in comic strips, modifying the sign on a store, or subverting government and commercial images (Harold, 2004, p. 192). Kalle Lasn, who is a modern media activist and a culture jammer, says the main goal of culture jammers is détournement. According to Lasn, the activists seek to make a change in one's everyday life by reclaiming the identity they believe has been lost to corporations and consumer capitalism (Warner, 2007, p. 21). Many culture jammers today are relying on parody and hoaxes as strategies. However, the Situationists were against using parody as a strategy as they believed it was not an effective strategy to get the "*truth*" out (Harold, 2004, p. 192).

Culture jamming and subvertising are two distinct forms of subversive advertising, but when considered vis-a-vis, they both share the common goal of challenging and disrupting mainstream consumer culture. Culture jamming is the foundation of subvertising and is where subvertisers get their inspiration from. Looking at history, subvertising traces back to being used in Europe during the 1950s by the Situationists to reclaim public space using political and commercial rhetoric (Harold, 2004, p. 192). Out of their strategies, détournement was a technique used to repurpose or rerouting existing images, texts, or other cultural artifacts against itself (Gilman-Opalsky, 2013, p. 3). This is the same technique that subvertisers are using. In other words, subvertisers can be explained as culture jammers who alter advertisements by adding graphical symbols (Gatti et al., 2015, p. 670), or by completely replacing the original meaning (Lekakis, 2021, p. 741). A difference between subvertising and culture jamming that is worth noting is that subvertising is dependent on existing media formats (Gilman-Opalsky, 2013, p. 15). Subvertisers base their work on previous advertisements for alteration, while culture jamming uses branding techniques from marketing firms. However, both culture jamming and subvertising share the same goal of disrupting the stream of popular media and challenging societal norms.

Adbusting is a form of subversive advertising, or rather anti-advertising, where individuals or groups tamper with existing commercials to promote social, political, and environmental issues (Maier & Mafael, 2022, p. 2). It consists of "*ad*", which is short for advertising, and "*busting*" which can be explained as deleting or altering. It is a tool for activists to take a proactive approach to advertising infringement in the public, and allows them to interact with people in the community (Bell & Goodwin, 2012, pp. 12-13). The term is used synonymously with "*subvertising*", and they share the same techniques (Maier & Mafael, 2022, p. 3). Figure 6 shows subvertisers in action as they are taking over a billboard with their work.

Figure 6. Brandalism vs HSBC Subvertising Posters (Bonner, 2020)

Just like subvertisers, activists that get involved in these acts are referred to as "a*dbusters*". Adbusting originated from the Canada-based activist magazine "*Adbusters*" which draws on the same strategies. It was founded in 1989 and utilizes the same tactics that détournement is based on, as the collective behind the magazine has taken inspiration from the

Situationists (Rumbo, 2002, p. 137). The magazine publishes parodies (Harold, 2004, p. 209) and how-to manuals, which have assisted in the growth and diversification of subvertising techniques across urban areas worldwide (Dekeyser, 2021, p. 311). The anti-advertisement movement is linked loosely to culture jamming through trademark infringement, billboard liberation, corporate sabotage, and media hoaxing (Harold, 2004, p. 190). Their focus is on environmental, social, and physiological issues which can be divided into two causes. First is the commercialization of public space that is being taken over by large corporations. The second is the destruction of natural resources due to the rise of the global economy and consumerism (Rumbo, 2002, p. 138). In other words, the magazine critiques advertisements, corporate control over public space, and the media's monopoly regarding the distribution of information, as well as today's consumption brought forward by advertisement being a crucial factor for climate change (Rumbo, 2002, p. 138).

Adbusting, culture jamming, and subvertising all use the technique of détournement and have the same goals to challenge consumer culture and societal norms. Just like subvertising, adbusting is also dependent on previous work for it to be altered. However, adbusting can be differentiated from culture jamming and subvertising as it originated from the magazine Adbusters. The authors will refer to the use of adbusting as a strategy unless otherwise stated. Adbusting is slightly more concerned about attacking brands (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004, p. 699), and the group is famous for parodying commercial messages (Grigoryan & King, 2008, p. 3). In contrast, culture jamming and subvertising deal with society as a whole.

Brandalism is an international movement that consists of volunteering and mostly anonymous activists and artists that replace advertisements with art (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, pp. 97-98). Through the use of subvertising, spoofs, parodies, and alteration of messages, Brandalism's goal is to revolt against the media and advertising giants' control over the messages that are found in public spaces. To target the brands, the activists utilize the brand's marketing strategy to make a statement (Smith-Antony & Groom, 2015, p. 30). Bill Posters, one of the founders of Brandalism (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 97), claims that advertising is a form of pollution that affects people's private intimate spaces, in addition to common public and cultural spaces. Targeting advertisements is, according to the activists, a form of cleaning up the city (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 25).

From looking at Brandalism's previous projects, it is evident that the group deliberately times their takeovers to major events to gain international media attention. The group had their first project in 2012 during the London Olympics. Back then, the takeover was carried out by only two people, who replaced advertisements on billboards with 36 artworks done by 28 international artists across five big cities in the UK. The goal was to start a discussion around the outdoor advertising spaces, and the fact that people have no choice in whether they see it or not (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 98). The next big event that was targeted by Brandalism was COP21, which was held in Paris in 2015. The group wanted to raise awareness around the connection between consumerism and environmental destruction, and the greenwashing of the climate talks as major polluters were sponsoring these events. This was their biggest takeover, as they installed 600 posters, made tools to access bus stops in Paris, and trained local teams (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, pp. 98-99). Figure 7 shows how Volkswagen was one of the corporations targeted by Brandalism during COP21.

Figure 7. Brandalism Takes Aim at German Car Manufacturer Volkswagen (Brandalism, 2016)

In 2021, ahead of COP26 in Glasgow, satirical artworks were installed on over 200 billboards and bus stops across the UK. Their target was the bank Barclays, in an attempt to put pressure on the bank to stop funding the expansion of the fossil fuel industry (StreetArtNews, 2021). Brandalism's latest campaign took place at the beginning of 2023, ahead of the 100th

anniversary of the European Motor Show in Brussels. The attack was planned after a report from a UN High-Level Expert Group was released, which suggested that regulatory requirements to help businesses reach net zero should be introduced to limit lobbying activities and avoid greenwashing. Together with Subvertisers International and Extinction Rebellion, the groups installed over 400 parody advertising billboards targeting Toyota and BMW across Europe. The two companies were targeted for their misleading advertisements and aggressive lobbying tactics. The activists were demanding governments to introduce stricter policies to control the advertising of environmentally harmful products and to prevent greenwashing (Brandalism.ch, 2023).

Brandalism is continuously trying to recruit more activists and artists to their group, by encouraging people to reclaim public space and to share their artwork with the public. The group has created a very detailed subvertising manual that explains what is needed and how one does it, to help people get started with subvertising (Brandalism.ch, n.d., p. 9). Brandalism's focus on encouraging others to act has resulted in the participation of more volunteers in every campaign (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 97).

Similar to subvertising and adbusting, Brandalism also base their work on existing advertisements. Brandalism uses the same techniques as subvertising, culture jamming, and adbusting. While these three practices are often referred to as techniques, Brandalism, on the contrary, is a collective of activists that employ subvertising techniques to challenge the power and influence of advertising.

2.2 Theoretical Background

Once completing a search on Scopus using the four keywords, 37 different theories were mentioned in the articles after reviewing them. The authors searched for "*theor*" in all the articles to find "*theory*" and "*theories*" that could explain creative activism. After having studied the theories, the authors were left with 17 candidate theories that could help them to achieve the goal of this research. To get a bigger sample of theories, the authors did further research on theories on creative activism. After reviewing more theories, they concluded that the IJT was the most suitable compared to the other theories discovered from the Scopus search considering the

research questions of the study. Intergenerational justice was briefly mentioned in one of the articles retrieved from the search.

2.2.1 Intergenerational Justice Theory

The IJT is about ensuring justice for future generations by assuring that the current generation provides no less to the future generation than what the previous generation has provided to them (Hendlin, 2014, p. 7). The theory can simply be viewed as justice between the present and future generations (Tremmel, 2009, p. 4). In the debate regarding this theory, there is an assumption amongst scholars that current generations can predict the quality and quantities of savings and investments that are needed to provide justice for future generations (Hendlin, 2014, pp. 1-2). Figure 8 explains how an amount of resources are passed on from the previous generation to the current generation, while the future generation is not receiving the same amount as the current. Due to moral responsibility and obligations, some people get motivated to conduct subvertising in an attempt to reach a positive outcome, which is that the future generation receives the same amount as the current received. The subvertisers are trying to prevent the negative outcome from happening, which is that the future generation is left with less resources and a harder starting point.

Figure 8. Application of Intergenerational Justice Theory
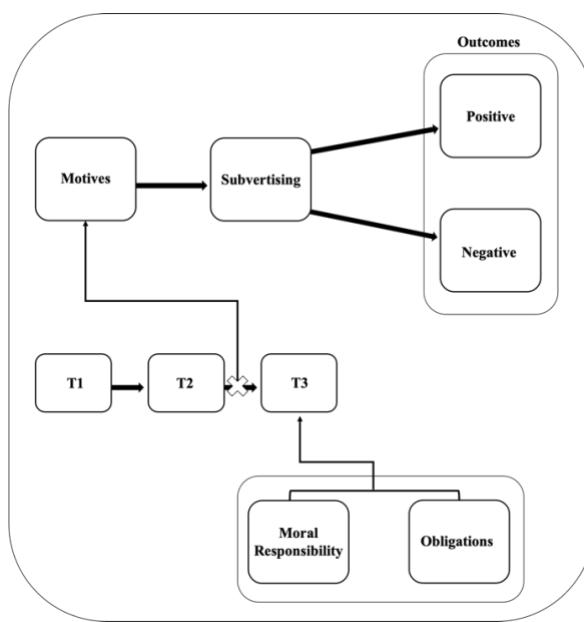
Note. *T3 > T2 > T1* where T1 is time 1, T2 is time 2, and T3 is time 3.

As mentioned previously in Chapter 1.3 Theoretical Framework, the theory is an applicant to this study and can support the authors' explanation as to why activists are engaging in subvertising. When connecting subvertising to the IJT, one can view the subvertisers as strong sustainability theorists, while the industries, companies, and influential people that are being targeted for greenwashing, promoting consumerism, and corruption, can be said to belong to the weak sustainability theorists. In recent years, intergenerational justice has become popular amongst young people and has especially been brought up during debates regarding the environment (Knappe & Renn, 2022, p. 1). There is an ongoing mobilization of younger people that see themselves as agents of social change. A study of the Fridays for Future (FFF) movement in Norway reveals that young Norwegian activists see climate change as a structural problem rather than a problem based on individual practices, and therefore have interventions that target the system (Knappe & Renn, 2022, p. 2). Fridays for Future was started by Greta Thunberg (Beckh & Limmer, 2022, p. 177), and is a global movement consisting of the younger generation. They demonstrate against political and economic organizations and are urging them to take action before it is too late (Beckh & Limmer, 2022, p. 183). There has become a growing concern that there will not be enough available resources in the future due to the current exploitation of resources, and younger generations today see themselves as spokespeople for future generations (Knappe & Renn, 2022, p. 3). These people can be seen as strong sustainability theorists. With intergenerational justice issues, there are feelings of anger and frustration as there is a perceived experience of having to bear the burden of actions taken by past generations, while also having to secure fairness and justice for the generations to come (Theodorou et al., 2023, pp. 59-60). There is an increase of young activists, but recently there has been a rise in climate activist groups in the UK led by parents, such as Extinction Rebellion Families, as they fight for their children's future, and hence for intergenerational justice (Howard et al., 2021, p. 1430). The lack of interest in future generations has changed and has today become a much greater concern not only for the young generation and their parents but also for politicians and scholars (Tremmel, 2006, p. 1).

Theories on intergenerational justice are relatively new, and there are limited academic articles that are accessible, as the creation of concepts and theories on justice between nonoverlapping generations has only been done for the past decades (Tremmel, 2009, p. 1).

Justice toward future generations has been an unpopular topic amongst political philosophers (Wissenburg, 2011, p. 557). Kant and Rawls, who were political philosophers, believed in a type of natural law where future generations' living standards continuously improved (Tremmel, 2009, p. 4). Critics of generational justice theories created a picture of spoilt heirs. However, not being concerned for future generations has somewhat changed in the past years as people are witnessing the effects of climate change and the increase of humans' power. Now, there is rather an apprehension that the next generations can become the ecological, economic, and social victims if the current generation has a myopic attitude (Tremmel, 2009, pp. 3-4).

3 Research Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology choices employed for this study are explained. The authors start by discussing the research context and method. Next, the data collection is explained, before the data analysis is presented. Lastly, how the authors ensured the quality of data is described.

3.1 Research Context and Method

The word "*method*" has a Greek origin and translates into "*way of investigation*" (Brinkkemper, 1996, p. 276). It is about gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data. When choosing a research method, it is important to ask the question as to what you are trying to find out. If the research objective is attempting to answer a "*what*" or "*how*" question, a qualitative approach is most likely the optimal option as it is an explorative method. Exploratory research questions are normally developed when there is a lack of existing information on a specific topic if the topic is complex, or if the information on the topic is unclear or insufficient (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020, p. 56). If, on the other hand, the goal is to indicate how much a factor significantly affects another, or the correlation between them, a quantitative approach would be more suitable (Walker, 1997, pp. 151-152). While qualitative research is mostly descriptive, quantitative research is concerned with testing hypotheses and investigating numerical data (Antwi & Hamza, 2015, pp. 220-221). In other words, choosing the right research method is crucial to be able to answer the research objective(s).

The goal of this study was to understand the concept of subvertising, and in what way it is discussed in the media. An exploratory qualitative approach was chosen as the authors were seeking to answer a "*what*" question. To answer the research questions, a TNA of the digital news media published in the popular press on subvertising was carried out. The meaning of thematic analysis, which is frequently used in academics, is to identify, analyze and interpret patterns in themes in contextual data (King & Brooks, 2018, pp. 219-220). Narratives can be described as stories with a clear consecutive order that connects events in a purposeful way to tailor for a specific crowd (Esin, 2011, p. 93). Combining these concepts gives researchers a method to uncover the *"who, what, or where"* of certain events or experiences. TNA is a qualitative descriptive approach (Vaismoradi et al., 2013, p. 399), that focuses on the content of the story and the themes around which stories are told (Riessman, 2008). It is the most

advantageous option for these types of research as TNA focuses on examining "*what*" rather than "*how*" (Riessman, 2008 p. 53).

The application of a TNA can be explained by four steps (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 112). The first step is the selection of segments. In this step, selected sections of transcripts relevant to the research question(s) are marked and gathered into a new subtext. They are often treated independently, but contextual details can still be included in interpretation by narrative researchers (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp. 112-113). The second step is to define thematic categories. The themes are identified from the selected subtext, either through predefined categories or emerging themes from multiple readings. The form of thematic categories depends on the analyst's perspective and can range from many subtle categories to a few broader categories which require less work (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 113). Once the definition of categories is finished, the third step involves sorting the material. Sentences across transcripts are placed in relevant thematic categories (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp. 113-114). The fourth and final step is drawing a conclusion that should be in accordance with the research aim(s) and question(s). The meanings within the transcripts can be described by using the narrative content collected under each of the categories (Lieblich et al, 1998, p. 114). Appendix III-IX shows the thematic categories with well-formulated and narrowed definitions and descriptions so that only relevant codes were obtained and placed under the right categories.

The application of the thematic narrative model ranges from narratives produced in interviews to already published online news media (Esin, 2011, p. 108). The reason why the authors chose a TNA was because the data contained extensive sociological information, and a substantial portion of empirical evidence is in a narrative form (Franzosi, 1998, p. 517). It also helps to reveal the close relationship between text and social reality (Franzosi, 1998, p. 547). One example from the literature where TNA has been used is when Frost (2009) employed the approach to explore the changes in identity in the transition to second-time motherhood. What makes it a TNA is the focus on the subjective understanding of the experiences of motherhood and what changes in the identity once they have a second child. Another example is Jones and Lynn's (2018) study on families' blogs during their child's hospitalization. Here, the goal was to find the stress factors that these parents experience and their coping mechanisms. Though these are two different examples, the context for both of them is to find out what is being framed rather

than how which again is the hallmark of TNA. This shows that TNA can be applied in various contexts and is what makes this approach suitable in many scenarios.

3.2 Data Collection

In this study, the authors used secondary data as a source for data collection. Secondary data is defined as data that originally has been gathered for a different purpose, but which is reused for another research question (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p. 593). The data was collected through the analysis and coding of news articles and videos. All the news articles and YouTube videos used for the study were originally created for another purpose, and the authors of this research reused the data to answer the research questions. Thus, secondary data was used. Since the data was collected from publicly available sources, no ethical approval was required (Manchaiah et al., 2019, p. 13). The greatest advantage of using secondary data for this research study was that the authors had fast access to relevant data at no cost (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p. 594).

Until recently, researchers were skeptical of the use of newspapers in research, as its accuracy was questioned amongst other things (Bingham, 2010, p. 225). However, due to digitalization and a cultural turn, there is now an agreement that newspaper content can have value when trying to understand society, culture, and politics (Bingham, 2010, p. 225).

The authors gathered data from different news articles in the popular media and video material related to subvertising available on the internet. The objective of including videos was to get a better foundation for the study. The data was collected using the keywords "*brandalism*", "*culture jamming**", "*ad busting**", and "*subvertising*". The keywords were used to collect news articles from two different sources, while videos were collected from YouTube. Initially, the authors did a search on Google News. To get more width and depth to the data collection of news articles, the authors ran the same search on a normal Google search to find additional articles that did not appear during the initial attempt. Both hard news and soft news that were presented to the authors as a result of those keywords, were collected from the popular media. Hard news is characterized as being timely, with a factual and text-oriented style (Reinemann et al., 2012, p. 226). Soft news, on the other hand, is characterized as personalized, entertaining, and visually oriented (Reinemann et al., 2012, p. 226). It is important to note that researchers do

not completely agree on what they regard as hard news and soft news (Reinemann et al., 2012, p. 226). The initial data collection took place from the 16th of January to the 23rd of February 2023. This database consisted of 192 articles and 79 videos. However, the authors collected data on two more occasions, as the goal was to collect the largest amount of data possible within the topic. When doing qualitative research, the strategy for data collection is to assemble a large amount of data on a sample that is small and purposive (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p. 593). A Google Alerts was set up at the beginning of the data collection period with the four keywords to notify the authors of any new articles. Figure 9 illustrates the different stages of the research design.

Figure 9. Different Stages of the Research Design
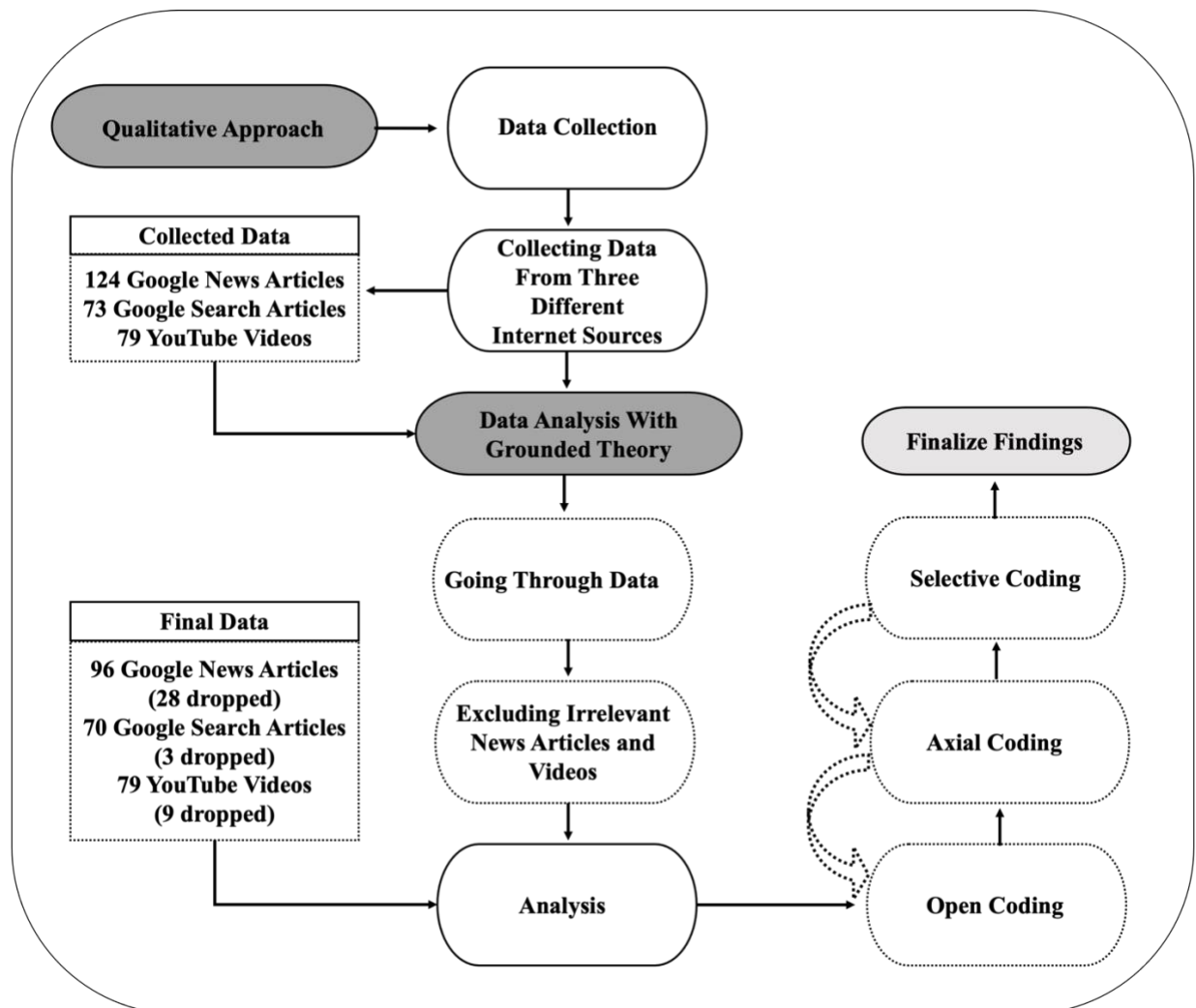
A criterion for using the articles and videos was that more than half of the text had to be in English. On Google News searches, all articles were included except for six articles that the authors did not gain access to, due to paywalls. During the process of collecting material on Google Search, articles that had not been collected from Google News, and which met the criteria, were included. The YouTube videos collected were run through Trint Transcription software, which is an automatic transcription program (Kim et al., 2019, p. 4). Videos were uploaded as MP4 files to Trint, and an auto-generated transcription was formed within 15 minutes (Kim et al., 2019, p. 5). Compared to other transcription software, Trint has one of the highest average accuracies (Liyanagunawardena, 2019, p. 392), and is a secure platform that fully complies with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation, shortened to GDPR (Pertl et al., 2023, p. 6). GDPR is a law by the European Union that regulates the way personal data can be used, processed, and used (Goodman & Flaxman, 2017, p. 50). The transcripts were then treated as news articles and coded the same way.

From the time Google Alerts was created, until the 20th of April 2023, the authors received 24 alerts. Only five of those alerts were added to the authors' data collection. The reason is that three of the news articles were already collected, one was behind a paywall, while the rest were posts on Twitter and Reddit, or links to online shops. On the 25th of May, both the authors redid the entire search on Google Search and went through the Google Alerts for Google News that appeared after the 20th of April to ensure that no relevant data was left out. The authors found two additional Google News articles and eight new articles from Google Search that were relevant. The authors also conducted the same additional search on YouTube to make sure that no videos containing relevant data were left out. The new search resulted in 21 new videos being included in the database as the authors deemed them relevant. After the 21 videos, the authors ended the data collection as they experienced that the videos started to become less relevant and did not meet the criteria that were set. The additional news articles and videos were analyzed and mapped with the original database. From the two additional searches on news articles and videos, five new definitions were included in the database.

Videos and news articles that were excluded contained information about figures that subvertisers were selling, or were irrelevant as the keywords were found in advertisements next to the actual article. News articles and videos that did not have one of the authors' chosen

keywords as the main topic were removed. Articles that addressed an Australian marketing company named Brandalism were also excluded. The collected material that was not found relevant was marked red in a shared Excel file where the coding process took place. The authors did include editorial and opinion articles, as well as school project videos. The reason is that previous research has indicated that their writers tend to frame personalities, events, and issues similarly to reporters and editors (Ryan, 2001). In total, 207 news articles and 100 YouTube videos were found. After having filtered the articles and videos, they were left with a total of 175 news articles (consisting of 380 pages with 144 491 words) and 91 YouTube videos (consisting of 170 pages with 65 282 words) that were included in the analysis. To differentiate between the data, the news articles retrieved from Google News were labeled as A1, A2…, the news articles retrieved from Google Search were named B1, B2…, while the videos retrieved from YouTube were labeled as C1, C2….

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis of the gathered qualitative data from news articles and YouTube videos is influenced by grounded theory (Walker & Myrick, 2006). Grounded theory is a qualitative research method, where a theory is systematically developed based on the collected data. It differentiates itself from the logico-deductive method of finding a theory, where one begins with a theory and then tries to find data to verify it (Walker & Myrick, 2006, pp. 547-548). It is known as a method of constant comparison, and has a hybrid approach, as grounded theory combines the process of coding and the process of developing a theory (Walker & Myrick, 2006, p. 548). First, the data is collected, coded, and analyzed, before a theory is created. The data analysis in grounded theory consists of three steps (Noble & Mitchell, 2016, p. 34). The first step is open coding, where the researcher tries to understand and reflect on what has been read by identifying and moving concepts into subcategories, and then categories. Placing key phrases or concepts in subcategories and categories ensures that the data is continuously compared for similarities. The second step is axial coding. Here, one tries to find correlations between the categories, and pinpoint connections. The third and last step of the data analysis in grounded theory is selective coding. Here, core categories are created, before they are methodically linked to other categories. The categories have to be carefully developed, and the connection between the categories must be validated. The theory is then created from the core categories (Noble &

Mitchell, 2016, p. 34). The reason for choosing a grounded theory perspective is that there are limited studies on subvertising using this approach (Valor et al., 2016).

During the data analysis process, the authors followed the same steps. First, the two authors coded each news article and video separately, before coming together and comparing the open codes. Grounded theory is an inductive approach since theories are directly made from the data collected (Engward, 2013, p. 37). A method called inductive coding was therefore used when the news articles and videos were coded, as categories were created directly from the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 83). Inductive coding is a process where labels for categories have been created after text segments containing meaningful components have been identified through close readings and interpretation of texts. As additional text is found relevant, they are added to the categories (Thomas, 2006, p. 241). For the coding process, a shared Excel file where the news articles and videos were indexed using basic information such as retrieving date, title, author, date of publication, link to the article, and the article text was used. The shared Excel file can be found in Appendix I-II.

During the construction of the coding scheme created in the shared Excel file, the authors took into consideration that it should contain focus, be objective, be easy to use, and be mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. The authors established the system in such a way that made it clear what was to be observed, and that it would require little interpretation from the researchers by having detailed definitions of categories. When creating the categories, they made sure that none of the categories were overlapping each other. To cover all the relevant information and to ensure that it was coded, subcategories were made during the process (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020, p. 138).

One implementation of the grounded theory approach is Gioia's methodology. This method was used as it ensures rigorous coding and encourages the research findings to be presented in a way that visualizes the connections between data (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 17). Gioia's methodology is therefore ideal when analyzing complex textual data as it helps to identify and show patterns and themes within the sample. The method can be explained as the identification of three important components: 1st order themes, 2nd order themes, and aggregate dimensions. In the 1st-order analysis, an explosion of themes, terms, and open codes arises early

from the research which can be overwhelming (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 20). Once the data collection progresses, similarities and differences start arising and themes can be reduced to a more manageable number (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 20). By giving them descriptions, it is then possible to start thinking at multiple levels. In the 2nd order analysis, it is essential to inquire whether the emerging themes suggest categories that can help define and explain the phenomenon of the study (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 20). In other words, 2nd order themes are categories of a higher order. For this paper, the authors have named 2nd order themes as coding subcategories. When a practical set of themes and categories are in place, the final step of Gioia's method is to extract and create an even higher order of topics from the 2nd order themes, which are called aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 20). For this study, the authors named them aggregate coding category.

The categories were created in three steps. First, the authors did open coding. They coded articles separately to get an idea of what topics would repeat themselves and be of importance. Second, they conducted axial coding, as they sat together and compared the coding results, and developed a list of categories. During this step, the five preliminary thematic categories that were created were the different *targets* and *events* of subvertising, the *motives* behind the subvertising attacks, the *types* of subvertising, the different *definitions* of central concepts, and the *evolution* of subvertising. Third, using this preliminary coding scheme, the authors coded all 207 articles and 100 videos independently, before doing selective coding by comparing the coding results and further amending the preliminary list of categories. During the comparison of codes, the categories that were included later on due to their recurrence and importance were the *outcomes* of subvertising for the public, governments, and corporations, and how the governments and corporations have *defended* themselves against subvertising. The way activists have defended their actions was also examined. The authors adjusted the preliminary list and the subcategories when needed.

In total, 29 sections under the subcategories were created. Six out of seven categories consisted of three to four subcategories, besides evolution which had eight subcategories named after their decades. During the coding, most articles fit under more than one subcategory and were therefore placed under all the relevant sections.

3.4 Data Quality

The purpose of quality in qualitative research is to create an understanding. Trustworthiness is the main criterion in qualitative research and refers to validity and reliability which is used to assess quality in quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). Evaluating the extent to which researchers' claim about knowledge corresponds to reality, has traditionally been the approach to assess validity in qualitative research. Recently, *transformational* validity and *transactional* validity, which are two very different approaches, have emerged (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 320). In qualitative research, transformational validity states that validity is not determined by the techniques or methods used, but rather by the self-reflection of the researcher(s), as many perspectives on a topic give multiple meanings (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 324). Transactional validity, on the other hand, is the process of obtaining high accuracy and agreement by going over feelings, facts, experiences, and values that are collected and interpreted until the desired level of certainty is achieved. It is an interactive procedure between the researcher, the object being researched, and the collected data (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 321). Here, it is believed that it is the chosen strategy, the method, and the technique used that determines the credibility of the qualitative research, and which can ensure that the reality is being correctly reflected. In the transactional validity approach, researchers aim to earn trust in their findings through research credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 322). Figure 10 illustrates two different forms of addressing data quality in qualitative research.

Figure 10. Data Quality
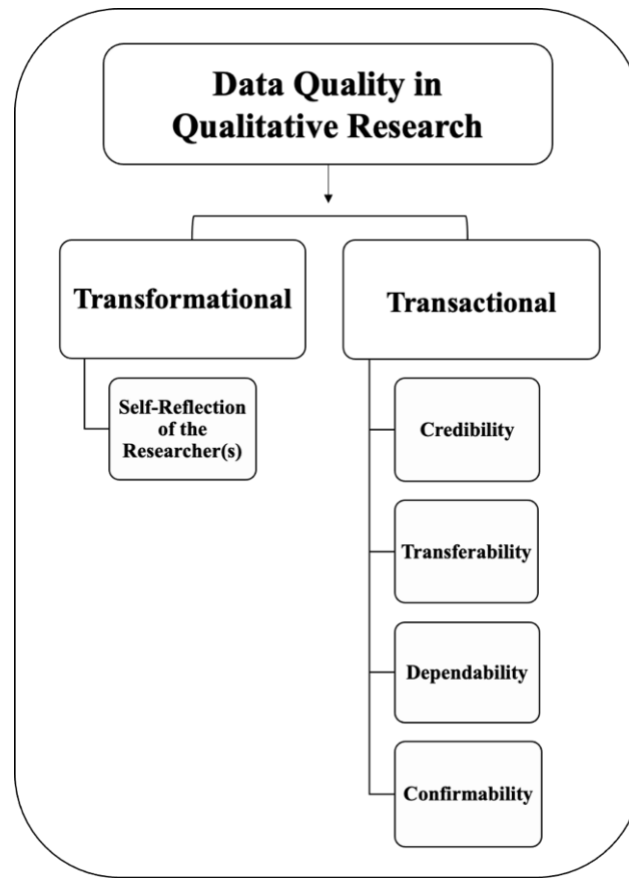
In this study, the transactional validity approach was used to increase the trustworthiness of the findings as the authors believed that their self-reflection was not enough to earn the readers' trust and to convince them that both the data and the study itself is of quality. The study had an interactive approach, where the two authors went back and forth and adjusted their findings based on new information and comparison of work, as the transactional validity approach is a process where misapprehensions and disputes can be adjusted and fixed (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 322). To have a study of quality, the authors took several steps to ensure that the findings were trustworthy.

Credibility, in qualitative research, means that the findings are accurate and give a true description of the phenomenon that is being investigated (Chowdhury, 2015, p. 148). The term is similar to internal validity in quantitative research. Research is only considered trustworthy if the reader considers it to be so (Rolfe, 2006, p. 305). So, to generate trust from the readers that the

answers to the research questions of this study were based on accurate findings, and hence true, a detailed description of how the data was collected and analyzed in this study was created and presented. By being open about the steps that were taken to conceptualize subvertising and to explain the motives and outcomes of it, the authors are allowing the readers to judge if the right data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods were used, and if the steps were adequate to get findings that were true and accurate. The openness creates trust that the findings are based on solid and carefully conducted work and hence strengthens the credibility of the study (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019, p. 237). Another important step that was taken to ensure credibility was that the authors looked for additional data twice after the original data collection period that spanned from January to February. This was done to obtain a high level of certainty that no relevant data was left out of the study, and to ensure accurate findings.

   Transferability corresponds to external validity (Rolfe, 2006, p. 305), and refers to in qualitative research whether enough detailed information has been given so that the reader can judge if the findings are appropriate to other settings or not (Chowdhury, 2015, pp. 148-149). To have a comprehensive and representative data collection that could generate transferable findings, data was collected from three different online sources. Using an online strategy for sampling, allowed the sample to be more diverse, which can increase the validity of the research study (McEwan, 2020, p. 242). Collecting data from multiple sources rather than just one, makes the results more robust and valid as the information from the sources is cross-validated. This process is known as triangulation (Kaplan & Maxwell, 2005, p. 45). By collecting data from the popular media, the authors had access to hundreds of news articles and videos. This made the data-rich, since the data collected was detailed and varied, and gave a full picture of how subvertising is being discussed in the media (Kaplan & Maxwell, 2005, p. 44). Having rich data created a stronger confidence in that the collected material was comprehensive and representative, and that the findings therefore could be generalized as the data collected was based on a whole population rather than a sample. By coding data from multiple sources, a greater trust in the researchers' data could be attained by evaluating if the coding from the different data sources was strongly correlated with one another (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020, p. 157).

Confirmability is about objectivity (Chowdhury, 2015, p. 148), and refers to if the analysis of the data were logical and consistent, and if the interpretations based on the collected data were fair. To evaluate whether the study is confirmable, one has to consider if the methods and procedures are described in detail, and that the findings provide a comprehensive picture of what is being researched (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019, p. 238). Since this study had a subjective research approach, there was a chance that the two authors working with the same data could interpret it differently (Tuffour, 2017, p. 5). Steps were therefore taken to ensure that the analysis were consistent and that the authors interpreted the data fairly. To reduce variance in the open coding process, the two authors discussed the process beforehand to reduce the chance of any misinterpretations. After coding individually, the authors conducted another triangulation, by comparing the codes that the authors created apart from each other (Mays & Pope, 2000, p. 51), to identify any possible biases, and to see if there had been misinterpretation of the data (Kaplan & Maxwell, 2005, p. 45). After the comparison, new codes were then created based on patterns of similarity to ensure that the articles and videos were interpreted the same way and that the codes were comprehensive and correlating (Mays & Pope, 2000, p. 51). When the coding was done, the codes were placed under categories and subcategories in a new shared Excel file. Two different files were therefore used to ensure that there was a high correlation between the findings. One file where the authors did open coding and compared the codes (see Appendix I-II), and another file where the final codes were placed under categories and subcategories (see Appendix III-IX). In the end, the two authors went through the files and made necessary changes to ensure that the results were compatible. The triangulation was not only done to ensure consistency amongst the codes but also to ensure objectivity. Objectivity refers to confirmability in qualitative research, and it is important for the quality of the study. By creating new and final codes based on the comparison, the authors could prove that the findings were logical, fair, and consistent as they were objective and coming from the data, and not from personal opinions (Chowdhury, 2015, pp. 149-150).

Dependability relates to reliability (Rolfe, 2006, p. 305), and is about obtaining similar results if the research were repeated in the same context with the same method and participants. To facilitate studies in the future, and for there to be consistency in the study, the authors took multiple measures (Chowdhury, 2015, p. 149). To ensure that the findings were reliable, with

minimum error variance (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020, p. 211), the authors used a shared Excel file consisting of transcripts of the news articles and videos during the coding process. By doing this, the authors could be confident that they were reading the same transcript throughout the data collection process, as news articles and videos can be altered or deleted over time. There was then high confidence that the codes generated by each author were done on the same premises. During studies when more than one person is collecting data, there is a risk that the collectors experience and interpret the data differently, which can influence the consistency and agreement of the data collected (McHugh, 2012, p. 276). To ensure that there was an agreement between the two authors about the categories and that both had an understanding of what was supposed to be placed where, both authors created the categories and subcategories together (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020, p. 319). In this study, the authors conducted a search on popular media with specific search words. From the beginning, they conducted the same search several times on the same platforms, both days and weeks apart, to attain an assurance that the popular media provided the same articles each time. The measures described above have ensured that the findings in this research are dependable. It would therefore be feasible for other researchers to repeat the study in the future and obtain the same results if conducted in the same context, using the same method and search words as in this research.

4 Results

In this chapter, the authors present the results of the qualitative data analysis. Based on the analysis, the authors were able to find three aggregate coding categories which were *conceptualization of subvertising, motives of subvertising,* and *outcomes of subvertising.* The study resulted in the identification of 12 coding subcategories. These categories were definition, target, type, defense, evolution, environment, inclusion and diversity, capitalism, social, public, government, and corporate. The categories provided valuable insight into the subvertising phenomenon and helped the authors to understand the factors that influenced it. The authors found consistency between the articles and videos. After having coded articles and placed them in their relevant categories, most of the videos were placed in the already created categories, and only a few new subcategories were constructed based on the video material. In this part, the authors are presenting the seven categories and the most relevant subcategories.

4.1 Conceptualization of Subvertising

Conceptualization plays a critical role in the development of theories and frameworks in all fields. It involves taking research ideas and transforming them into commonly understood meanings to obtain an agreement among users (Sequeira, 2014). Conceptualization is a process that results in the creation of meaningful "*concepts*", from the word "*conceptualization*", to ultimately generate a theory (Sequeira, 2014).

The conceptualization of subvertising can be explained by five coding subcategories, which are definition, target, type, defense, and evolution. Analyzing these categories helped the authors get a deeper understanding of the conceptualization of subvertising. Figure 11 illustrates the aggregate coding category designed after Gioia's method for a visual presentation of how these categories relate to each other and how they provide a better understanding of the phenomenon.

Figure 11. Data Structure for the Conceptualization of Subvertising
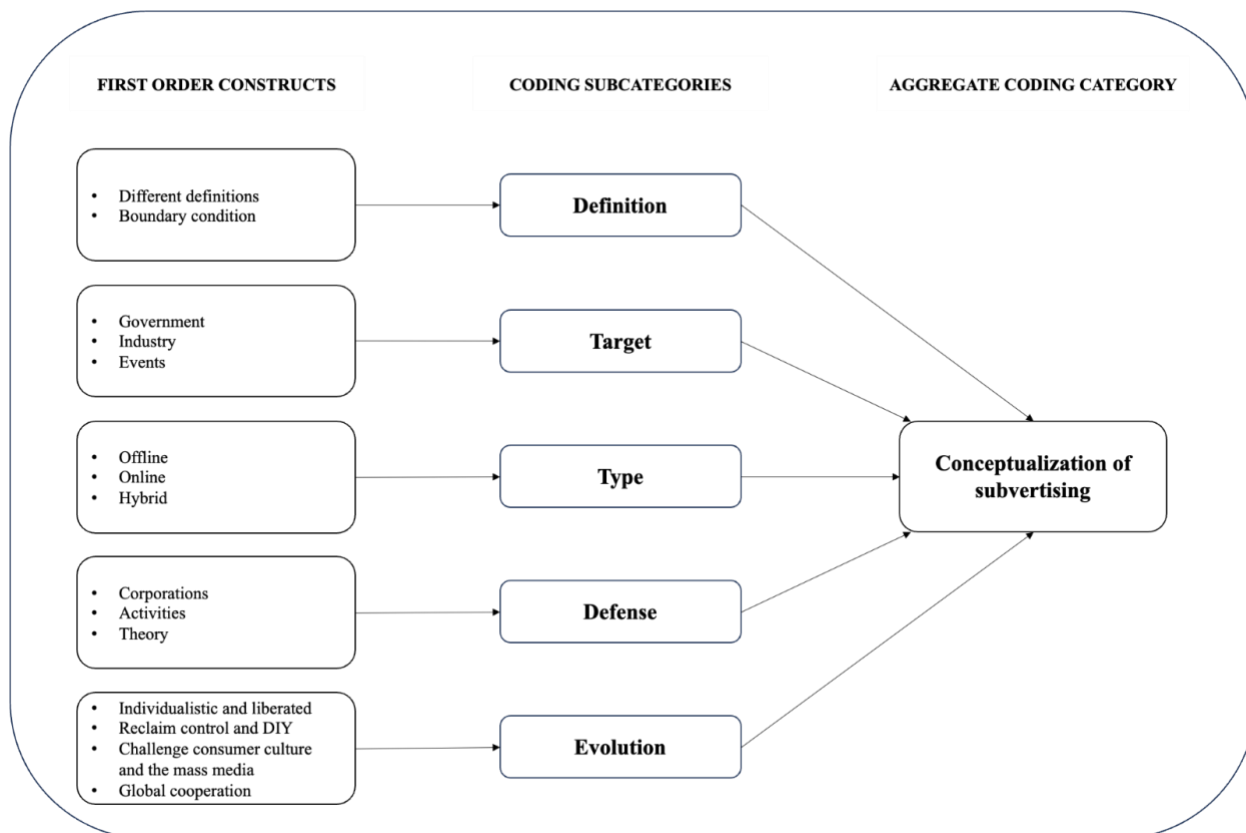
4.1.1 Definition

In the literature on subvertising, there was a need for clarification in the definition of the phenomenon. Definitions matter and are important when presenting the findings of a study. Since the readers of this study may have a different background than the authors, there is a chance that "*subvertising*" is interpreted in a different way than intended. It is therefore important that the term is defined precisely to prevent this (van Mil & Henman, 2016, pp. 709-710).

Different definitions

From the review of the articles and videos, the authors found that popular media rarely defined subvertising. Those definitions that were found from the qualitative data varied from each other as one can see below.

This definition of subvertising states that it is a form of street art that works to change the meaning behind corporate advertisements: "*Subvertising — short for 'subverting advertising' — is a visual and performative form of street art that subverts the power and meaning of corporate ads.*" (A91, para. 2).

While the next definition characterizes subvertising as vandalization and claims that it is both an artistic and a political movement. It does not mention anything about subvertising being street art: "*Subvertising is an artistic-political movement that expresses itself through the creative vandalisation of advertising space."* (B38, para. 1).

The last example of a definition that was discovered from the analysis, which was found in two articles, addresses subvertising as a practice where they use spoofs and parodies to make a statement, and that they target corporate and political advertisements: "*The practice of making spoofs or parodies of corporate and political advertisements in order to make a statement."* (B52, para. 1; B76, para. 4).

As shown from the three definitions above, subvertising is explained as a visual and performative form of street art, an artistic-political movement, and the practice of making spoofs or parodies. The different descriptions of subvertising have caused it to be challenging to understand what subvertising is, and what separates it from similar concepts.

Boundary condition

Definitions are about boundary conditions, which concern setting limitations that restrict generalizability (Busse et al., 2017, p. 575). The seven different definitions of subvertising that were discovered during the analysis of the collected data, offered different conceptual boundaries, which was *subvert, parodies, visual and performative form of art, expose, corporate and political advertisement, commercial culture, statement, graffiti-style interventions, co-ordinated campaigns,* and *movement*. Having several definitions with many different boundaries may be the reason why subvertising easily has been confused with other similar concepts, and why it may have been challenging to bring the research on subvertising forward.

Though the definitions were similar, there was a difference in how they were articulated and in what was emphasized. However, it was a consensus amongst them, as there is an

agreement that subvertising is an action or practice that targets advertisement. The review of the different definitions found in the news articles suggests various important keywords; *subvert, parodies, visual, and performative form of art, expose, corporate and political advertisement, commercial culture, statement,* and *movement*.

Based on those keywords, the authors were able to create a definition: "*Subvertising is a movement that through parody, visual, and performative art aims to make a statement and expose assumptions behind the corporate and political advertisement.*". With this newly created definition, the authors have narrowed the boundaries, so that they are comprehensive, and clearly separate subvertising from similar concepts. By limiting the conceptual boundaries to *movement, parody, visual and performative art, expose, statement,* and *corporate and political advertisements*, subvertising and its boundaries are defined, which makes it easier to understand the phenomenon. Figure 12 provides a visual image of the new conceptual boundaries of subvertising.

Figure 12. Conceptual Boundaries of Subvertising
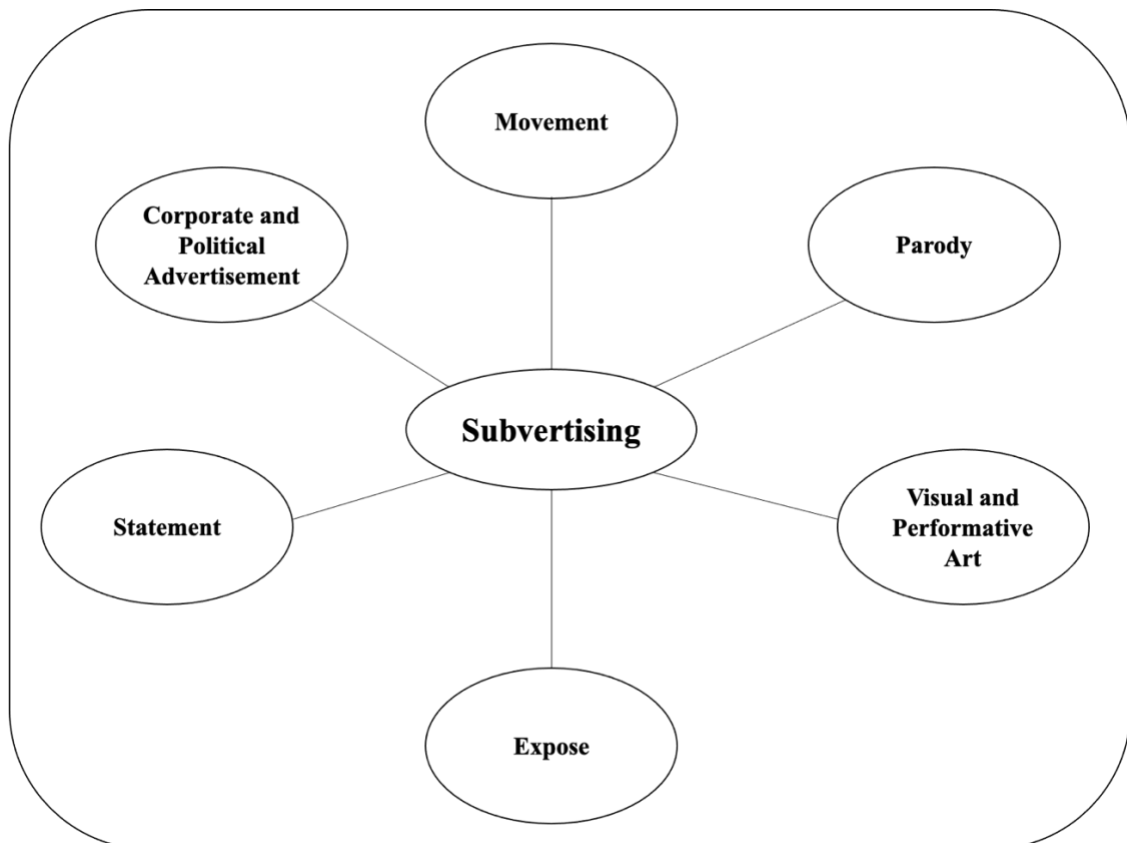
4.1.2 Target

To conceptualize subvertising, it can be helpful to look at what and who the activists target. Several articles on subvertising report on attacks on governments, industries, and during big events. Each of these will be discussed in detail.

Governments

Subvertisers target governments at various levels, including continental, national, and local city councils. They criticize these governments for either perceived unfulfilled promises, their lack of actions, or demanding stricter restrictions. The data analysis revealed several examples where different types of governments have been attacked. One example from Europe, where several countries were attacked, involved permitting the advertisement of high-carbon products. Subvertisers argued that the government's efforts on regulating misleading advertisements on environmentally harmful products were not enough and that stricter regulations needed to be introduced:

> *Activists are using the campaign to call for governments to regulate adverts for*
> *environmentally harmful products and prevent misleading claims from big polluters.*
> (A71, para. 15)

> *Campaigners from Greenpeace International, Résistance à l'Agression Publicitaire,*
> *Climáximo and more than 35 other organisations are calling for a tobacco-style ban on*
> *adverts for high carbon products.* (A71, para. 16)

The qualitative data discusses national governments such as the UK, the USA, and Guatemala, with the Australian government being the most prominently mentioned. During their bushfires in 2019-2020, subvertisers believed that the Australian government's actions in addressing climate change were insufficient:

> *As a collective group of Australian artists, we have been driven to reclaim public*
> *advertising space with posters speaking to the Australian government's inaction on*
> *climate change and the devastating bushfires.* (A16, para. 2)

> *We do not accept that this situation is 'business as usual.' We are making these issues*
> *visible in our public spaces and in our media; areas monopolized by entities maintaining*

conservative climate denial agendas. If the newspapers won't print the story, we will! (A16, para. 3)

For local city councils, London and Bristol were the only ones to be identified from the qualitative data. The reason behind the attacks is the same as with the attacks on European governments, namely their inaction towards a ban on high carbon-emitting products, especially vehicles: "*One resident who took part in the billboard installations said the action also highlights the irony of advertising cars in cities that already suffer from too many cars.*" (A2, para. 11)

Industries

In this context, industries refer to businesses and firms that operate in various sectors of the economy, encompassing manufacturing, services, and other commercial activities. Most subvertisers target one or more industries in their attacks, and these industries vary from beauty and fashion to amusement parks and sports. The industries mentioned the most are advertising, automotive, fossil fuel, banking, media, and aviation. If it were not for the advertising industry, subvertising would not exist. The advertising industry is being targeted as the activists believe that they are accommodating companies in their greenwashing practices, and it is therefore mentioned most times together with another industry. An example is the advertising industry being targeted together with the fossil fuel industry:

> *We are taking their spaces back because we want to challenge the role advertising plays in promoting unsustainable consumerism," said Elan. "Because the advertising industry force feeds our desires for products created from fossil fuels, they are intimately connected to causing climate change. As is the case with the climate talks and their corporate sponsored events, outdoor advertising ensures that those with the most amount of money are able to ensure that their voices get heard above all else.* (A41, para. 5).

As explained previously, the automotive industry has been one of the prime focuses of subvertisers. Large car corporations are advertising their electric vehicles as environmentally friendly, however, subvertisers believe that these are misleading and drive up the demand for polluting vehicles:

The billboard posters criticise the car industry for misleading adverts that have driven up demand for polluting vehicles and private car use – resulting in increased carbon emissions from road transport and worsening air pollution and congestion in towns and cities. (A7, para. 2)

Subvertisers target the aviation industry to actively encourage unsustainable practices through their advertising efforts. Just like with the automotive industry, the subvertisers are aiming to get a ban on high-carbon advertisements: "*The various pieces of satirical artwork use aviation company names and branding to then highlight and poke fun at the damage the industry causes to the environment. Each hijacked paid-for ad space includes the hashtag '#BanFossilAds'.*" (B47, para. 2)

Events

Subvertisers intentionally plan their attack to coincide with major events to gain the most attention. Events that have been targeted by subvertising are climate conferences, such as COP21 and COP26, and commercial events, such as the European Motor Show 2023 and Black Friday. The motive behind the attacks on COP21 and COP26 was to target the corporate sponsors of the event and their investments in fossil fuel industries: "*When they arrived in the French capital on Monday, world leaders were greeted with 600 pieces of unauthorized protest street art installed around the city denouncing corporate sponsorship of the COP21 conference.*" (A30, para. 2)

The European Motor Show 2023 was targeted by subvertisers for two reasons. First, the show is promoting the automotive industry which contributes to consumerism, which subvertisers advocate against. Second, the European Motor Show was targeted as subvertisers used this as an opportunity to call on governments to introduce regulations for advertising on vehicles:

Three activist organisations have installed parody advertising billboards of car manufacturers Toyota and BMW to protest "their misleading advertisements and aggressive lobbying against climate policy". The ultimate aim is to influence regulation and policy to introduce a ban on advertising environmentally harmful products. (B49, para. 1)

Another popular commercial event that is targeted is Black Friday. Subvertisers answer to the busiest shopping day of the year is "*No Ad Day*" or "*Buy Nothing Day*". No Ad Day is a civil disobedience act on the day of Black Friday where the outdoor advertisement is removed and left blank. Buy Nothing Day is a protest against Black Friday and its contribution to consumerism, and is marked the same day or the day after Black Friday depending on the country:

> *On the same day, others were busy not shopping to commemorate Buy Nothing Day. A public awareness campaign, which takes place on Black Friday, started by the founder of Adbusters magazine, criticizing today's consumer culture such that it may the online world has become a lot like the city and anti-advertisers are no less abundant.* (C8)

4.1.3 Type

The coding subcategory *type* is about how subvertisers do their work. The category was divided into three first order constructs; offline, online, and hybrid. These subcategories explain the various methods and techniques employed by subvertisers across different platforms, which helped the authors to conceptualize the phenomenon.

Offline

Offline subvertising is considered as acts that are not done on the internet. Offline subvertising is frequently discussed in the data, with the hacking of billboards and bus stops being the most used tactics. Occasionally, tagging of murals, graffiti, and posters are used. Another form of offline subvertising is demonstrations. The activists rarely gather as groups to protest, as they mostly tamper with advertisements individually or in pairs. However, during COP21 they had planned a riot that had to be canceled due to the terrorist attack in Paris in November 2015 banning all protest marches. This did not stop the subvertisers, but only meant they had to be creative in their demonstrations. Though this is only one specific example of artistic demonstration, it has been mentioned several times in qualitative data:

> *In response, the activist network Avaaz created a public protest art installation at the Place de la République in Paris. Thousands of shoes, from slippers to spike heels, were lined up on the ground, symbolizing the activists who would have been marching had*

there not been a ban. Handwritten messages were tucked inside the shoes, pleading with world leaders to consider their children and grandchildren when addressing climate change. A group of Australian women dressed as "climate angels" and stepped quietly through the rows of shoes. "The shoes are marching for us," one Parisian man told CNN. (A30, para. 6)

Online

Regarding online subvertising, social media is frequently used by subvertisers to spread their messages, inform about upcoming attacks and events, and show off their art. However, the qualitative data did not discover new attacks done exclusively on the internet. The use of Twitter, Facebook, videos, memes, websites, and blog posts are popular platforms to share information pre- and post-attack: "*See the list of participating artists and their posters, as well as a map of what cities were hit, at the Brandalism site.*" (B20, para. 6)

Hybrid

The last subcategory, which is hybrid, consists of subvertising practices that blend both off- and online approaches. This includes diverse activities such as recruitment engagement and instructional and informative videos of subvertising techniques. Subvertisers actively try to recruit more activists and encourage them to join their mission. Recruitment engagement is done both on the websites of subvertising groups and through physical means. The qualitative data briefly touches upon their efforts to train and equip individuals with the necessary tools to alter advertisement. Recruitment manuals vary in scope, ranging from comprehensive step-by-step guides to what subvertisers refer to as "*hackpacks*":

> *Subvertising is not just gaining relevance in the light of COP21. Initiatives such as the £6 'hackpacks' by Strike Magazine! - offering bus shelter takeover keys and a how-to guide for £6 - also highlight and trouble the role outdoor advertising plays in the commercialization of public space and of the people and relations occupying it*. (A13, para. 15)

On a few occasions, guides on how corporations can avoid being subvertised and how to deal with being subvertised were found.

4.1.4 Defense

The aggregate coding category, defense, plays an important role in the conceptualization of subvertising, shedding light on the justification and response mechanisms associated with it. The qualitative data helped identify two types of stakeholders using defense strategies. Firstly, industries and corporations subjected to subvertising attacks actively defend themselves against such actions. Secondly, subvertisers themselves employ defense to justify their actions, driven by a strong belief that their actions are morally correct.

Industry

The qualitative data discusses that subvertisers' action causes thousands of pounds worth of damage to industries every year. A lot of corporations look at subvertising as a form of vandalism, and that it is or should be illegal. Advertising firms in particular defend their commercials by saying they are financially contributing to society. Renting billboards and outdoor digital displays are not cheap, and the monetary input is their way of giving back to the community:

> *Unsurprisingly, the outdoor advertising industry, which calls its sector Out of Home (OOH), strongly defends itself.* (A5, para. 13)

> *Tim Lumb, from the trade body Outsmart, points out that adverts "contribute a significant amount of money every year to the transport authorities and local councils through rent and business rates".* (A5, para. 14)

Subvertisers

Subvertisers believe that they have the right to reply to advertisements. The way activists defend their civil acts of disobedience is by claiming that public space belongs to everyone and that humans do not have the choice of whether to look at advertising or not. They argue that the public cannot choose whether or not to look at commercials, and the public should therefore be allowed to reply. Furthermore, subvertisers believe that censorship and control of what is being published is too strict, as major networks have refused to sell subvertising groups airtime on television:

Subvertising is basically about reclaiming the freedom to communicate. We're very familiar with the freedom of speech, but the freedom to communicate is something that's reserved for corporations and for very rich individuals. Like if you've got enough capital, you can buy a newspaper. You can get the freedom to communicate with millions. The thing with subvertising is that it is about reclaiming these spaces that are generally used for corporations to talk at us and shout at us and go and actually know that it belongs to us as well. And we have got something to say in this space and it democratizes communication. (C41)

While corporations categorize subvertising as vandalism, the activists themselves mostly believe their act of civil disobedience to be legal or, at the very least, in a gray area of legality. The qualitative data suggests that subvertising represents a form of freedom of communication exercised by activists.

4.1.5 Evolution

The final category that helped the authors to conceptualize subvertising was evolution. Evolution takes away myths of the past and gives us the truth about our origin (Coyne, 2010, p. xvi). Evolution does not mean that things will constantly be changing, nor does it indicate how quickly they will change if it does. It depends on the pressure that is experienced, and if it is necessary to adapt further to the environment (Coyne, 2010, p. 4). Timelines endorse evolutions, as they support the details, and offer a framework of what has happened (Thiry et al., 2013, pp. 1619-1620). Timelines are an easy and common way to present and understand the past and provide a direct connection between the things that have happened (Lubar, 2013, p. 169). To begin with, the authors created a timeline based on the decades that were mentioned in the news articles and videos. They then placed the different events that were found from reviewing the collected material under the decade they belonged to. This was done to get a clear picture of where subvertising originated from and how subvertising has evolved throughout time to become what it is today based on the published material in the popular media. The timeline went from 1910 to the 21st century, and from studying the events placed in the timeline, the authors found correlations between the decades. Documenting the evolution of subvertising offers a better understanding to scholars and practitioners so that they can understand the historical significance of this topic, how it originated, and how the meaning of subvertising has changed over time. This

is crucial because when people know the history, they can learn from it, and then make choices that are based on historical facts.

It is challenging to establish the origin of subvertising, as it traces roots from multiple activist groups and strategies (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, pp. 51-52). A review of the collected data suggests that forms of subvertising started at the beginning of the 20th century. Based on the news articles and videos from the three different data sources, the authors have explained the evolution of subvertising using four different components. The names of these components are: *I. Individualistic and Liberated*, *II. Reclaim Control and Do-It-Yourself*, *III. Challenge Consumer Culture and The Mass Media*, and *IV. Global Cooperation*. Each of these are shown in Figure 13 and discussed in greater detail below.

Figure 13. Evolution of Subvertising

Individualistic and Liberated

Reclaim Control and Do-It-Yourself

Challenge Consumer Culture and The Mass Media

Global Cooperation

21st Century
Connecting Globally
Global resistance against the visual and mental implications of advertising

Internet
Target online advertising

Social Media
Has the capability to make reworked versions of adverts go viral

Plane Stupid
Group that protest against airport expansion

1950
Situationist Art Movement
Resisted 'the spectacle' of American imperialism (consumerism)

Détournement
The practice of hijacking popular symbols and changing their meaning

1970
The Billboard Liberation Front
Subversion of any outdoor billboard they deemed inappropriate across San Francisco

BUGA-UP
Responding to tobacco advertising

1980
Culture Jamming
Focus on disrupting the messages that promote global capitalism

Adbusters
Fighting against capitalism and in particular advertising's role in capitalism

1910
Dadaism
Characterized by satirical and often nonsensical art, poetry and performance

1920
Agitprop
New form of propaganda, which was born out of the horrors of the World War I

1960
Situationist Art Movement
Resisted 'the spectacle' of American imperialism (consumerism)

Punk and Graffiti Movements
A movement focusing on using stencils and DIY (Do It Yourself) philosophy

Negativland
Culture jamming group

Guerilla Girls
A large group of anonymous female artists who stand up to sexism and racism in the world of art

Ron English
American contemporary artist who explores brand imagery, street art, and advertising

1990
Banksy
An anonymous and famous graffiti artist. Known for anti-authoritarian art, often done in public places

Adfree Cities
A network of groups in UK concerned about corporate advertisement

Brandalism
International collective of artists that confront power of big business and their PR advertising

I. Individualistic and Liberated

From what is mentioned in the qualitative data, Dadaism and agitprop are the earliest forms of activisms that subvertising traces roots from:

> *Subvertising has its roots firmly planted in the histories of art and activism: from Dadaism, which was characterised by satirical and often nonsensical art, poetry and performance, to the Agitprop art element of the 'anti-art' movement, which was born out of the horrors of World War I...* (A91, para. 3)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a radical and provocative movement called Dadaism was created. The movement was a reaction to the political situation in Europe, as the countries were amid World War I. The movement was not driven by a group of activists. It was rather an individualistic activity, where individuals participated every now and then. Dadaism was formed to express the political and social changes at the time, and through performance, poems, and art, they provoked and shocked in an attempt to stir up protests (Elger, 2004, pp. 6-7). The movement challenged the existing notions and norms of art at that time by experimenting with new forms of art, as they wanted to be liberated from all art-historical role models (Elger, 2004, p. 14). A few years later, the term agitprop was formed in the 1920s in Russia after the Bolsheviks took control over the country at the end of World War I. Since 70% of the citizens were unable to read or write at that time, and the Bolsheviks needed to strengthen their position, a new form of propaganda emerged (Brown, 2013, p. 5). Agitprop theatre, which had the purpose of reaching out to the lower class that was illiterate (Brown, 2013, p. 5), challenged the existing forms of art at that time just like the Dadaists, by not using complex costumes, makeup, and scripts (Brown, 2013, pp. 6-7). Through performances where music, clowns, and acrobats were used, the Soviet regime was able to spread its political messages to the working class that previously had been left out of political activities (Brown, 2013, p. 7).

II. Reclaim Control and Do-It-Yourself

Decades later, during the 1950s and 1960s, the Situationist art movement had its uprising. This movement altered and reclaimed already existing political and commercial work, to reduce the spectacle that they believed had taken over people's lives. Through the strategy called

détournement, they reworded conversations and reworked the signs on stores amongst other things (Harold, 2004, p. 192). According to the qualitative data, subvertising is highly influenced by these two decades: "*The idea of détournement, which the Situationist International put together in the 50s, was one of the principles behind subvertising as it came to be known.*" (A23, para. 10)

A decade later, in the late 1970s, a punk movement arose. Inspired by Dadaism and the Situationists, the movement had the principles of Do-It-Yourself (DIY), meaning that people were encouraged to make their own culture and to stop consuming what was already made for them. Punk retaliated against the modern world and the mainstream, through music, fashion, and a political community. The artists used violent and brutal language as part of a strategy to draw attention and offend. To get the message of resistance out, they communicated it through content or graphics (Triggs, 2006, pp. 69-74). Also at the end of 1970, a group called the Billboard Liberation Front was formed. The group was known for climbing up on billboards and altering what the ads were representing (Fabian & Reestorff, 2015, p. 3). The group, which had anonymous members, was based in San Fransico, and their work was inspired by the punk and DIY culture (Lambert-Beatty, 2010, p. 103): "*The Billboard Liberation Front initiated subversions of any outdoor billboard they deemed inappropriate across San Francisco.*" (A42, para. 6)

Another group that was formed late in the 1970s and which was very active throughout the 1980s in Australia was Billboard Utilising Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions, also known as BUGA-UP. The group supported public health and therefore targeted advertisements on tobacco and alcohol by altering them in such a way that created a negative message about what was being promoted (Deitz, 2014, p. 1). Since the group used graffiti to alter the advertisements (Deitz, 2014, p. 1), it can be said that this group also drew inspiration from the punk and DIY culture: "*The history of hijacking advertising ranges back to the 1970s when the Australian BUGA.UP (Billboard-Utilising Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions) collective started responding to what they considered offensive tobacco advertising.*" (A13, para. 10).

Negativland, which is an experimental band from San Francisco also established in the late 1970s, was the one that came up with the term "*culture jamming*" (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p.

7). The band hides radical political messages in their music and performance with humor and satire (Zimmermann, 2006, p. 316):

> *'The whole idea of culture-jamming was to demonstrate things like 'The media lies!' and 'This is fake news." says Hosler. "But what we were really doing was punching up –* *speaking truth to power, as they say – trying to get people to look at things in a different way, trying to create a more educated, thoughtful, compassionate, kinder, better world. In our own weird-ass way.* (A108, para. 3)

III. Challenge Consumer Culture and The Mass Media

To challenge consumer culture and the mass media, which was believed by some to create an illusion of democratic freedom, a movement of activists called culture jamming, coined in the late 80s, was set to challenge the status quo (Wettergren, 2009, pp. 2-3): "*... culture jamming" originally referred to the alteration of existing imagery in order to amplify jammers' own, alternative messages*." (A77, para. 5)

Culture jammers are considered to be an offspring of the Situationists. However, the culture jammers differentiate themselves from the Situationists by their use of humor and parody. The Situationists were strongly against this strategy, as they believed it did not help them achieve the desired effect (Harold, 2004, p. 192). Culture jammers use fun and humor as part of their strategy to motivate to action and to take responsibility (Wettergren, 2009, pp. 6-7). Adbusters is a magazine that was established in the late 1980s, and which falls under culture jamming (Harold, 2004, p. 190). The Canadian magazine criticizes consumerism and advertising, and it draws its inspiration from the Situationists (Rumbo, 2002, pp. 136-137). Adbusters consists of articles where the writers address how they believe advertising, big corporations, and consumerism are affecting natural, political, mental, and social environments. Instead of having paid advertisements in their magazine, which is a common practice, Adbusters have ironic anti-ads (Rumbo, 2002, p. 136):

> *Blaming advertising for playing a central role in creating and maintaining consumer culture, they have used the creative skills and talents against advertising itself. They*

claim to be combating the negative effects of advertising and empowering its readers to regain control of culture. (B1, para. 4)

Ron English, which plays an important part in the culture jamming movement, is a famous artist that includes political messages in his art. He has hacked billboards and altered advertising messages since the 1980s (Sayej, 2020). As an artist, he uses humor, and experiments with advertisements and famous brands (Wicaksono & Juwariyah, 2019, p. 60):

Initially, the billboards I did were very surrealistic in nature, and they were intended as works of art, giving away free to the public. And later, as I became more political and more aware politically, it just seemed like such a great thing to start adding some politics into the billboards instead of just trying to present my art. (C39)

In 1985, a group called Guerilla Girls was formed to protest the lack of women and people of color in the art world (McDonald & Partlow, 2003, pp. 303-304). According to themselves, they use humor and facts to confront discrimination. When the group appears publicly, the activists use gorilla masks, and instead of using their names on their work, they use the name of dead female artists to remain anonymous. The Guerilla Girls consists of female artists, writers, performers, and filmmakers that create posters, books, and stickers amongst other things to spread their messages (McDonald & Partlow, 2003, p. 304):

And they are an anonymous feminist activist group protesting about misrepresentation of women and art, racism, sexism and male patriarchy. And they would protest by using posters, stickers, book talks and art exhibitions that would all include humor and unique graphic design. (C33)

Another artist in this phase which has been important for the evolution of subvertising, is the anonymous street artist called Banksy that started working in the 1990s. The artist whose identity is unknown is a painter, filmmaker, and activist, that in 2010 was on the list of the world's 100 most influential people (Ellsworth-Jones, 2013). The art created by Banksy is simple, and highlights issues such as consumerism, war, and capitalism. Through the work, the artist confronts the system and the established art world (Pinto, 2022, pp. 2-3): "*Arguably the*

most controversial street artist in the world, who has developed an entire art subculture devoted to his works. Banksy's an English street artist whose real identity remains unknown" (C50)

All these movements, strategies, and artists mentioned above have had an influence in shaping today's subvertising movement (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 52).

IV. Global Cooperation

The stakes have never been higher, as consumerism is increasing, while the environment is degrading (Lekakis, 2017, p. 323). The world is in the midst of a climate crisis, and people are faced with news media that almost daily cover climate change, inequality, loss of biodiversity, financial instability, food insecurity, and resource scarcity (Wunder, 2019, p. xvii). The main target for subvertisers today is therefore consumerism (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 19). During a metropolitan transit journey that takes around 45 minutes, a commuter can be exposed to more than a hundred advertisements (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, pp. 25-26). Most advertisements are created to appeal to extrinsic values. Those values are, amongst other things, associated with less concern about the environment and human rights (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 33).

Subvertising has become a more coordinated movement, as groups are connecting globally: "*Today, the practice of subvertising is reaching novel heights. Collectives are starting to connect globally to form an ever-increasing force of resistance against the visual and mental implications of advertising.*" (A13, para. 12)

Previously, the motivations have been comprehensive, and subvertising groups have worked separately with their own goals. However, in recent times, activist groups have acquired a shared vision to challenge advertising and its visual and mental implications. There is a collective belief amongst the groups that there is a connection between advertising, fossil fuels, and climate change. Together they are breaking into advertising spaces to alter messages that promote consumption towards ones that advocate for anti-consumption (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, pp. 51-52). For example, during #SubvertTheCity, which was a global call for action, over 60 international street and visual artists participated. On the same day, in over 30 cities around the world, hundreds of artworks encouraging the public to think about an alternative society beyond consumerism were installed (StreetArtNews, 2017). Some of the groups that have emerged in the

21ˢᵗ century, and which share the belief that there is a connection between advertising, fossil fuels, and climate change, are Plane Stupid, Brandalism, and Adfree Cities: "*Initiatives such as Brandalism, Brigade Antipub and Plane Stupid are beginning to specifically address the connections between advertising, fossil fuels and climate change.*" (A13, para. 12)

Plane Stupid, which was founded in 2005 (Vidal, 2008), is an environmental activist group, that targets airport expansion and pollution. The group is amongst other things known for having protested against the proposition of a third runway at Heathrow Airport (Newlands, 2013, p. 46). Through their actions, they are criticizing the British government's climate policy, as they believe the government is not doing enough (Gavin, 2010, p. 459). Any climate change activist that wants to act against the expansion of airports and the increasing use of airplanes as a travel option, can say that they are working for Plane Stupid, as it is a network without membership and leaders (Vidal, 2008). The second group, which is Brandalism, focuses on exposing corporate greenwashing and had its first project in 2012 (Lekakis, 2017, pp. 316-317). The group is influenced by agitprop, the Situationists, and graffiti movements from the 20ᵗʰ century. The motivation behind their work is to reveal the truth behind advertisements and to start a discussion about the politics of public spaces, as they believe we are forced to see advertisements when they are placed outdoors (Lekakis, 2017, p. 317). The third group, Adfree Cities, is a network of groups in the UK that is trying to challenge corporate advertisements, as they believe the advertisements have a negative impact on our health, the environment, and the local economy amongst other things (Lekakis, 2022, p. 32). The network, which was founded in 2017, sees itself as a part of the wider subvertising and anti-advertising movement and uses creativity and lobbying tactics to try to end advertising in public spaces (Lekakis, 2022, p. 32).

Another proclaimed motivation for the modern subvertising movement is the monopoly private companies have over public spaces through outdoor advertising. The activists' goal is therefore to reclaim that space (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 40). From creating mainstream design and advertising, the movement has shifted its focus toward exposing and reforming its practices. Catherine Flood, a protest art academic, further claims that modern subvertising appears to be going back to its roots from the 1950s and 1960s (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 53). Additionally, the movement has become more aggressive than before when it comes to recruiting new activists (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 54).
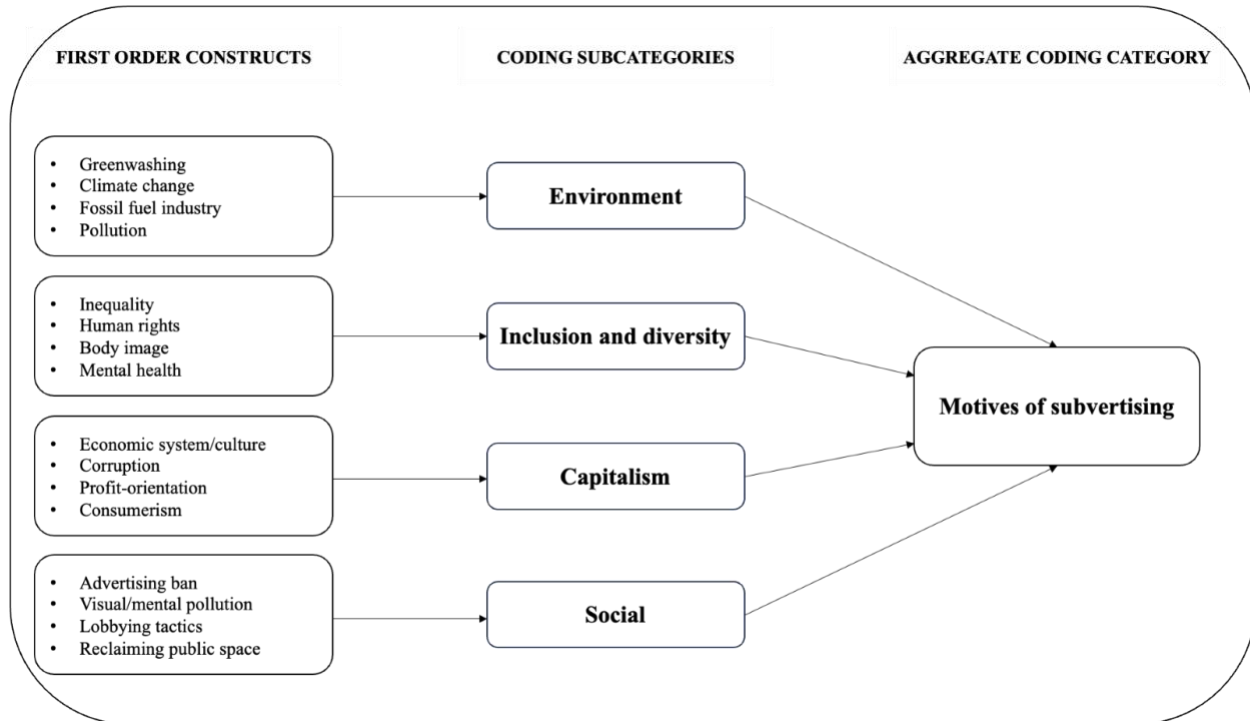
Advertising is not only to be found in the streets. Since 1994, companies have bought their right to advertise online (Evans, 2009, p. 38): "*The advertising industry is changing, moving from mass-targeted mediums like billboards and buses to the individualized, private sphere of the Internet.*" (A83, para. 2)

Compared to traditional advertising such as radio, television, and outdoor advertising, online advertising companies can attain valuable information about the viewers such as location, what time the advertisement was viewed, and what other websites they have visited (Evans, 2009, p. 42). During the 21st century, which the authors have called Global Cooperation, there has become an increasing number of groups and activists that have taken use of the internet to organize campaigns, recruit other activists and artists, and spread their messages. They also use the internet to develop and share culture jamming images. As groups and activists for decades have worked to reclaim public spaces, they are now also working on reclaiming virtual public spaces by, for example, targeting online advertisements (Bell et al., 2004, p. 39). Social media has the capability to make reworked versions of adverts go viral, giving activists the possibility to promote their work globally (Smith-Antony & Groom, 2015, p. 30). Due to social media and access to the internet, it has also become easier for activists and groups to connect with each other, draw inspiration from one another, and recruit new members.

4.2 Motives of Subvertising

The motives of subvertising can be explained by four coding subcategories, which are environment, inclusion and diversity, capitalism, and social. By analyzing subvertising through the motives of engaging in it, the authors can gain an understanding of what the activists are passionate about. Figure 14 illustrates the data structure for the motives of subvertising to give a visual presentation of what influences the motives of subvertising.

Figure 14. Data Structure for the Motives of Subvertising

FIRST ORDER CONSTRUCTS

- Greenwashing
- Climate change
- Fossil fuel industry
- Pollution

- Inequality
- Human rights
- Body image
- Mental health

- Economic system/culture
- Corruption
- Profit-orientation
- Consumerism

- Advertising ban
- Visual/mental pollution
- Lobbying tactics
- Reclaiming public space

CODING SUBCATEGORIES

Environment

Inclusion and diversity

Capitalism

Social

AGGREGATE CODING CATEGORY

Motives of subvertising

4.2.1 Environment

To understand the motives behind subvertising, examining the environmental context can be insightful. Environmental motives are concerned about greenwashing, climate change, the fossil fuel industry, and pollution.

Greenwashing

The qualitative data consistently highlights greenwashing as a motive. Corporations face frequent accusations from subvertisers for engaging in practices such as making misleading claims about their environmental commitments:

> *Brandalism artists say they hope their visual displays can make a positive contribution to these mass efforts by exposing false solutions. "By sponsoring the climate talks, major polluters such as Air France and GDF-Suez-Engie can promote themselves as part of the*

solution—when actually they are part of the problem," said Joe Elan of Brandalism.
(B79, para. 11)

Climate change

Subvertisers believe that industries, corporations, and governments lack response and action to the issue of climate change. Furthermore, they draw a connection between the advertising industry and climate change, as they argue that commercials often fail to present the complete truth:

> *The posters showcase the environmental impacts we don't see in Barclays' own adverts: the deforestation, the ocean drilling, the oil spills, the wildfires, the threat to wildlife. They're a corrective, right of reply to the greenwash messaging of Europe's dirtiest bank.* (A6, para. 5)

Fossil fuel industry

Subvertisers are also concerned about corporations not taking accountability for their contribution to climate change. Notably, industries that heavily invest in the fossil fuel industry become a primary target of subvertisers. The qualitative data emphasizes the fossil fuel sector's failure to fulfill its promises:

> *Earlier this month the US congress announced that it has launched an investigation, and will hold hearings, into the reported role of the fossil fuel industry in a long-running, industry-wide campaign to spread disinformation about the role of fossil fuels in causing climate change. The clock of accountability is ticking.* (A25, para. 14)

Pollution

Subvertisers recognize the health risks associated with pollution caused by increased consumption. However, subvertisers do not only attack the polluters. The activists' critique goes beyond this and directs their efforts toward those who facilitate and enable polluters to operate: "*Climate activists are expanding their targets from the world's biggest corporate polluters to those who enable them, from governments to banks and, of course, ad agencies.*" (B22, para. 6)

4.2.2 Inclusion and Diversity

Inclusion and diversity is another theme that is important to examine to understand the motives behind subvertising. Subvertisers are concerned with issues such as inequality, human rights, body image, and mental health.

Inequality

Subvertisers believe that the placement of advertisements can contribute to inequality. They argue that specific locations where advertisements are displayed play a significant role in perpetuating economic inequality: "*Some launched an Adfree Cities initiative, observing that outdoor advertising makes inequality worse: heavy road networks, which tend to have the most outdoor advertising sites and the worst air quality, typically run through poor neighborhoods.*" (A8, para. 12)

Human rights

In the qualitative data, human rights are found to be a topic of interest for subvertisers. Governments and corporations, such as large clothing lines and petroleum companies, are being blamed for not having fair labor practices and wages, while banks are accused of investing in companies that violate human rights. Some subvertisers also go to the extent of calling advertising, in general, a violation of human rights: "*With the United Nations currently investigating the impact of advertising on human rights, Brandalism seeks to highlight the lack of control that communities have over their public space.*" (B16, para. 5)

Body image

Occasionally in the qualitative data, the discussion concerning the effect advertisements have on body image is debated. Specifically, attention is drawn to that the use of photoshopped images in advertisements fosters insecurities among individuals:

> *Companies sell products by convincing viewers that the object will make their lives better. In order to do this. Companies try to make people feel insecure. The hypersexualized women to make them the object of the male gaze. They teach women that their bodies can and should be manipulated and that there is only one definition of beauty. Tall, slim and white.* (C66)

Mental health

The pressure to buy imposed by advertisements has, according to subvertisers, a significant impact on mental health. The qualitative data discusses how advertisements facilitate the normalization of a high-carbon and consumer lifestyle through misleading green advertisements. This normalization influences mental health:

> *Every day the average North American receives over 3000 product marketing messages. From that reassuring glow of our TV sets, we are bombarded with enticements to buy and consume. Are North Americans being held mentally hostage by the advertising industry? And is the way we think and act somehow changed by this exposure?* (C21)

4.2.3 Capitalism

When exploring the motives behind subvertising, it is necessary to investigate the underlying dynamics of capitalism. Capitalism has been found in the qualitative data to be one of the main motives for subvertisers: "*The modern subvertising movement is a reaction against the outdoor advertising industry and the economic system it serves — capitalism.*" (A91, para. 4). Capitalism includes the topics of economic system/culture, corruption, profit-orientation, and consumerism.

Economic system/culture

Economic systems and culture are closely linked to capitalism which is widely discussed in the data. The activists consider their acts as a means to disrupt and challenge the economic system and culture, with their messages directly opposing these entrenched systems. Subvertisers' actions can be seen as a reaction to the current economic system, reflecting their dissatisfaction and desire for change:

> *You have to think about the long-term consequences of the kind of business culture that we have built up. I mean, our global economic system is now producing climate change. We're running out of oil. The fish in the Atlantic are starting to disappear. Here in the Pacific Northwest, where I live, the salmon runs are drying up. And I think that in some way we are actually living off the backs of our own children. We're living off the backs of future generations if we continue.* (C29)

Corruption

The qualitative data also discusses that making a profit is considered more important than the environment for corporations, which can result in corruption. It discusses corruption as a modern crisis, and subvertisers therefore aim to challenge the problem: "*Parodying brand ads and undermining brand vows, Brandalism challenges corporate power, greed, and corruption by forcing onlookers to question if a company's words and actions match up.*" (B34, para. 5)

Profit-Orientation

Subvertisers believe that profit is the sole reason for advertisement. They believe that the relentless pursuit of financial gain drives the advertising industry, often leading to unethical practices and the continuity of injustice:

> *So we believe that the effects advertising has on our minds, our society, our culture, our biosphere is deeply concerning. The goal of advertising is not to create a genuine and lasting sense of happiness or fulfillment that wouldn't be profitable.* (C53)

Consumerism

The most discussed topic under the coding subcategory of capitalism is consumerism. Consumerism is one of the key motivations behind subvertising as the activists argue that advertisement is triggering unsustainable consumerism: "*The original idea of Brandalism consists on criticise those actions that develop global warming, but it is not the only aim. They fight against consumerism and unreality on publicity.*" (B41, para. 4)

4.2.4 Social

The last identified coding construct of motives of subvertising is the social aspect. Topics discussed here are advertising bans, visual/mental pollution, lobbying tactics, and reclaiming public space.

Advertising ban

Advertising is considered visual pollution and subvertising groups are trying to enact a ban on advertising. A lot of subvertisers take their inspiration from the Brazilian city of Sao Paulo, which is one of the cities that have banned outdoor advertising altogether: "*Brandalism*

takes inspiration from Sao Paolo, Brazil, which banned outdoor advertising in 2007. 'They deemed it visual pollution, just like exhaust fumes polluting our airwaves or industrial pollution in our rivers,'" (A12, para. 12). Subvertisers draw parallels to tobacco and alcohol advertising and advocate for similar bans to be implemented on advertisements that are contributing to increased consumption and climate change.

Visual/mental pollution

Subvertisers express concern over the notion that they believe advertising is equal to visual pollution, and individuals are not given the freedom to choose whether or not to engage with it. According to the activists, when they alter or take down advertisements, they are reducing mental pollution:

> *There should be a legal defense because you're reducing harm. I think any time that you take an advertisement off the street, you're helping tidy up visual pollution, you're tightening up the kind of psychological nightmare that is that kind of assault on people's psyches by corporations.* (C41)

Lobbying tactics

Subvertisers are driven by a range of concerns beyond the environment, including a desire to address lobbying tactics. The activists argue that certain industries and corporations utilize lobbying to influence decision-making processes and shape policies in their favor:

> *In the past, Brandalism has targeted the banking and aviation sectors for their greenwashing activities, but this time the group says its intention is to highlight the misleading adverts and aggressive lobbying tactics used by the automotive industry – specifically Toyota and BMW.* (A1, para. 2)

Reclaiming public space

Reclaiming public space is in the qualitative data considered as one of the main goals of subvertising. The activists believe that public space is for everyone and that individuals should not be bombarded with commercials that they have not asked for. Subvertisers are therefore trying to take back control from corporate entities: "*Out of this anger, Marcuse and a group of*

his artist friends spawned Brandalism: a movement dedicated to reclaiming the outdoor, visual realm from corporate control." (A18, para. 6)

4.3 Outcomes of Subvertising

The outcomes of subvertising can be explained by three coding subcategories, which are public, government, and corporate. By analyzing subvertising through its outcomes, the authors gain insight into the impacts. The outcomes of subvertising are in the data described vaguely. It is also difficult to guarantee that subvertising is the only factor leading to the outcome and that other factors are not influencing. Figure 15 illustrates the data structure for the outcomes of subvertising to give a visual presentation.

Figure 15. Data Structure for Outcomes of Subvertising
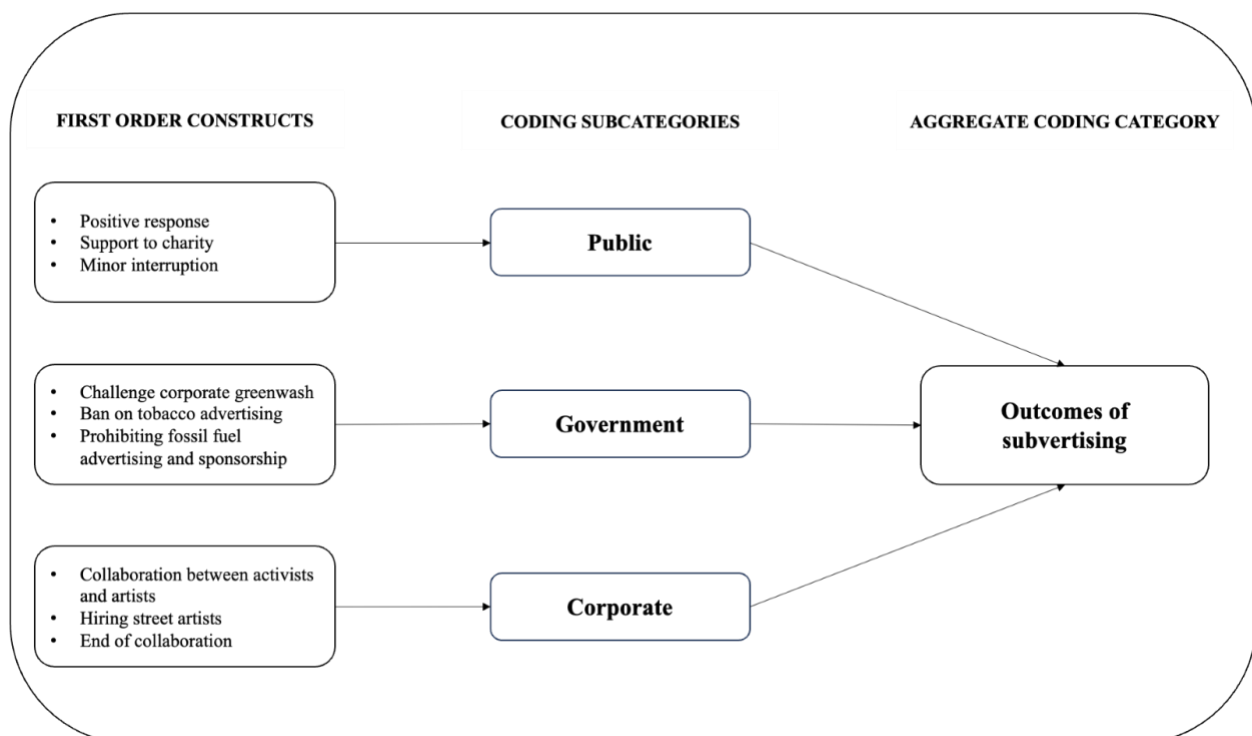
4.3.1 Public

To comprehend the various outcomes of subvertising, examining the public impacts is crucial. The public outcomes can be divided into three sections. First, positive outcomes emerge as a notable impact. Second, the qualitative data reveal instances where subvertising has resulted

in support to charities. Lastly, how certain members of the public consider subvertising to only be a minor interruption is explained.

Positive response

The public response has mostly been positive. Especially on social media, subvertisers' work is frequently shared and liked. The public are also leaving encouraging comments:

> *Among your comments were: "I love an intelligent response to advertising. Who asked the public if we want our faces filled with adverts as we walk the streets?" and "Hooray! More of this. Everyone should start doing this to adverts".* (A33, para. 2)

Support to charity

Another public outcome is the contribution to charity. This was especially noteworthy during the bushfires in Australia, where subvertising posters were equipped with QR codes that could be scanned before one got directed to a charity. This helped the subvertisers get an understanding of how and where the public related to the campaign. Crowdfunding ads have also been used by subvertisers to raise money for advertisements in magazines:

> *'We had a target to raise £20,000 for the adverts but due to contributions from over 2,000 people we broke that target and were able to get the ads into two publications rather than the planned one,' says Naomi McAuliffe, poverty and human rights campaigner at Amnesty International. 'The individuals who financially supported this campaign were hugely enthusiastic about it as they could see exactly where their money was going and understood the rationale for advertising in this way.'* (A82, para. 17)

Minor interruption

Though there are changes that have resulted from subvertising, these are by some considered to be insignificant or of little importance. The qualitative data argues that to expect any outcomes out of subvertising is rather naive:

> *A criticism of subvertising is that over-emphasising its potential effect may be naïve. As academic Richard Gilman-Opalsky points out: "Debord was well aware, in the 1950s and 60s, that something like sporadic 'subvertising' could never jam a culture of constant*

accumulation. Subvertising at its best is like a skip on a record that the needle passes over with a minor interruption." (B9, para. 9)

4.3.2 Government

The second type of outcome of subvertising is governmental impacts. The governmental outcomes can be divided into three sections. First, governments are trying to challenge corporate greenwashing. Second, the qualitative data reveals that a great number of people believe a ban like the ban on tobacco advertising is necessary and that some governments are implementing this. Lastly, some governments are prohibiting the advertisement and sponsorship of the fossil fuel industry.

Challenge corporate greenwash

When it comes to the government's outcomes, articles discuss cities that are taking corporates to court because of greenwashing. Several cities and local governments in the USA are suing oil corporations for making false advertising claims. Most cases involve misrepresentation of environmental benefits:

> *As catalogued in a recent London School of Economics report, at least 25 cities and local governments in the United States are taking oil majors to court for making false claims in advertising, including New York suing ExxonMobil for "affirmatively misrepresenting the environmental benefits" of their fuels.* (A51, para. 8)

Ban on tobacco advertising

As discussed in the evolution, subvertisers targeted advertisements on tobacco and alcohol back in the 1970s due to the risks it poses to public health. Modern subvertising argues the fossil fuels industry poses the same risks, therefore arguing for the same ban:

> *Drawing parallels with the ban on advertising for tobacco companies, climate campaigners are calling for a ban on any advertising for fossil fuel companies or those dependent on fossil fuels, including airlines, airports and fossil-dependent cars, owing to the incontrovertible evidence of the harm caused by burning fossil fuels.* (B25, para. 6)

Prohibiting fossil fuel advertising and sponsorship

Some governments have gone to the extent of prohibiting the advertising or sponsorship of fossil fuel industries. Iceland is discussed in the qualitative data to be the first country to ban outdoor advertising for cigarettes in 1971, and several other places have followed the same trend: "*Several councils in the UK, including Cambridgeshire, Norwich and North Somerset, have introduced restrictions on advertising for environmentally damaging products, such as fossil fuel companies, flights and SUV cars*." (A2, para. 4)

4.3.3 Corporate

The last identified coding construct of outcomes of subvertising is corporate impacts. Topics discussed here are collaborations between activists and artists, hiring street artists, and the end of collaborations.

Collaboration between activists and artists

Subvertisers argue that collaboration gives benefits for both the artist and the activist. By collaborating, artists gain a platform to express their creativity, while activists benefit from artistic expertise and creative strategies used by artists. This collaboration strengthens the impact of subvertising acts and fosters a sense of shared purpose in challenging corporate power:

> *Though they butt heads, there's a real opportunity for artists and advertisers to collaborate as some kind of ingenious, wildly creative hybrid. Progressively interacting with one another in the public space can allow advertisers to experiment with commercial street art, and artists are given more opportunities to explore new and innovative ways in which they convey their ideas and designs, all while gaining a huge amount of exposure.* (A57, para. 9)

Hiring street artists

In some cases, street artists have also been hired by corporations to create advertisements. Subvertisers therefore argue that they do not only challenge corporate practices but that they also create job opportunities:

> *English has painted album covers for The Dandy Warhols, Slash and Chris Brown and has been featured in multiple documentaries, plus an episode of The Simpsons. Having been the subject of the 2005 documentary Popaganda: The Art and Crimes of Ron*

English, he's now the star of yet another film, Welcome to Delusionville, a more personal look at his life and oeuvre that recently screened at the Kessler Theater. (A80, para. 7)

End of collaboration

On the contrary, some collaborations have ended. The qualitative data discusses that subvertising attacks have exposed corporations' wrongdoings, and collaborations and sponsorships between corporations have therefore been terminated:

The performance was part of a musical protest outside the Theatre Royal by BP or not BP? and Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Choir in the final days of COP26. (A73, para. 6)

A few months later, life imitated art as the Scottish Ballet announced in February that it was cutting ties with its oil sponsor. (A73, para. 7)

The news came on the same day that the National Portrait Gallery in London was also ending its partnership with BP. (A73, para. 8)

5 Conclusion

This chapter provides a synopsis of the study where the two research questions are being discussed. Furthermore, the theoretical and practical implications are presented before the study ends with limitations and suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary

Over time, subvertising has gained popularity, which has resulted in widespread discussion on the topic in the popular media. The rise of subvertising attacks has led to an increase in research articles on activists, referred to as subvertisers, utilizing it as a tool. Despite this popularity, there is limited research about subvertising, and to the authors' best knowledge, none of them have used a TNA that is based on news articles and videos from popular media. The current literature focuses on discussing and examining specific cases (Britland, 2020; Melo & Balonas, 2019; Nelson et al., 2020) rather than attempting to conceptualize and define subvertising. There is also limited research that addresses the motives and outcomes with an overall approach and that looks at the phenomenon through a broader lens. The authors therefore decided to attempt to fill these gaps in the literature by looking at two things. First, by examining how popular media conceptualize subvertising, and second, by looking at what the various motives and outcomes of subvertising are. This study aims to fill the gaps with a TNA of popular media, including transcription of 175 news articles and 91 videos of subvertising that were relevant for this study. By analyzing popular media, the study provides valuable insights into how subvertising is portrayed by the media, the role of subvertising in contemporary social change, and how it can be used to promote more sustainable behavior as it challenges the dominant narratives of consumer culture. The findings of this study are not only for academics, but also for activists and artists who seek to use subvertising as a tool for social, environmental, and political justice.

To answer **RQ1**, how does popular media conceptualize subvertising, the authors started by looking at how subvertising had been defined in the collected news articles and videos. This helped the authors understand the perception of subvertising in popular media. Keywords that kept repeating were *subvert, parodies, visual and performative form of art, expose, corporate and political advertisement, commercial culture, statement,* and *movement*. By looking at the keywords that were found after analyzing the definitions discovered in the qualitative data, the

authors were able to construct a more precise definition: "*Subvertising is a movement that through parody, visual, and performative art aims to make a statement and expose assumptions behind the corporate and political advertisement*". As there is no existing literature that focuses on defining subvertising, this study contributes new insight into this context. The targets that were identified revealed that subvertisers are most often attacking industries and corporations rather than individuals. This claim can be defended by a research article on intergenerational justice issues, as the climate activists that have been written about in that research see climate change as a structural problem rather than a problem caused by individual actions (Knappe & Renn, 2022, p. 2). Kozinets and Handelman (2004) argue the same by claiming that consumer culture is attacked. However, they further argue that anti-consumption activist groups, such as those that engage in subvertising, should be cautious. There is a fine line between "*conviction and conversion*", and attempting to influence consumers can sometimes backfire by pushing them away (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004, p. 703). This study also discovered that subvertisers plan their attacks around larger events, often climate-related or anti-climate events such as European Motor Show and Black Friday, to get the most attention. Another tactic that is being used to get the most attention is hijacking billboards and bus stops, and other artistic demonstrations at locations with a lot of traffic. Subvertisers justify their actions by arguing that public space belongs to everyone and that individuals should not be exposed to false or misleading advertisements that they are forced to view. Subvertisers are celebrating their freedom of speech and freedom to reply back to corporations by altering advertisements.

To answer **RQ2**, what are the various motives and outcomes of subvertising, the authors explored the motives and outcomes that were discussed in the news articles and videos. The motives found through this study explained that subvertisers often attack corporations they believe have aggressive lobbying tactics and that are greenwashing their practices through misleading advertisements. The study by Melo and Balonas (2019), which investigated the subvertising stickers in the city of Porto, in Portugal, questioned the creators' motivations. More specifically, it questioned whether the creators had political motives, or if it was an artistic form of popular expression. This is converging with the findings in this study, as some subvertisers may have political agendas, such as when they attacked the London Olympics, COP21, and

COP26. However, some subvertisers aim at reclaiming public space and challenge the dominance of corporate advertising.

Lekakis' (2017) research examined the group Brandalism and how they target the advertising industry, as they believe that advertisements are contributing to consumerism and environmental consequences. In the research, the author concluded that activists and artists are increasingly involved in contemporary social changes, which is converging with the results of this study. Greenwashing was one of the most critical motives behind subvertising, as corporations often create a false impression of environmental responsibility while continuing to engage in environmentally harmful practices. Theories on intergenerational justice, which were used to understand the concept of subvertising, addressed a concern about securing justice for future generations by leaving the world no worse off to the next generations than how it was left to the present generation. In the theory, climate protection and social justice are combined (Knappe & Renn, 2022, p. 1). Through subvertising, the activists address concerns around today's consumer behavior, and how the climate, humans, and life on earth in general are suffering due to repudiation and the lack of action taken by industries and governments. They also address inequalities through their work, and how it is the less privileged that bear the greatest consequences of the climate crisis. Consumerism and environmental concerns are some of the subvertisers' greatest motives and can be explained by the fact that they are concerned about the future of the planet, and what the next generations will be left with. An example of this was found in the findings of this study under the motivation of subvertising. The qualitative data claimed that the motivation behind the reaction against today's economic system, which is capitalism, was its contribution to climate change and an unsustainable lifestyle that is not considerate to future generations.

Lekakis' (2017) study further suggests that subvertising can be a possibly effective way for both artists and activists to raise awareness about the negative impacts consumerism and the advertising industry have on the environment. The authors are careful with this allegation, as there is no prior literature that has reported subvertising as being effective. For example, a study done by Frederick et al., (2016), examined whether women exposed to thin-ideal media commercials that are tampered with report better body image. The study concluded that subvertising had no significant effect on body image, hence questioning the effectiveness of

using subvertising to improve body image. This study did however find one particular outcome that subvertising had a direct effect on, namely charity and crowdfunding. Since some of the art created by subvertisers included a QR code that directed viewers to charities, and it was possible to trace back to which QR codes the contributions came from, the authors were able to establish that subvertising had a direct effect on the chosen charities. Based on the findings in this study, all the other outcomes, such as advertising bans, the end of collaborations between different corporations and artists, and activists, cannot fully be explained by subvertising. Other underlying factors could be contributing to these outcomes, and it is therefore important to consider a broader range of factors when examining outcomes of subvertising.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The authors' research contributes to the literature on subvertising in five ways. First, perhaps the most important contribution of this study is that the authors came up with a definition for subvertising that explains what it is. The authors thoroughly studied the concept of subvertising and analyzed how popular media conceptualize subvertising to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. If not defined clearly, concepts can be interpreted by the perception of people, which can make the interpretation deviate from the intended meaning due to sociological differences between people (van Mil & Henman, 2016, pp. 709-710). In the popular media, there was no consensus on the definition of subvertising, so the authors therefore created a new one based on the definitions that were found after reviewing the collected newspapers and videos.

Second, subvertising has a lot of synonyms due to the existence of similar movements and strategies such as culture jamming, adbusting, and Brandalism. As a result, subvertising and its synonyms are being addressed interchangeably in prior literature and everyday language. This research has therefore investigated the boundaries of subvertising by doing in-depth research on who the subvertisers target, what motivates them, their common ways of carrying out their attacks, and how it has evolved throughout time. A study on the outcomes of subvertising is also provided in this research, as the authors looked at how the corporations defend themselves against the subvertisers, and how subvertisers justify their attacks. The authors also compared subvertising to similar movements and strategies by looking into the similarities and differences so that the boundaries of subvertising would be clearer. Understanding its boundaries makes it

easier to understand what subvertising is, and minimizes the risk of it being confused with other concepts.

Third, narrative research is a newer approach under qualitative research (Bruce et al., 2016, p. 1), and has been a source of many dialogues and debates for the last 50 years. Whether phenomena of the world can be determined by events in the world, has been one of the main topics in the ongoing debates. Many scholars across social science believe that no meaningful observation can be done without a theoretical structure. However, other scholars support those explanations of the world, which is data-driven, can be improved and corrected through observation (Gergen, 2015, pp. 288-289). By conducting a TNA to see how popular media conceptualize subvertising, and to understand what the motives and outcomes are, this study supports that important findings can come from narrative research. The authors discovered amongst other things what drives the subvertisers by identifying that the degradation of the environment, the capitalistic economy, social issues, and fighting for diversity and inclusion are the main motives behind the attacks. The claim that no meaningful observations can be done through narrative research is therefore being contradicted.

Fourth, the authors are offering a methodological contribution to the limited literature on subvertising. To their best knowledge, no prior research on subvertising has had a popular media-based TNA. By using news articles and videos, this research sheds new light on subvertising, as it tries to differentiate subvertising from other similar concepts by focusing on what it is, and what the motives and outcomes are based on what is written and said in the popular media.

Fifth, the authors provide research on how society has reacted to subvertising attacks as there has been little focus on this in prior literature. The authors identified that there are mixed feelings about subvertising. Parts of the public are positive about the work of subvertisers and want to participate or get involved somehow. However, others do not like being told what to do no matter who the message is coming from (Harold, 2004, p. 191), and believe that subvertisers are only stating what people already know. Even though the main target for subvertisers today is consumerism (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 19), the authors found through the study that

subvertisers are selling things such as figures, guides, and merchandise. They are hence contributing to a problem they are initially trying to reduce, which can be viewed as hypocritical.

5.3 Practical Implications

This research provides five practical implications for subvertisers and other activists, corporations, governments, and the public in general. First, since the authors in this research have defined subvertising and studied its boundaries, they are offering important knowledge to academic scholars that may be interested in researching the same topic. The findings from this research, which provides a definition of subvertising and knowledge on motives, targets, types of attacks, defense mechanisms, and evolution, will be very helpful material for potential future research.

Second, it is beneficial for corporations, which are targeted by subvertisers, to understand what subvertising is, as they are dependent on positive public relations, and there is no indication that subvertising will decrease. Knowing what subvertising is, and what the motives are, helps the affected parties to understand why these campaigns are driven, and why they are being targeted by subvertisers. Having this knowledge also makes it easier for the targeted parties to take more informed choices regarding how to respond to it, and how they can constructively engage with subvertisers.

Third, the study revealed that governments and politicians are targeted by subvertisers in their attacks to push for stricter legislation on advertising in an attempt to reduce consumerism and prevent greenwashing. They are also being targeted for not doing enough for the environment, as subvertisers believe their climate actions are too slow and not sufficient. As for corporations, this research provides governments and politicians with important knowledge about a rising movement and strategy that we most likely will see much more from in the future. The information that emerges from this study will be helpful for them, as knowing what subvertising is and what its concepts and boundaries are can help them to make better and more informed decisions. Knowing the concepts of subvertising, such as who they target and why, and their motivations, will make it easier for them to interact with the subvertisers constructively. The information that is generated in this research can also be used to create and support new

legislation for advertising, while also influencing them to take action against corporations that misuse outdoor advertising by using it as a tool to greenwash their operation.

Fourth, this research reveals that the public has mixed feelings towards subvertising and similar activist groups. For activists to succeed, they must have respect and be accepted by citizens (Moyer et al., 2001, p. 21). A study that researched how the public view their attacks, can give subvertisers and similar movements an understanding of what is working and what is not, and how they can change their strategies to engage more people. The study reveals that some critics perceive them as arrogant and judgmental, and provides reasons for why some have that perception of them. Such information allows the activists to work on how they portray themselves and make changes to their strategies so that they can reach out to more people and get more support.

Fifth, the authors have studied the evolution of subvertising, where they have connected it from the past until the present date. By analyzing the evolution, the authors have revealed several patterns. Patterns are used by humans to make sense of things (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003, p. 466). Having a good understanding of something or someone makes it easier to anticipate future actions (Schank, 1986 p. 42). In the evolution that starts from 1910, the authors have provided information about movements and attacks that have formed subvertising to what it is today, while also linking the unforeseen attacks that have been done throughout time. This information can be used to make predictions of future attacks (Schank, 1986 p. 48). The authors' discovery of patterns of subvertising can help academic scholars to better understand the phenomenon, and help them to make advancements in their research. For governments and corporations, seeing and understanding the patterns is beneficial as it can help them to predict attacks, which gives them time to plan how to defend themselves or how to respond.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

Even though a great effort was put down to make this study of great quality, it is not without limitations. The data that was used to gain a deeper understanding of subvertising and to answer the two research questions, was retrieved from the popular media using a set of four keywords. This study, like most qualitative research, had a subjective approach (Kalu, 2019, p. 98), and the keywords were therefore chosen based on a subjective opinion of what the authors

thought was the most important after reviewing the literature on subvertising that was available on Scopus. The keywords used, the data collected, and the codes generated in this study, have been influenced by how the authors have interpreted the articles and videos. The result is therefore subjective as it is based on interpretations (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019, p. 234).

Using the four keywords when searching for material on YouTube gave the authors an immense result, consisting of an unknown number of videos. The authors stopped the collection after 100 videos, as they experienced that the material failed to meet the set criteria after this amount. There was therefore an unknown number of videos that were not included in this study. This means that not all accessible material was included. However, the authors did their very best to include all relevant videos.

These limitations provide opportunities for future research. This study focused on getting a deeper understanding of subvertising, and the authors investigated how the phenomenon is being conceptualized in the popular media, and the motives and outcomes of subvertising. The data collection in this study was limited to four keywords that were based on what the authors were trying to get answers to. By using different sets of keywords, many possible investigations can be done about subvertising, and the phenomenon could be analyzed from manifold perspectives as different news articles and videos are collected. Based on this study's delimitations, a suggestion for future research can therefore be to investigate the criticism of subvertising and why the acts of subvertisers are generating such mixed feelings amongst the recipients. Also, since more and more companies are starting to take advantage of the internet and social media to promote their products and services, another suggestion for research would be to investigate how this move from physical to online advertising is affecting the subvertisers' practices, and if there is a need for adaption due to this change.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Master Analysis of Articles

Can be accessed through:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xk03cs0rmcrj6ym/AABC-HFjJ23zlgPU_7c0m5SIa?dl=0

(Download for optimal view)

Appendix II: Master Analysis of Videos

Can be accessed through:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xk03cs0rmcrj6ym/AABC-HFjJ23zlgPU_7c0m5SIa?dl=0

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Appendix III: Coding – Target

Can be accessed through:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xk03cs0rmcrj6ym/AABC-HFjJ23zlgPU_7c0m5SIa?dl=0

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Target

GOVERNMENT	Article	What	INDUSTRY	Article	What	EVENT	Article	What
Australia	A15, A16, A17, A18, A32, A36, A66, A69, A88, B19, B23, B40, B45, B81, C28	The Australian government's lack of action on climate change during bushfires	Aviation	A3, A4, A23, A24, A30, A41, B2, B7, B47, B68, B70, B79, C95	Contribution to climate change	European Motor Show in Brussel	A1, A22, A70, B49, B58, C1	Call for governments to regulate adverts for car advertisement
UK	A2, A8, A18, A34, A125, B62, C80, C88	Demand government action	Automotive	A1, A2, A7, A8, A10, A21, A22, A30, A38, A41, A63, A70, A71,	Misleading adverts and aggressive lobbying tactics	London Olympics, 2012	A18, A20, A54, A58, B14, C10	To draw as much attention as possible
London	A50, A94	Demand government action	Advertising	A3, A18, A20, A23, A24, A25, A32, A33, A38, A41, A44, A54,	Contribute to help fossil fuel companies greenwashing	COP21, Paris	A13, A18, A30, A37, A41, A42, A62, A63, A65, A67, A98, B10,	Especially the corporate sponsors of the event are targeted
Europe	A1, A10, A71, B58, B72	Demand more robust policies	Banking	A6, A14, A25, A26, A27, A51, A64, A78, B3, B10, B22, B31, B37, B67, B79, C63	Financing to fossil fuel companies, and profit oriented	Black Friday	A23, A41, A68, B18, B43, C8, C21, C29, C30, C32, C69	Contributes to consumerism. Being attacked through Buy nothing day/no ad day
Bristol	A2	Demand city council to take action	Fossil Fuel	A12, A16, A18, A23, A36, A51, A60 A73, A92, A105, A120, A125, B10, B22	Big polluters. BP and Shell mostly	COP26, Glasgow	A25, A32, A51, A60, A73, A92	Targeting companies in and investing in fossil fuel industries
Guatamala	A106	Demand government action	Media	A15, A18, A69, A88, B40, B45, B66, C16, C24, C34, C36, C49, C50	Their coverage and control over what is being published	International day against advertising, March 25th	A44	International day against advertisement
US	C11, C34, C57	US Chamber of Commerce being cultured jammed to take action	Fashion	A68, A72, A121, B36, C51, C73, C84, C93	Unsustainable fashion			
			Film	A79, C81	Lack of black representation			
			Healthcare	A118, C31, C33, C57, C64, C82	Criticising the hospital and pharmaceutical system, as they are very profit oriented			
			Food and beverage	A106, B56, C18, C42, C55, C83	Exploitation of natural resources for food and beverages, health concerns regarding alcohol			
			Sport	C13, C26	Corporate takeover. A lot of advertisement. Contribute to violence			
			Beauty	C66, C74	Testing product on animals			
			Tech	C58, C70	Human right abuse, increasing prices without offering much better versions			
			Manufacturing	C38				
			Tobacco	C23, C37, C65	Dangerous for your health and environment			
			Amusement parks	A98, B36 B43, B63, B65, B79, C16, C62	Attack on different amusement parks such as Sea World and Disney.			

Appendix IV: Coding – Motives

Can be accessed through:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xk03cs0rmcrj6ym/AABC-HFjJ23zlgPU_7c0m5SIa?dl=0

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Motives										
ENVIRONMENT	Article	What	**INCLUSION AND I**	Article	What	**CAPITALISM**	Article	What	**SOCIAL**	Article	What
Greenwashing	A1, A3, A6, A10, A12, A14, A18, A21, A22, A23, A25, A26, A27, A29, A35	Making misleading claims about their environmental	Inequality	A8, A64, A123, B52, B57, C80	Advertisements contribute to inequality as they are often placed in poor	Economic system/culture	A91, A124, B42, B61, B62, B65, C9, C15, C28, C33, C34, C44, C46, C53, C60	Reaction to the current system	Advertisement ban	A1, A2, A3, A5, A6, A8, A10, A18, A22, A24, A32, A33, A35, A59, A70, A92	Encouraging ban on outdoor advertisement like Sao Paulo
Accountability	A4, A106, C79	A call for accountability from corporations regarding	Etnisity	A79, B31, C81	Lack of representation, discrimination	Corruption	A7, A8, A63, B19, B22, B34, B55, C50	Challenge corruption	Visual/Mental pollution	A5, A18, A57, A64, A82, A94, B5, B16, B20, B21, B24, B37, B44, B48, B51,	Look at advertisement as visual pollution
Pollution	A8, B10, B26, B47, C1	Risk to health as we are polluting	Human rights	A27, A72, A93, A113, B55, B67, C14, C18, C38, C60, C70, C73, C84	Industries/govern ment violating human rights	Profit-orientation	A4, A12, A123, A124, B37, C26, C44, C45, C53, C57, C100	Companies are aiming to maintain their profit rather than environment	Lobbying tactics	A1, A10, A21, A22, A70, B49, B55, B58, B72, C1, C57	Agressive lobbying tactics
Traffic congestion	A8	Advertisement are encouraging to consumer to purchase SUVs which cause	Cultural values	A20, A58, B53, B61	Tackling issued on cultural values	Consumerism	A4, A6, A7, A9, A13, A30, A33, A37, A41, A42, A58, A63, A64, A65, A68, A79.	Unsustainable lifestyles. Advertisement contribute to consumerism	Reclaiming public space	A13, A18, A38, A59, A64, A91, A95, A104, B6, B14, B16, B17, B18, B19, B20,	Take back control
Climate change	A3, A8, A13, A15, A16, A23, A24, A27, A37, A58, A65, A69, A84, A89, A93, A98, A120,	Lack of respons on the climate change. Linkage between advertisement and climate	Body image	A20, A58, A64, B10, B52, B61, C5, C9, C21, C49, C52, C66, C71, C86, C91, C93	Advertisement put pressure on body image	Debt	A58, A64, B10, B16, B61, C5, C9	Fuel, ecological debt, personal debt	Social and environmental justice issues	A5, A124, B49, B66, C60, C82, C98	Highlighting social and environmental justice issues in their work
Exploitation of natural resources	A106	Companies are exploiting natural resources for their own good	Mental health	A5, A35, B74, C5, C21, C86, C92, C93	Mental health issues arise due to environment and advertisements'	Advertisement's integrity	B34, B49	Questioning the integrety of advertisement	Too much control/Power	B74, C24, C41, C43, C59, C67	The media has control over our mind and information we receive
Fossil fuel industry	A6, A14, A24, A25, A26, A27, A32, A51, A60, A78, B3, B7, B22, B24, B31, B67	Attacks on industries that invests heavily in the fossil fuel industry	Gender roles	C14, C48, C66, C67	Inequality	Meat industry	A14	Attacks on industries that invests heavily in the meat industry			
Weapon industry	B31, B67	Attacks on industries that invests heavily in the weapon industry	Social pressure	C52, C92	Pressure from society (need to be married, need to be skinny, need to have a	Strict advertisement regulations	A54, A58	Rebelling against strict advertisement rules			
US prisons and detention centres	B31, B67	Attacks on industries that invests heavily in US prisons and detention				Politics	C19, C77, C79, C88	Want to start a discussion around political implication			

Appendix V: Coding – Type

Can be accessed through:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xk03cs0rmcrj6ym/AABC-HFjJ23zlgPU_7c0m5SIa?dl=0

(Download for optimal view)

Type

MECHANISMS	Article	What	SOCIAL MEDIA	Article	What	GUIDES	Article	What
Hacking billboards	A1, A2, A3, A6, A7, A8, A10, A12, A13, A14,	Subvertising done on billboards	Twitter	A52, A71, B72	Own Twitter channel	Avoid subvertising	A4	Guide on how to avoid being subvertised
Hacking bus stops	A1, A2, A6, A7, A8, A10, A12, A13, A14, A17, A18, A21, A27, A32, A36, A44,	Subvertising done on bus stops and in bus shelters	Videos	A62, A96, A101, B6, C94	Posting of videos online, mostly YouTube	"Hackpacks", training and providing tools	A13, A42, A50, A91, B10, B12, B16, B18, B28, B35, B37, B45, B62, B64, B71,	Guide on how to subvertise. This includes tamper with bus shelter, providing key to
Murals	A14, A48, A57, A106, C96	Subvertising done on murals	Facebook	A94, B6, C52	Own Facebook page	Checklist	A60	Checklist for working with high-carbon clients
Graffiti	A20, A46, A123, B8, B31, C7, C99	Use of graffiti as a form of subvertising	Instagram	B6	Own Instagram page	Deal with subvertising	A111	Advices on how to deal with subvertising and online attacks
Artistic demonstrations	A30, A42, A63, A73, A93, A95, A106, A113, A117, B3, B12, B32, B34, C80	Protests using various types of art	Website and blog posts	A82, B20, B32, B45, B81, C85	Spreading their message online			
Self subvertising	A9, A46	Companies subvertise their own brand	Memes	A77, B8, B39, C60, C77, C94	Due to the digital world			
Posters	A14, A50, A96, B13, B16, B29, B31	Subvertising done on posters	Fake website	C34	Creating a website where they pretend to be someone else			
Protest	A26, A95, B39	Subvertising groups gather to protest	Deinfluencing	A121	Promoting deinflucing for consumers to not buy certain products			
Tube and Train	A26, A50, A70, A94, A105, B67, C8	Subvertising done on tube and trains						
Stunt	C11, C57	Press conference						

Appendix VI: Coding – Outcomes

Can be accessed through:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xk03cs0rmcrj6ym/AABC-HFjJ23zlgPU_7c0m5SIa?dl=0

(Download for optimal view)

Outcomes

PUBLIC OUTCOMES	Article	What	GOVERNMENT ACTIONS	Article	What	CORPORATE ACTIONS	Article	What
Good response	A13, A33, A42, A46, A67, A76, A82, B28, C79, C98	The public is positive	Prohibiting fossil fuel advertising and sponsorship	A2, A51, A60	Amsterdam, The Hauge, France, Liverpool, Norwich, North Somerset and Cambridgeshire	End collaboration	A51, A73	End sponsor agreement
Support to charity	A15, A16, A17, A36, A66, A69, B23, B81	Especially during bushfires	Challenging corporate greenwash	A51, A59, A60, A93, B1, B19, B22, B29	For making false claims in advertising	Hiring street artists	A48, A57, A80, C96	Street artists are hired by companies
Request for help to get started	A42	Public involvement in terms of wanting to join in on subvertising	Ban on tobacco advertising	A77	After many attacks on the tobacco industry	Collaboration between activists and artists	A57, B30, C9	Collaboration between activists and artists to challenge corporate power
Minor interruption	A79, B4, B9, B41	Little effect of sporadic 'subvertising' and considered naive						
Raised money	A82	Money raised against advertisement						
No longer passive	A20, A111	Consumers are no longer passive / consumer uprisings						
All talk but no action	C60	They do not provide any feasible solutions to those problems						
Limited impact	C60	Subvertising will ever drown out the messaging of multinational						
State the obvious	C37, C60	Subvertisers are stating what we already know						
Activists can be hypocritical	C27	They are anti consumerism and yet they create products and to sell to the public						

Appendix VII: Coding – Defense

Can be accessed through:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xk03cs0rmcrj6ym/AABC-HFjJ23zlgPU_7c0m5SIa?dl=0

(Download for optimal view)

Defense

CORPORATIONS	Article	What	ACTIVISTS	Article	What	THEORY	Article	What
Society	A5, A12, A52	Advertisements' financial contribution to the society	Public space belongs to everyone	A18, B6, B20, B35, B54, C6, C10, C17, C32, C41, C53, C77	No choice whether you see the ad or not, and no one should be able to own public space	John Fiske	B5, B75	"People are not cultural idiots". The public cannot be overwhelmed with what is offered.
Censorship	A110	Freedom of expression	Communiaction	A5, A23, A59, A123, C3, C8, C23, C37, C39, C46	Right to reply	Kalle Lasn	C59	Theory of four seasons
Changing their operations	B22, B46, B49	Making efforts to become cleaner	Censorship	C9, C21, C29, C39, C41	Unfair advertisement practices - strict control of what is being published			
Transportation Company	A94	It is not authorised adverts, and are destruction of private property. Subvertising is vandalism	Grey area	A13, B18, B42, B76, C32, C41, C85	Civil disobedience			
Fossil fuel company	A105	Open for feedback. Welcome honest and constructive discussion and debate	Legal	A9, A32, A46, A77, B30, B75, C61	Buying ad space, self subvertising, hosting public meetings			
Advertising industry	B31	Asking the public to recognize their efforts. Wants to be judged for their actions						
Hypocritical	C27	Promote anti-consumerism but create products and try to sell it to the public						
They provide information to us as consumers	C9	Helping us make rational choices						
Illegal	A5, A18, A94, A126, C3, C6, C10, C39, C53, C87, C98, C99	Vandalism						

Appendix VIII: Coding – Definition

Can be accessed through:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xk03cs0rmcrj6ym/AABC-HFjJ23zlgPU_7c0m5SIa?dl=0

(Download for optimal view)

Definition

BRANDALISM	Article	SUBVERTISING	Article	CULTURE JAMMI	Article	ADBUSTING	Article
Brandalism is an international collective of artists	B60	Subvertising — short for 'subverting	A91	"Culture jamming" originally referred to the alteration of	A77, C56	Adbusting (also called Subvertising, as	B18
Brandalism is an international	A7	"Subvertising," a portmanteau of	B4, B9	It aims to disrupt consumer culture	A90	Adbusting is basically referring	C91
It can refer to the body of cultural industries in the	B5	Subvertising is the practice of making spoofs or	A83, B56, B70, C8	Culture Jammers use a variety of creative tactics	B8	Ad busting is a form of media that looks like an	C92
The initiative covers a gamut of artists from	B32	Subvertising, or adbusting, is any form of action	B11	Culture jamming is a form of social disruption that	B69, C50		
Brandalism is a recent anti-	A126	Subvertising is an artistic-political	B38	Culture jamming is the practice of	C3, C24, C87		
Brandalism is a revolt against the corporate control	C86	The practice of making spoofs or parodies of	B52, B76	Culture jamming is a form of art that uses existing	C76		
Brandalism is the encroachment of	C97	Subvertising is a portmanteau of	A122	Culture jamming is the process of	C69		
				Culture jamming is a tactic used to	C67		
				Culture jamming is the practice of	C15, C66		
				Culture jamming, otherwise known	C16		
				Culture jamming is a protest tactic	C60		
				Culture jamming is a subversion of	C23		
				Culture jamming	C59		
				Culture jamming refers to the anti	C35		
				Culture jamming is an activity at	B78		

Appendix IX: Coding – Evolution

Can be accessed through:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xk03cs0rmcrj6ym/AABC-HFjJ23zlgPU_7c0m5SIa?dl=0

(Download for optimal view)

Evolution																							
1910	Article	What	**1920**	Article	What	**1960**	Article	What	**1960**	Article	What	**1970**	Article	What	**1980**	Article	What	**1990**	Article	What	**21st century**	Article	What
Dadaism	A91	Characterised by satirical and often nonsensical art, poetry and performance	Agitprop art	A91	'anti-art' movement, which was born out of the horrors of World War I	Detournement	A23, A79, A91, B9, B23, B34, B77, C33, C81	The practice of hijacking popular symbols and changing their meaning	Situationist art movements	A23, A59, A85, A91, A95, B4, B9, B34, C15, C24, C67, C89, C71	Resisted The spectacle of American imperialism (consumerism)	The Billboard Liberation Front	A13, A23, A42, B9, B74, C24	Subversions of any outdoor billboard they deemed inappropriate across San Francisco	Culture Jamming	A77, A90, A91, A97, B15, B38, B74, B76, C15, C22, C23	Expose hypocrisies or injustices	The Yes Men	C11, C24, C34, C57	Culture jamming activists duo. Raise awareness about problematic social and political issues.	Connecting globally	A13, A42, B4, B9, B90, C5	Resistance against the visual and mental implications of advertising
						Situationist art movements	A23, A59, A85, A91, A95, B4, B9, B34, B77, C15, C24, C67, C89, C71, C81	Resisted the spectacle of American imperialism (consumerism)				BUGA-UP	A13, A15, A23, A42, A51, A91, B9, B23, B74, C24	Responding to what they considered offensive tobacco advertising	Adbusters	A23, A79, A90, A91, B1, B28, B76, C23, C33, C66, C69, C76	Fighting against capitalism and in particular advertising's role in capitalism	Banksy	C50, C76	Banksy is an anonymous and famous graffiti artist. He is known for his anti-...	Internet	A83, A90, B71	Target online advertising
												Punk and graffiti movements	A91	A movement focusing on using stencils and DIY (Do It Yourself) philosophy	Guerilla Girls	C33, C60, C66	A large group of anonymous female artists who stand up to sexism and racism in the world of art.				Plane stupid	A13, A42, B70	End airport expansion
												Negativland	A106, C24, C33, C43, C89	Culture-jamming collective	Ron English	C39	American contemporary artist who explores brand imagery, street art, and advertising				Brigade Antipub	A13, A42	French anti-advertising group
																					Adfree cities	A3, A5, B22	A network of groups in UK concerned about corporate advertisement
																					Brandalism	A42, A62, A89, A91, A96, A98, B2, B3, B4, B5, B10, B21, B22, B25, B28, B30, B33, B34, B70, B71	International collective of artists that confront power of big business and their PR...

Appendix X: Discussion Paper – Responsible

Stine Øisang Austad

Summary of the thesis

In this thesis, research on subvertising has been conducted, which is presented as both a set of tactics used by movements and a movement itself. Subvertising is an anti-consumerist movement that target advertisements (Lekakis, 2021, p. 740). People that live in a capital city are exposed to thousands of advertisements during a day (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 26), and the subvertisers that target advertisements believe that advertising encourage people to consume, and that it promotes unsustainable habits. They go as far as saying that advertisements are creating and enabling a system that is responsible for today's environmental and economic crisis, the inequalities, and limitations on resources (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, pp. 22-23). Subvertising is the practice of hacking billboards, bus shelters, and advertising screens to make changes to the outdoor advertising (Dekeyser, 2021, p. 310). They then alter the messages, remove the advertising completely, or display art amongst other things. Subvertisers see advertising as visual pollution, and the act of removing or replacing advertising as an effort to clean up the outdoor space (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 25).

Even though we are in a climate crisis, it does not seem that it hinders people from consuming and living an unsustainable lifestyle. Subvertisers are one movement that for many years have tried to address this issue. Even though subversion of outdoor advertising goes back to at least the 1970s (Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 51), academic literature on subvertising is limited. The goal with this thesis was therefore to gain a deeper understanding of subvertising and what is being published about the topic in popular media. The reason being that there is no general agreement of the definition of subvertising, and several other movements and tactics are used interchangeably with subvertising. To help get a better understanding of subvertising, and how it is being addressed in the popular media, two research questions were created to investigate how popular media conceptualize subvertising, and what the motives and outcomes of subvertising are.

To get answers to the research questions, we conducted a thematic narrative analysis of news articles and videos about subvertising found in the popular media. It is a method used to analyze texts that are written as stories (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). The data collection process

lasted from January 16th to May 25th, and since a part of the goal was to see what is being published about subvertising in the popular media, news articles were collected from Google News and Google Search, while videos were collected from YouTube. Through the analysis of the collected data, we were able to understand how media conceptualize subvertising by looking at how the topic is being defined, who the activists target, and types of attacks they conduct. We also looked at how corporations and government defend themselves against attacks, and how subvertisers defend their actions. Lastly, we examined how subvertising has evolved throughout time to become what it is today. Based on what was discovered, we were able to create a definition of subvertising. The analysis of the collected material also revealed that the motivation for subvertising attack could be divided into four themes: environment, inclusion and diversity, capitalism, and social. There was little focus in the news articles and videos on the outcomes of subvertising, so it is hard to say the effect subvertising has. From the conducted research, we cannot say that subvertising has been the only factor influencing the outcome, or if other factors have been involved.

How the thesis relates to responsibility

In McGrath and Whitty's research on accountability and responsibility, responsibility is defined as an obligation to satisfactorily perform a task (McGrath & Whitty, 2018, p. 695). It is important that research is conducted in a responsible way. Responsible conduct of research is about that ethical and legal choices are made in a research program, and that the choices are aligned with the researcher's morals (Schaller-Demers, 2015, pp. 67-68). In the course Research Method, we learned that it is important to be ethically and responsible throughout the whole research process, and that the final product should reflect that (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020, p. 12). In this thesis, there can be identified potential ethical issues in the topic, the research questions, and the findings, but which we have dealt with to make sure that the thesis is responsible and ethical.

First, subvertising, which is the topic of the thesis, provides an ethical challenge. Subvertising is by the advertising industry and other targeted industries seen as vandalism, and hence illegal (Dekeyser, 2018, p. 1434). Since we in this thesis have been writing about a topic that many view as illegal and have an ambivalent relationship to, we have taken responsibility by trying to not glorify subvertising and their motives, as the activists are damaging private property

and advertisements that companies have paid much for. The fact that subvertising is considered to be vandalism and illegal, while subvertisers themselves believe that they are operating in a gray area and have a responsibility to act, present another ethical issue. Through their work, subvertisers inform about advertisements role in making social, economic, and environmental issues greater, such as dangerous body images, climate change and corruption (Dekeyser, 2021, p. 311). The outdoor advertising industry, however, believe that companies have the right to advertise their products, and that advertisements are giving a lot of money to the transport authorities and local councils through rent and business rates, which can be used to make improvements that benefit the citizens (Bearne, 2022). The outdoor advertising industry is taking responsibility by contributing money to the society, while it at the same time is promoting consumerism, which then again has negative consequences for the environment. The ethical issue here is therefore that subvertisers are breaking the law by altering private and paid-for advertisements, but which is done with good intentions as they are taking the responsibility to inform the public about the dangers that are associated with advertisements such as consumption, environmental degradation, and negative self-image.

Subvertising is a somewhat new phenomenon, which have been confused with other similar movements and strategies. We have therefore taken the responsibility to precisely explain what subvertising is and its boundaries, by creating a definition and stating the motives and outcomes of their attacks. The course Management Control Systems taught us that many managers have a challenging relation to ethics since they in economics are taught that one should maximize one's own self-interest and shareholder value in for-profit organizations (Merchant & Van der Stede, 2017, p. 677). Subvertisers believe that some specific industries only think about maximizing profit, and that they do not take responsibility for their actions that have consequences for the climate. This has been one of the biggest motives behind the subvertisers' attacks, based on what we have discovered through the research.

A potential ethical issue with research questions is if they do not help to clarify or nor explain the problem that needs to be solved in the research (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020, p. 52). Since the goal of the research was to gain a deeper understanding of subvertising and what is being published about the topic in the popular media, we made sure that the research questions that were included were created responsible by ensuring that they covered a broad specter of

subvertising, so that we did not portray the phenomenon wrongfully by giving a narrow picture of it. The aim was that the research questions would expand the knowledge about subvertising and help solve the problem we wanted to clarify in the thesis.

The findings in this thesis are based on a subjective approach since qualitative research was conducted, which can be a potential ethical issue. The whole research process is subjective, as it is influenced after how we interpreted the research articles, the news articles, and videos. The codes created, and the findings based on the codes, are therefore shaped after our opinions. Since we had a responsibility as researchers to interpret the data and results in an ethical way, we first interpreted by ourselves, before we came together and compared the interpretations. To justify the findings in the research, we included the intergenerational justice theory, as this theory could help explain what we had discovered, and hence reduce the ethical issue of the thesis being subjective. The theory suggests that the next generation should receive no less than what the current generation received from the previous one (Hendlin, 2014, p. 7). Our findings suggest that subvertisers are concerned about the next generations and what they are going to be left with if industries and people in this generation do not take responsibility for their actions. Some of the main motives behind the attacks have been based on the environment such as greenwashing, pollution and exploitation of natural resources. Another potential ethical challenge with the findings is that they were based on news articles and videos from popular media, and hence were secondary data. Neither of us talked directly to the subvertisers, nor to the society or the targeted parties. We therefore had a responsibility to address in the thesis that the findings were based on information from secondary data, and that it did not come directly from the parties written about.

Conclusion

As discussed, the whole thesis relates to responsibility. The topic itself, subvertising, relates to responsibility as the activists believe they are taking responsibility through their art and attacks by informing about the consequences of the advertising industry, and exposing corporations' greenwashing practices and aggressive lobbying tactics. The targeted parties, such as the outdoor advertising industry itself, also believe that they are taking responsibility by providing money to the society through rent which can be used for improvements. There is also an underlying message about taking responsibility in the subvertisers' work. Even though the activists are targeting industries, governments and politicians, the art and attacks are also meant

to be an eyeopener to us, and an attempt to make us reduce our consumption and to stop supporting companies that are only profit oriented and that do not think about the environment and what the next generations are going to be left with.

We, as authors, also had a focus on being ethical and responsible throughout the whole research process, by providing findings that are correct, and which can be generalizable. Since the thesis have had a subjective approach, we put down great effort to make sure that the data was of quality that would create an understanding of subvertising, which is the purpose of quality in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). To create a responsible thesis, we focused on making the findings trustworthy, by ensuring that they were credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Rolfe, 2006, p. 305). This was achieved by having a data collection that was based on a whole population and not a sample, by comparing our independent work with each other to prevent bias, and by tying the findings up to a theory called intergenerational justice, which supported the findings. Careful considerations were also taken to ensure that the research questions we created helped solve the goal of the thesis, which was to get a better understanding of the phenomenon subvertising, and what was being published about it. We had a responsibility to correctly explain subvertising and its boundaries to separate it from similar concepts, and we did so by defining subvertising based on the collected news articles and videos. Additionally, we also stated the motives and outcomes by studying additional components of the phenomenon, such as who they target, how they do it and why they are targeted. We also investigated how the targeted parties defend themselves, and how subvertisers are defending their actions. Furthermore, we investigated how subvertising has evolved over time.

Responsible is a broad concept, and we have worked hard and thorough to be responsible researchers throughout the whole process of writing this thesis, by acknowledging the responsibility we have when doing research. Especially during the research methodology section, and when presenting the results.

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Appendix XI: Discussion Paper – Responsible

Sarah Allouch

The topic of advertising has long been studied, with concerns ranging from its potential effects on consumer behavior, to its role as a contributor to harmful societal norms. However, in recent decades, a new form of adverting has emerged that takes a more subversive approach: subvertising, the practice of altering existing advertisement to often promote the opposite. In this discussion paper I explore the ethical issues surrounding subvertising and the responsibilities we have taken in conducting research. To do this, I will start by briefly presenting my master thesis and why it is of relevancy. I next present the ethical issues with subvertising as a social phenomenon before I explain the general ethical challenges in our study. To gain a better understanding of the ethical implications, I have included an example of a case involving activists, commonly referred to as subvertisers, who were taken to court. Lastly, I summarize and conclude my discussion.

My thesis focuses on the phenomenon of subvertising, exploring its conceptualization, underlying motives, and outcomes. Subvertising is a portmanteau of the words "subvert" and "advertising" (Gatti et al., 2015, p. 672). Subvert means to manipulate, change, and turning a situation around to look at it from another side (Toly, 2004, pp. 35-36), while advertising aims to turn potential consumers towards a product or service by providing favorable information (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2020). Subvertising has been defined differently in the literature and to my best knowledge there is no research providing a clear definition. Based on this, RQ1 was developed as follows: **RQ1** How does popular media conceptualize subvertising? Previous literature focus mainly on examining specific cases of subvertising attack rather than trying to explore the motives and outcomes of the activism in a broader sense. To attempt filling this gap, the following research question arose**RQ2** What are the motives and outcomes of subvertising?

There are several reasons why our study is of relevance and relates to responsibility. First, it helps shed light on the nature and scope of subvertising as a social phenomenon. Our study uses a thematic narrative approach, studying news articles from Google news and normal Google search, as well as YouTube videos. By examining news articles and videos, we will gain a better understanding of what ways subvertising is portrayed and interpreted in the media. This is important to be able to understand how popular media conceptualizes subvertising.

Subvertising is still a relatively new topic in academics and can therefore be illustrated incorrectly if not defined precisely. A lot of researchers use the term subvertising interchangeably with other terms such as culture jamming, adbusting, and brandalism. We therefore felt responsible to provide researchers and academia with a new, clear, and concise definition that can be used in the future. The definition that was created from our master thesis is: Subvertising is a movement that through parody, visual and performative art aims to make a statement and expose assumptions behind corporate and political advertisement.

Second, by identifying underlying motives, we gain insight into the goals of the activists that engage in subvertising. This information can have practical applications in several contexts, including social, political, and academically. For a social setting, examining the motives and goals of subvertising will reveal the underlying factors that drive this type of activism. Our study concluded that consumerism, capitalism, corporate power, environmental, and social justice concerns are some of the most important factors. For the political context in which subvertising occurs, we already know that some cities around the world have taken the work of subvertisers seriously and decided to ban advertising to some degree (Ansari, 2023; Heilpern, 2016; Raoul & Bonner, 2019, p. 47). In an academic context, researchers can use our findings and the created definition to investigate further. One interesting suggestion for future studies could be to investigate the effectiveness of subvertising and their activism.

Last, our thesis can inform debates around the ethics of subvertising. On one hand, subvertising can be seen as a form of resistance to the dominant power structures that underpin the advertising industry. On the other hand, it can be seen as a form of deception or manipulation. By examining the ethical implications of subvertising, for example copyright infringement and taking over advertising space, we can better understand the potential benefits and drawbacks as a type of activism.

In terms of copyright infringement, intellectual property rights have been a topic mentioned and studied throughout my degree, especially when discussing international marketing. Intellectual property rights can be defined as legal ownership granted for manmade intellectual activities that are useful and have economic benefit (Abduh & Fajaruddin, 2021, p. 170). Copyright is an automatic and exclusive right granted to creators when a work is realized in a tangible form, without reducing restrictions in accordance with the provisions of laws and

regulations (Abduh & Fajaruddin, 2021, p. 171). Copyright infringement is when the copyrighted work is reproduced by someone other than the rightful owner, making the impression as if it was their own work without citing (Abduh & Fajaruddin, 2021, p. 175). This is a real ethical challenge that subvertising is facing. Subvertising is a movement that takes advertisement and alter it often to the opposite than its original intention, hench "subvert". When done properly, it is extremely difficult to determine whether it is a real commercial, or one that has been subvertised. Figure 1 shows an example of a leaflet from the 1990s that was distributed by activists containing information about the potential harms of eating at McDonald's, using their font, logo, and an intimidating-looking mask of Ronald McDonald.

Figure 1 – First page of the McDonald's leaflet.

The activists behind the pamphlet above were sued by McDonald's under English defamation law, which permits corporations to defend their reputation against harmful publications made by others (Nicholson, 2000, p. 119). The trial, also known as the McLibel case, is the longest libel trial in English history lasting more than two and a half-year (Nicholson, 2000, p. 2). The activists behind this act were initially held responsible to have defamed and assessed damages equivalent to $96,000, but the McLibel case resulted later in a win for the

activists (Commonplace.pl, 2021; Nicholson, 2000, pp. 2-3). Though this case resulted favorable for the subvertisers, this is just one of several cases that have brought activists to court. Dismantling these kinds of messages can damage the reputation of corporations and make it difficult for them to recover. This raises ethical questions regarding the legality of subvertising, as subvertisers' underlying motivations is to highlight the harm corporations cause socially and environmentally, facilitating their actions.

Though subvertisers are known for attacking corporations with hypocritical advertising, they are not immune to criticism themselves. An ethical challenge within the practice of subvertising is the perception that subvertisers may position themselves as being more knowledgeable and "morally superior" over consumers (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004, p. 699). Kozinets & Handelman (2004) argue that the activists portray consumers to be lazy and selfish, and that their act of influencing may push consumers away if taken too far. Other critics have also discussed that being told what to do is not more favorable from activists, rather than advertisers (Harold, 2004, p. 191). This highlights the importance of considering the perspective of all stakeholders in the advertising environment.

There have also been ethical challenges related to our study. In the course "research method for business", we learnt that ethics and data collection were critical parts of research. In business research, ethical consideration refers to the expected societal norms of behavior or a code of conduct while conducting research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 13). One of the pitfalls while gathering data is misinterpreting other authors' work on purpose (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 59). Our master thesis is a qualitative analysis relying solely on secondary data from popular news media such as news articles and videos. At no circumstance did the authors of the thesis intend on incorrectly interpreting data in a way that would benefit our study, however qualitative research has primarily a subjective approach (Kalu, 2019, p. 98). Our study can therefore have been influenced by researcher bias. In addition, it is important to note that even newspapers are not always unbiased (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 55), and journalists of the data we have analyzed might have allowed their own opinions to influence the way they reported on subvertising. Researchers are responsible to present research that is meaningful, trustworthy, and valid (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010, p. 604), and we therefore took three steps to ensure this.

During the data analysis, both authors read and coded each article and video transcript separately before sitting down together and comparing. We would question each other's codes when in doubt, to double check we understood and agreed on the codes, and to ensure accuracy and consistency. This meant that if we had coded completely different from each other, we would be able to discuss and resolve any discrepancy in the coding process.

Another step we took was to ensure transparency in our research process. To achieve this, we have provided a detailed description of how data was collected, analyzed and the interpretation process in order to facilitate the replication of the study by other researchers. Specifically, we have described our search words that were used to find relevant articles and videos, the criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and the process for coding and analyzing the data. Additionally, a description of the tools that were used to manage data, and the procedures that were followed to ensure accuracy and validity of the findings was provided. By providing a clear and transparent description, I hope to contribute to the overall quality and credibility of research in the field of subvertising.

A step for responsible research is to acknowledge the limitations of our knowledge (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010, p. 605). Throughout our thesis, we have reminded the reader that to our best knowledge no similar study has been conducted investigating motives and outcomes, and creation of a new definition on subvertising using a thematic narrative approach. We also recognize that our selection of search words was subjective and limited, and that other researchers may choose to approach this differently.

One ethical challenge that we were not able to overcome, is regarding our research questions and data. Our two research questions, again based on subjective opinions, were formulated as followed: "How does popular media conceptualize subvertising?" and **"**What are the motives and outcomes of subvertising?". Although I have argued why they are relevant and how they help fill gaps in the literature, they are with some drawbacks. Relying solely on news articles and YouTube videos could expose us to bias and possibly an inaccurate portrayal of the phenomenon. Subvertising is in the thesis mostly being viewed at from the journalists' perspective, and a weakness is that we rarely hear the stories from the subvertisers' angle. Popular news media does also rarely include effects on the corporations that are being attacked. This has led our research to be almost one-sided, only including and relying on news media and

videos. A solution to overcome this ethical challenge, is to include a more diverse representation of media sources, for instance including interview with activists who engage in the movement and corporations that are being targeted. Due to time limitations, this was not possible for our master thesis.

The discussion paper presents a summary of the master's thesis on subvertising, which aims to explore the conceptualization, motivation, and outcomes of subvertising as a social phenomenon. I have highlighted how the thesis relates to relevance and responsibility by our research questions and how it provides useful insight, and how our data was collected and analyzed in a responsible manner. The thesis provides a new, clear, and concise definition of subvertising that can be used by researchers and academia. Further in the discussion paper I have discussed real and potential ethical challenges of subvertising, such as legality and copyright infringement, in the light of the McLibel case. Lastly, I have provided ethical challenges to our study, such as limitations to the research questions and the subjective approach, and how these can be managed. The study concludes that our study is not perfect, but that we have been aware of the limitations and explained how we did our best to assure a responsible and ethical way of conducting research.

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