THE COOL GIRL CULT:

Glossier and building brand identity on Instagram

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Sosiaalinen media on nykyään tärkeä osa markkinointia ja brändien imagonrakennusta. Pienikin yritys voi nousta kulttimaineeseen oikeanlaisella imagonrakennuksella ja viestinnällä. Nykysukupolvet odottavat tukemiltaan yrityksiltä erilaista viestintää kuin ennen. Ostopäätökset tehdään kasvavissa määrin sosiaalisen median perusteella, mikä on saanut brändit siirtämään markkinointiaan yhä enemmän eri sosiaalisen median alustoille.

Tässä tutkielmassa analysoin meikki- ja ihonhoitomerkki Glossierin tuottamaa sisältöä sosiaalisen median alustassa Instagramissa. Tutkielman tarkoitus on identifioida postauksista eri diskursseja sekä analysoida niiden vaikutusta Glossierin brändi-identiteettiin.

Instagramin postaukset ovat luonnoltaan multimodaalisia, joten käyttämäni analyysimetodi on multimodaalinen diskurssianalyysi. Diskurssien tunnistamisen lisäksi olin kiinnostunut siitä, miten feminiinisyys ja autenttisuus rakentuvat Glossierin tuottamassa sisällössä sosiaalisessa mediassa.

Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu 75 Glossierin Instagram-julkaisusta vuosilta 2019 ja 2020. Saadakseni täyden kuvan käytetyistä viestinnän keinoista, huomioin analyysissa sekä kuvan että kuvatekstin, sekä kuvatekstissä käytetyt multimodaaliset keinot kuten emojit.

Tunnistin keräämästäni aineistosta viisi diskurssia, jotka kaikki osaltaan rakentavat Glossierin brändi-identiteettiä. Tunnistetut diskurssit keskittyivät Glossierin imagoon, sosiaaliseen vastuuseen, yhteisön rakentamiseen brändin ympärille sekä perinteisempään tuotteiden mainostamiseen. Erityisesti yhteisön rakentaminen brändin ympärille oli suuressa osassa Glossierin Instagramia.

Asiasanat - Keywords
multimodal discourse analysis, brand identity, social media, Instagram, postfeminism

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, the best way to reach your customers and tell your brand's story is through social media. As audiences are becoming increasingly faded and rejecting flashy advertising campaigns as fake, the importance of having an authentic brand identity has become the greatest asset a brand can have. Brands have closer relationships with their customers than ever before. Consumers' perceptions of brands mirror their perceptions of human personalities (Kapferer 2012: 159), meaning that as consumers we can be attracted and attached to a brand for qualities other than just what the brand offers us functionally. With the emergence of technology, social media is the main tool used for maintaining this relationship between brands and consumers. Having an online presence and being active on social media has become a marketing standard for any business, as it is the best way for consumers to connect with brands.

Research on social media is useful as it surrounds us every day and more and more of our lives are happening online. Especially the topic of marketing in social media is important as it can be difficult to even realize all the ways brands are affecting our decisions and thought processes. Social media is used as a tool to enhance brand awareness, influence purchase decisions, and create brand communities. The majority of all brand activity on Instagram is native, meaning that it uses the same conventions and tools as all other users of the platform. This is what makes it a useful tool for brand identity management, but also blurs the lines between advertisements and non-sponsored content on the platform. One of the ways that social media is changing the dynamics of how brands communicate with customers is the way it blurs the lines between consumers' personal networks as the brands messages are mixed in with posts from the customer's social network, brands can reach them on a more personal level "as if they were just another individual in the consumers' social network" (Gensler et al., 2013: 250).

The beauty industry is a fruitful source for research due to its size, reach and the ways it mirrors the society. The industry has seen a century of "virtually uninterrupted growth that not even economic downfalls and world wars have been able to stop" (G. Jones, 2010:

1). By 2019, beauty had become a $532 billion industry and is now growing faster than ever (Biron 2019). The changes in the beauty industry mirror changes in society, phenomena such as the rise of feminism can be mapped through makeup advertising and this makes the beauty industry a valuable subject for research.

Geoffrey Jones (2010: 302-306) discusses the relationship between big brands such as L'Oréal and smaller brands and how after the 1990s bigger brands were able to reach a global audience and through that and acquisitions of smaller brands, a handful of beauty megabrands dominated the industry. These megabrands and their globalization proved that, even in such a traditionally culture-specific industry as beauty, the world was becoming "flatter" (G. Jones 2010: 310). However, the industry was faced with a growing problem of a disillusionment with the advertisements campaigns and need for more authenticity. According to Jones (2010: 328) the disillusion was related to a generational change, as people born in the digital age and growing up with social media, emerged as consumers and concepts such as electronic word of mouth became a more important factor in consumer's purchasing decisions. Consumers are now more likely to look for brands they can relate to. Jones (2010: 329) notes how as brands have become more distinct from each other, consumers are more likely to feel personal identification with the brands in their lives, and the best way companies can encourage that identification is by telling stories about the brand. It could be argued that as social media has become a part of everyday life, these stories are told more and more on social media platforms.

In this thesis, I aim to shed light on how brands build and cultivate their brand identity on social media. More specifically, I am going to analyze the Instagram posts of beauty brand Glossier. Glossier is a makeup and skincare brand founded in 2014, that is often included in lists of 'cool girl' brands. It is apparent that Glossier has made great use of social media and especially Instagram in brand identity building and marketing. The opinion on Glossier seems to range from cult-like dedication to strong disdain. Some of this can be attributed to the fact that unlike many other beauty brands, Glossier has a very strong brand aesthetic that swears by natural beauty and their products are meant to complement, not to cover. According to the brand's founder, Emily Weiss, anyone can be

a Glossier girl. Weiss describes Glossier girls as girls who "have freckles, pores, scars". Weiss states that a Glossier girl "doesn't need our products, but she chooses them because they make her feel great" (Mlotek 2017). According to Hart (2019), Glossier was launched at the peak of the social media craze, and the brand used social media to its advantage, by listening to what its customers wanted. This separated Glossier from larger beauty brands, which relied more on traditional advertising methods.

The data for this thesis is collected from Glossier's official Instagram account. The account is very active and has over 2,7 million followers. Forbes called Glossier "a beauty brand for Generation Instagram" (O'Connor 2016) and Glossier's showroom in Manhattan was advertised as "most Instagrammable room in SoHo" (Cai 2017). The brand's strong dedication to an aesthetic is evident in the brand's Instagram posts.

It is clear that Glossier has a strong brand identity and, in this thesis, I aim to analyze the different linguistic and multimodal elements present in Glossier's Instagram posts and how they are used to construct and cultivate this brand identity. My main aim is to identify and analyze different discourses present during the time period chosen for analysis and discuss how they affect the way Glossier is perceived as a brand.

This thesis also aims to take a closer look at the discourse of authenticity and realness in Glossier's marketing. The marketing trope of realness is a recurring theme in fashion media texts such as print magazines, beauty advertising, and, more recently, on blogs and social media such as Instagram feeds (Findlay 2019: 2). In today's digital mediascape that is largely dominated by plastic surgery, photoshop and filters, this authenticity can seem refreshing, yet is usually just as fabricated as the social media influencers' content we automatically deem 'fake'. Millennials, usually defined as anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock 2019), demand authenticity and transparency from the companies they buy from, and as millennials have become the group with the strongest buying power, companies are scrambling to fill this demand.

Additionally, the concepts of postfeminism and brands capitalizing on feminism are relevant for this thesis. According to Elias et al. (2017: 5), the politics of beauty and the discourses around it have always been a part of feminist theory, and that the first two decades of the 21st century have had a resurgence of interest in it. The myth of appearing effortlessly fashionable in any given moment has been present in fashion for centuries, but arguably the same goes for beauty. Brands such as Glossier sell the myth of effortless, natural beauty at any given moment. In addition, a new form of Instagrammable feminism has arisen in the last decade and while this new form of feminism borrows some themes from more traditional feminism, it can often be hard to see any substance that goes further than slogans stating that women should be able enjoy beauty regimens without shame. In this thesis, I will discuss these concepts and, using feminist media studies as a guide, analyze the possible feminist discourses present in Glossier's Instagram content.

Analyzing social media is important as it is an ever-present entity in our lives nowadays and reaches even people who are not using it themselves via conversations and news sources. The things we are repeatedly shown in the media easily become unquestioned norms, and it is important to study who is setting these norms and why. The amount of linguistic research focusing on Instagram content is rather small, which could be due to the multimodal nature of Instagram and the platform being image-heavy. However, Instagram is one of the fastest growing social media platforms, which makes it worthy of research in all fields.

The present study will begin with an introduction of the relevant theoretical background on brands, social media, discourse studies, authenticity, and feminist media studies. In the part following that, the methodology and data of the thesis will be introduced. I will then follow with presenting and discussing the findings of the study.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The concepts that are most relevant for this thesis are brands, brand identities, narratives of authenticity, discourse analysis, and analyzing social media content, more specifically

Instagram. Since Glossier is a beauty brand and beauty products are traditionally a gendered product, its target audience is mostly women, it is also relevant to discuss femininity in advertising. Identities and how they are built and represented on social media are wide concepts and due to the limits posed on this thesis, I am discussing only a small portion of possible theories and concepts in this chapter. For the same reasons, I am also focusing on other studies done on Instagram instead of a larger scope that includes other social media platforms as well.

In this chapter, I will also take a brief look at the previous research on brand identity and social media and any studies done on the brand Glossier specifically.

2.1 Brands and brand identities

For decades, a company's value was measured in terms of buildings, land, and other tangible assets (Kapferer 2012: 2). However, the markets have changed, and companies are now being bought for prices that cannot be explained by the tangible assets such as inventory and machinery the company owns. According to Kapferer (2012: 3), the explanation for this phenomenon is that by acquiring these companies, the buyers are actually purchasing positions in the minds of potential customers. This acquired brand awareness and trust is a guarantee of future success and thus, justifies the price paid.

According to Halloran (2014: 6), marketers used to think of brands as the "comprising attributes that encompass everything tangible about a product — its taste, packaging, ingredients, materials, logo, and so on", but that in today's world, the concept is not as clear-cut anymore. Nowadays, consumers have so many options when it comes to products and services, that companies have to look for ways to emotionally connect with their customers and become irreplaceable (Wheeler 2017: 2). Keller and Lehmann (2006: 740) state that branding has emerged as a top management priority in the last few decades because brands are now recognized as one of the most valuable intangible assets of any company. Having a loyal customer base that trusts and believes in the superiority of the brand is essential. As Halloran (2014: 7) states, the principle is for the consumer to feel so

strongly about using the brand that in the case they could not use its product or service, they would feel deprived emotionally. Kapferer (2012: 13) proposes that in today's world, organizations should see the brand as something that "symbolizes a long-term engagement, crusade or commitment to a unique set of values, embedded into products, services, and behaviors, which make the organization, person or product stand apart or stand out".

Wheeler (2017: 2) asserts that brands serve three primary functions: navigation, reassurance, and engagement; people fall in love with brands, they use them to navigate the market and they stay loyal to the brand. To create this emotional connection, a brand has to be more than just a name and a logo. To make customers fall in love with the brand, the brand needs to have a personality. This is where brand identities come into play. Despite the concepts being similar, brand and brand identity are not synonymous. Brand identity is something tangible that fuels recognition and amplifies differentiation (Wheeler 2017: 4). Kapferer (2012: 158) agrees, stating that brands need to have a deep inner inspiration in order to gain a passionate following. Keller (2003: 12) names brand salience as one of the most important aspects of brand identity. Brand salience is connected to customer awareness of the brand, meaning often and easily the brand is evoked under various situations or circumstances. Highly salient brands are easily recalled and recognized by customers.

Kapferer (2012: 158-164) has proposed a framework that divides brand identity into six different facets: the brand's physique, personality, culture, relationship, customer reflection, and customer self-image. This hexagonal prism can be used to identify and evaluate the strength of a brand's brand identity. According to Kapferer (2012: 158-164), the brand physique consists of all the physical attributes connected with the brand, for example, the logo, the way the product looks, and the colors associated with it. The brand physique is the clearest visual representation of the brand.

The second facet of the prism, brand personality, is created and curated by communicating with the consumer base and can be seen in, for example, the tone of voice the brand uses

in advertising. In essence, this facet describes what type of a person the brand would be, if the brand was a human being. According to Kapferer (2012: 159), the personality has been the main focus of brand advertising since the 1970s and is still a big part of brand identity building. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003: 141) note that people choose brands the same way they choose their friends, because they simply like them as people. However, they also note that the main problem with the current definition of brand personality is that the definition is too wide. Using brand personality as a blanket term can lead to losing the distinctiveness of the facets of brand identity, of which personality is only one. The definition proposed by Azoulay and Kapferer (2003: 151) is "the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands", instead of including all traits of human beings that a brand might have.

The fourth facet in the prism is the brand relationship, which describes the relationship between a brand and its customers, for example, whether the customers feel that they can trust the brand. The last two facets are customer reflection and customer self-image, which can sound similar, but illustrate different points of view. Customer reflection refers to the stereotypical customer of the brand; the target audience the brand wants to be associated with. This reflection is also what is portrayed in a brand's promotional material. Customer self-image, on the other hand, refers to how the customer sees their ideal self. By understanding how the target customer wants to see themself, a brand can target their message and advertising accordingly.

When discussing brands that have reached a so-called cult status, such as the topic of the present study, Glossier, the most important facet to discuss from Kapferer's six facets, is the brand culture. Most cult brands reach this status due to their ideological underpinnings (Kapferer 2012: 160), as it is hard to create a community just on product attributes alone. Brand culture could almost be described as an ideology specific to the brand in question. The cultural dimension of brand identities is a relatively new concept, but interesting and increasingly relevant in today's world.
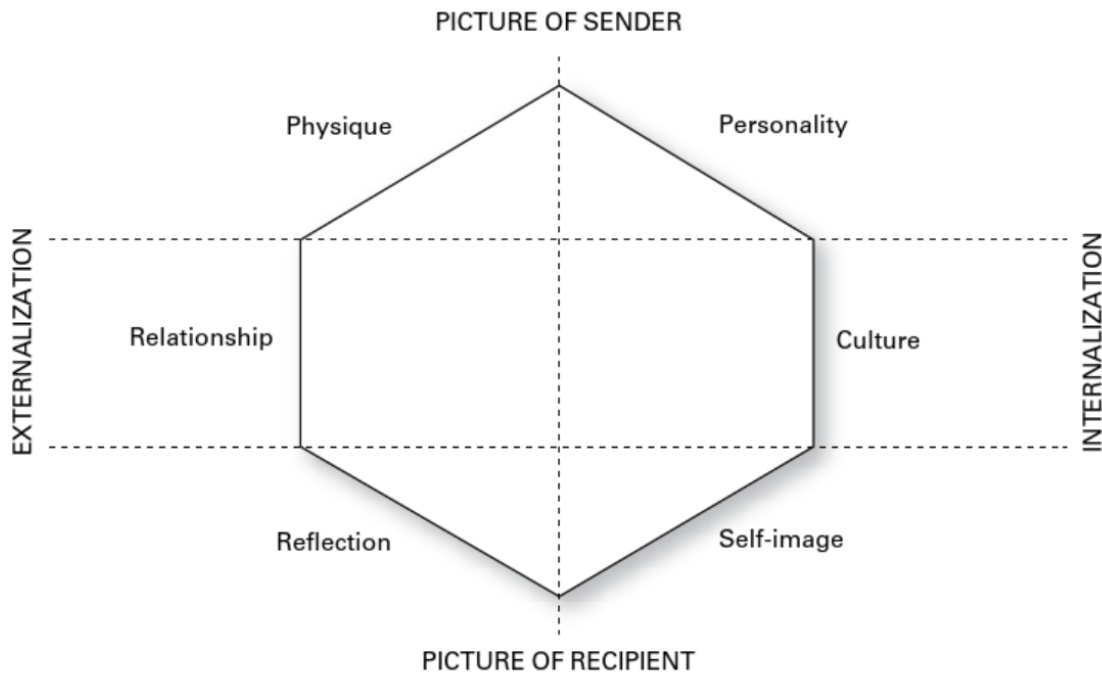
PICTURE OF SENDER

Physique   Personality

EXTERNALIZATION

Relationship   Culture

INTERNALIZATION

Reflection   Self-image

PICTURE OF RECIPIENT

Figure 1. Brand identity prism (Kapferer 2012: 158)

2.2 Social media

In this section I will define and introduce the concepts relevant to this thesis in the field of social media. First, I will start by defining what we mean by social media in its present-day usage. Secondly, I will introduce Instagram, the platform this thesis focuses on. I will finish the section by discussing some of the research done on marketing and brand identity building on social media.

2.2.1 Defining social media

Social media is an umbrella term generally applied to all web-based services that encourage and facilitate some form of social interaction (Zappavigna 2012: 2). The concept of social media started with Web 2.0, a term that describes the internet as we know it right now. Web 2.0 is not one technology, but rather a set of technologies that makes the internet what is it today. Web 2.0 has more user-generated content compared to its earlier incarnation and, according to Zappavigna (2012: 2), signaled a move towards the internet as a social tool, instead of solely an informational network. Web 2.0 has made our use of

the Internet more connected and collaborative, instead of only visiting websites, users can now participate in ways that were not possible before. Social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram make creating and sharing content with other people possible.

For a less broad definition of the term, Leppänen et al. (2015: 3) define social media as digital applications that allow "the creation, exchange, and circulation of user-generated content and enable interaction between users". Leppänen et al. continue to state that on social media platforms users construct at least semi-public profiles and establish connections with other users and then interact and share content in various ways. Even if one is not an avid user of social media platforms themselves, the discussions and concepts from social media often transfer over to other forms of media. Zappavigna (2012: 3) goes on to state that due to the rapid technological development in social media platforms, social media discourses can be a moving target for scholars, but it could be argued that this is precisely why they are an excellent topic for research.

Social media also allows people to form communities. While the early incarnation of the Internet, often referred to as Web 1.0, had some like-minded people creating communities around their interests, it mostly happened in a limited way with very little real interaction between different users (Dijck 2013: 5). The advent of Web 2.0 and social media revolutionized this and nowadays, communities and interaction are at the heart of Internet usage. According to Dijck (2013: 7), social media platforms are used for the same purposes as social connections offline, for example talking to friends, exchanging gossip and showing holiday photos. However, a major difference between these activities is that through social media these casual interactions are now released into a public domain where they can have far-reaching and long-lasting effects. This is how social media platforms have changed the nature of private and public communication.

2.2.2 Instagram as a social media platform

Instagram is an incredibly popular social media platform used for sharing photos and videos. The platform originated as an app for smartphones but is now also available as a desktop version. Each user has their own personal profile where they share photos and a separate feed that shows all the content created by the people the user follows. Each post typically consists of two elements: a visual element (photo or video) and a caption. The mobile app was created and launched in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger (Lagorio 2012) and has since become one of the biggest players in the field. Instagram is now "the home for visual storytelling for everyone from celebrities, newsrooms, and brands, to teens, musicians and anyone with a creative passion" (Instagram 2020). In 2012, Instagram was purchased by Facebook for 1 billion dollars (Lagorio 2012), which makes it one of the most highly valued social media platforms to date.

Although the platform started as individual-focused, it has started to cater more to the needs of brands and advertisers over the years (Carah & Shaul 2015: 70). Users can now create business profiles that offer different features meant to make the platform more useful for business owners, for example, access to Instagram Insights, which gives the user information on the demographics of the account's followers. As one of the new changes to brand accounts, Instagram has introduced a function that allows users to checkout and pay for their purchase right on Instagram (Keys 2017). However, at the moment the checkout option is available only for businesses based in the United States (Business Instagram 2020).

As of 2019, according to Instagram's own statistics, a staggering 90% of its users follow at least one business on Instagram (Business Instagram 2020) and 70% of users use the platform to find new products. Instagram has a relatively young user demographic that skews female (Duggan 2015) which makes it an important platform for brands that cater to this demographic.

The fact that Instagram is a photo-based platform makes it a useful avenue for marketing and building brand identity. According to Soonius (2012: 30), the use of images as opposed to only text produces higher levels of engagement with consumers and leads to more interactions. On Instagram, users can interact with photos by liking and commenting, and these interactions make the images visible to other users in their network (Carah & Shaul 2015: 71), which is especially important for brands as it enables more like-minded users to see the post. In addition to this, brands are interested in achieving a high level of engagement as it usually results in "an intimate long-term relationship with the customer" according to Sashi (2012: 254).

While there is plenty of research about Web 2.0 and social media itself, Instagram research is still a relatively new topic and therefore worth studying. Additionally, while some research on building brand identity on Instagram has been conducted (e.g., Carah & Shaul 2015, Colliander & Marder 2018, and Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas 2016), the amount of research focusing on identifying and analyzing discourses in Instagram posts is scarce.

2.2.3 Marketing and identity on social media

The content a brand posts on different social media platforms plays a crucial role in telling the brand story, building and curating the brand identity, and shaping brand communities (e.g., Ginsberg 2015: 80, Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim 2019: 774). According to Lou et al. (2019) being repeatedly exposed to a brand's social media content and interacting with it increases positive attitudes towards the brand and heightens purchase intentions. Many brands actively encourage customers to interact with their posts, for example by asking questions.

Millennials in particular are an appropriate target audience for social media marketing, as it has been found that millennials are the biggest cohort for status consumption (Eastman & Liu 2012: 99), meaning millennials are more likely to purchase consumer products to improve one's social standing than earlier generations, and their active social media use offers them the opportunity to portray who they are in terms of image, identity and

status. Since millennials are using social media to build their identities, it makes sense for brands to use the same platforms to build their brand identities and reach customers who might relate to the brand's social media content.

Social media is a key area in brand identity building because as Patterson (2018) explains, positive personalized interactions with people representing the brand keeps consumers coming back. Patterson also notes that communicating with customers makes them feel heard in the brand community which helps in building lasting customer relationships and creating positive word-of-mouth. Positive word-of-mouth is especially crucial for brands that want to reach the millennial audience as millennials and Generation Z rely on peer recommendations (Patterson 2018). To create long-lasting positive customer relationships, brands these days often aim to create a relationship that resembles a friendship. Talbot (1995: 147-148) calls this marketing trope synthetic personalization. Synthetic personalization includes communicating with large audiences as though they were individuals, by using inclusive language. This marketing tactic is prevalent in social media posts, but Talbot (1995: 147-148) reminds us that the same approach has been used in advertising for a long time. Communities forming around brands, sometimes referred to as consumption communities, require the purchase of a specific product in order to gain membership to the community, and then this anonymous audience is "addressed as thousands of identical yous with attitudes, values, and preoccupations ascribed to them" (Talbot 1995: 148) by the brand.

Brand communities are important for brands, as they execute important tasks on behalf of the brand (Laroche et al. 2012: 1756). A strong brand community facilitates sharing information, perpetuating the history and culture of the brand, and providing assistance to other consumers. In addition, according to Laroche et al. (2012: 1756) brand communities provide the social structure to customer–marketer relationships and have a strong influence on customer loyalty. The customers in these communities are also a source of positive electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). Word-of-mouth is traditionally defined as exchange of information about brands, products and services that occurs between consumers without direct prompting from marketers (Kozinets et al., 2010: 12).

WOM has been found to influence consumer attitudes and behavior, such as purchase decisions (Rosario et al. 2016: 2). According to Rosario et al. (2016: 3-8) more and more of WOM is happening online in environments such as blogs, forums and social media and it is therefore one of the most significant developments in contemporary consumer behavior. While millennials are more likely to trust e-WOM than advertising, consumers are still aware of the dangers of e-WOM being influenced or manipulated by brands and not all sources of e-WOM are deemed as reliable (Rosario et al. 2016: 9). Thus, e-WOM is also tied to the perceived authenticity of the source. Authenticity will be discussed further in this thesis in section 2.2.4.

Since social media is used largely to build brand identity, not all posts have mimic traditional advertising visuals, or arguably to be about the products and their functionality at all. (Findlay 2019: 7) discusses the trend of Instagram influences posting snapshots of their everyday lives "lives in cafes, on streets, and at other public (albeit photogenic) sites" in an effort to be more relatable and authentic. Findlay (2019: 7) states that as a continuation to this, brands are now using the same convention of presenting their products in everyday environments to communicate authenticity and other components of their brand identity. Arguably since social media is used to build the brand identity, it can be more important for the content to communicate something about the brand's general aesthetic than give a perfect description of a product.

2.2.4 Narratives of authenticity in marketing

According to Banet-Weiser (2012: 8), contemporary brand building is focused on building an authentic relationship with a consumer, a relationship that is based on the accumulation of memories, emotions, personal narratives, and expectations. Authenticity has become highly sought after by brands in the last few decades as millennials have become the largest group of consumers and have started demanding authentic messages, authentic brands, and authentic interactions instead of flashy advertising campaigns (Tyson 2016). Vannini and Williams (2009: 2) point out that ironically, strenuous marketing efforts are made to produce authenticity, even though the premise of the whole

concept is that it is an inherent quality and not something meticulously planned and manufactured.

As Banet-Weiser (2012: 10) admits, authenticity is a tricky concept to describe. In previous research, authenticity regarding brands has been described as "a subjective evaluation of genuineness ascribed to a brand by consumers" (Napoli et al., 2013: 2). Napoli et al. (2013: 2) continue on to state that authenticity is multifaceted and built around perceptions of concepts such as heritage, sincerity, cultural symbolism, nostalgia, craftsmanship, quality commitment and design consistency. Findlay (2013) introduces the marketing trope aspirational realness, which in many ways is similar to authenticity, and defines it as something that goes against the flawless ideal and thus, feels more real.

Instagram is a common platform for producing these narratives of authenticity, as the content on Instagram is, or at least was in the beginning stages of the app, snapshots of a moment happening right now in the life of the person instead of meticulously arranged photoshoots. Schroeder (2010: 7-10) states that a central aspect of the snapshot style imagery, that is common in many social media platforms, is the appearance of authenticity, as the snapshots could seemingly have been taken by anyone. Additionally, Zappavigna (2016: 279) states that the snapshot aesthetic and almost real-time pace at which images are posted and viewed by the audience invokes feelings of sharing the experience at the time that it is happening.

Lorenz (2019) notes that while Instagram created and popularized a very specific "carefully staged, color-corrected, glossy-looking aesthetic", it has since started to go out of fashion as people are looking for something more authentic. Unfiltered photos with low-production value are becoming more popular with influencers and brands are following suit. The ideal Instagram look is shifting and as, Lorenz (2019) states, people are now looking for things they can relate to. Similarly, in a study of video blogs, Tolson (2010: 281) found authenticity to be mainly a performance of ordinariness with the main components being a colloquial use of language, modest settings of pictures and videos and transparency of the production process.

Authenticity is also closely tied to the perceived "coolness" of a brand. Coolness is hard to define, but whole brands and markets depend on it (e.g., Pountain and Robins 2000: 15, Gurrieri 2009: 2). As coolness is tied to people's perceptions of the brand rather than on the product itself, it can only be reached by developing and curating a specific brand identity. Pountain and Robins (2000: 19) give the term cool the working description of being an "oppositional attitude adopted by individuals or small groups to express defiance to authority", which ties into the definition of aspirational realness mentioned above.

2.3 Discourses and discourse analysis

Next, I will discuss how the term discourse has been approached in earlier research. I will also take a brief look at the history, aims and criticism of discourse analysis.

2.3.1 Defining discourse

Discourse as a term has several different definitions and plenty of vagueness surrounding it. According to Kress (2012: 35), the terms text and discourse have frequently been used more or less interchangeably to mean "extended stretches of speech or writing". While agreeing that text, as in something written, has been seen as the most important part of discourse in the past, Blommaert (2004) argues that contemporary discourse analysis has to account for more than text, thus a broader definition is needed. According to Blommaert (2004: 3), discourse comprises of all purposeful semiotic human activity, seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns of use. A typical 'text', such as a newspaper article, nowadays includes several elements that make separating the textual content from the visual content difficult and impractical for analysis purposes.

Agreeing with Blommaert regarding the social dimension of discourses, Fairclough (2004: 10-12) states that a piece of discourse is something that is simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice. Fairclough discusses a three-dimensional model of discourse with three different levels that link discourse to

society. The first level is text. This level can be speech, writing, something visual, or a combination of all. Fairclough's second level is discourse as a discursive practice, which involves the production and consumption of texts, and the final level is discourse as social practice. This model allows more focus to be paid on the production and reception processes of the discourse than just examining the discursive text.

In addition, discourses construct, represent and communicate ideologies (e.g., Fairclough 2004, Blommaert 2004: 4). Identities are always present in language use. Discourses offer us ways of representing people and phenomena and therefore also shape our perceptions of reality (Blommaert 2004: 4). Therefore, discourses are an integral part of analyzing marketing language. Understanding the impact marketing language has on us and the ways we view ourselves and each other is always important. Discourses are also an important concept when analyzing social media texts, as they are by nature social and as Blommaert (2004: 4) states, discourse "is what transforms our environment into a socially and culturally meaningful one".

2.3.2 Discourse analysis

The premise of any discourse analysis is that the use of language is not only a linguistic act but it has a social component. According to Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 11) discourse analysis aims to identify the different meanings and connotations given to language, and how they are shaped and altered by society. When analyzing discourse, it is important to take into consideration not only language but also what is actually done with it. As Blommaert (2004: 2) aptly states, discourse can be defined as "language-in-action" or "language-in-use". Thus, discourse analysis aims to understand the ways language is used in real-life situations and has an emphasis on the contextual meaning of language and on the cultural rules and conventions of its setting (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009: 12). Discourse analysis is also used to explain and clarify the power relations in any and all discourse (Blommaert 2004: 53)

In the 1980s researchers working with discourse analysis realized that it is not only the text that makes meanings, as all visual features in and around the text have an effect too (Machin & Mayer 2012: 6). This concept of multiple modes considers 'language' as one among many resources for making meaning. According to Kress (2012: 38), this implies that the modal resources available in a culture need to be seen as one coherent field. To understand the influence of these features, a set of tools that would allow their analysis was needed. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) coined this set of tools 'multimodal discourse analysis'. Multimodal discourse analysis is relevant for this thesis, as the data analyzed is from an image-based social media account and thus multimodal by nature. Multimodal discourse analysis will be discussed further in chapter 3.5.

Analyzing discourse in internet environments adds new features to texts and is thus unlike traditional written text, according to Beaulieu, Sarker, and Sarker (2015). These new added features include things such as writing in all lowercase or uppercase, emojis and other graphics used to make meanings. For example, writing in all uppercase can be used to invoke the meaning of the author of the message yelling and emojis can be interpreted as the author making the face or gesture of the emoji. According to Zappavigna (2012: 77), emojis can also be used to increase interpersonal closeness and solidarity. However, as Zappavigna (2012: 80) notes, viewed alone, emojis contain a high amount of 'fuzziness', meaning that they can express a large range of emotions and there is always room for interpretation from the receiver. McCulloch (2019: 163) concurs, stating that emojis can have even taboo meanings that are not clear to all, such as the eggplant emoji. Correctly interpreting the eggplant emoji as a phallic symbol requires a certain level of internet literacy. There are intuitive rules to emoji use. According to McCulloch (2019: 174), these rules mostly deal with combining different emoji, for example, it is possible to combine several emojis related to snow and cold to increase the message of freezing weather, but as McCulloch (2019: 174) puts it, combining random vegetable emojis to the eggplant emoji does not make the message more sensual but instead makes it indecipherable.

It should be noted that analyzing discourse by nature requires some interpretation from the researcher. According to Machin and Mayr (2012: 209) some of the biggest criticism of

discourse analysis is that according to some, it is less a method of analysis and more an exercise in interpretation. However, all discourse analysis needs to go deeper than merely describing the language and its elements, and there needs to be an attempt to interpret the messages conveyed by the discourse. When doing discourse analysis, the researcher should avoid exaggeration and justify all findings thoroughly.

2.4 Feminist media studies

When analyzing the brand identity and communication of a brand that targets and reaches an audience composed mainly of women, it would be foolish to ignore that gender has an influence on the discourses used in the marketing and other communication performed by the brand. Feminist media studies focuses on the ways gender, sexuality, class and other forms of identity are represented in media texts. In addition to this, feminist media studies explores how these identities are also produced by contemporary media because, as Gill (2007: 12) states, media not only reflects reality but actively constructs it.

Talbot (1995: 145?) notes that in regard to discourse studies in the Foucauldian sense, femininity is not a discourse type on its own, but rather, femininity is articulated in different discourse types. She mentions women's magazines as an example of this happening, stating that both the advertisements and magazine features written by the editorial board about beauty products and fashion, are sites for "discourse of femininity". Talbot (1995: 154) notes the simulation of friendship as a frequent discourse feature in mass-media texts aimed at women and girls. A phenomenon Talbot (1995: 147-149) calls synthetic sisterhood is at the heart of this simulated friendship. In a synthetic sisterhood the reader becomes a part of a consumption community that resembles a group of friends. In Talbot's example, the community is formed around a women's magazine and the magazine editors working as the more experienced woman, giving out information and instructions. It could be argued that a similar phenomenon is happening around beauty brands and their online content.

According to Amelia Jones (2010: 1), "visuality is one of the key modes by which gender is culturally inscribed in Western culture". Historically this has been especially present in advertising, which feminist media studies often criticizes for its reinforcement of the objectification of women and narrow descriptions of the ideal women. Mills (2012: 39) states that although readers are not necessarily meant to be using close literary analysis when being subjected to an advertisement, such analysis "can be profitable in terms of uncovering ideological assumptions". Arguably the same principle applies to a brand's social media content, as we can safely assume that there is almost as much consideration behind the social media content as there is when it comes to advertising content.

Feminist media studies is also useful when analyzing gendered identities on social media. According to Findlay (2019: 5), fashion bloggers and social media influencers perform an aspirational everyday life of consumption and beauty practice on social media. She continues on to state that these performed identities "implicitly affirm the postfeminist sensibility that not only should women aspire to see their appearance as an ongoing project of self-improvement, but that to do so is their responsibility and the grounds upon which they can differentiate themselves from others". When it comes to consumption and feminist media studies, Kacen (2000: 347) goes as far as to argue that for most of marketing's modern history, "women have been seen as consumers and consumption as a feminine activity".

The notion of postfeminism has become an important talking point when discussing feminist culture analysis and especially media culture and the phenomenon of brands capitalizing on feminism. Postfeminism stems from traditional feminism but it has proved to be challenging to find an agreed-up definition for the term. According to Gill (2007: 253), postfeminism "treats feminism essentially as 'a lifestyle, an attitude, and identity' and that a big part of postfeminism is praising effortlessness and women's appearing confident and unconcerned about their self-presentation (Gill 2007: 262). In addition, the term is used as a "way of making sense of the paradoxes and contradictions" in the representation of women in popular media (Banet-Weiser et al. 2019: 4).

Additionally, Banet-Weiser et al. (2019: 5) note that some scholars have also seen postfeminism as a backlash against more traditional feminism. Postfeminism can appear as a contradictory perspective on contemporary gender relations that seemingly takes feminist achievements for granted. According to Dobson and Kanai (2018: 772), contemporary feminism in popular media appears to favor cool, fun-loving feminism over a feminism that is driven by exasperation over social injustice and inequality.

Crepax (2020: 73) states that the relationship between feminism and aesthetics is growing increasingly complicated, as feminism itself transforms and mixes with mainstream culture. According to Kearney (2015: 265), within postfeminist logic women are actively choosing to participate and find pleasure in the same "consumer-driven, hyperfeminine, glamorized body projects long used to construct us as passive spectacles for the male gaze". Crepax (2020: 76) introduces the term Instagram feminism, stating that accounts practicing this form of feminism have a characteristically 'girly' aesthetic, and are embracing glitter, flowers, and all shades of pink. Crepax (2020: 76) notes that this type of social media feminism often embraces a more diverse representation too, stating that "thanks to the changing tastes of the mainstream public and new aesthetic trends, non-white and non-thin women are increasingly represented in dominant contexts as well".

A common theme in Instagrammable feminism is female empowerment, especially in the form of posting slogans such as "know yourself, love yourself, be yourself" and anything to do with self-love. Gill (2016) notes that while these contemporary forms of feminism borrow the legacy, the themes, and the language of feminism, they ultimately lack its substance. Crepax (2020: 79) agrees, stating that it is problematic that feminism is "frequently reduced to a hip aesthetic built around messages about self-love and beautiful women enjoying girly fun together" by these social media accounts. When feminism is used as an aesthetic, it becomes a marketing tool and loses its potential to change the status quo.

2.5 Previous research on beauty brands on Instagram and Glossier's brand identity

This section introduces previous research and studies done on subjects relevant to the current thesis. Some of the discussed research concerns research on beauty brands on social media, brand identities on Instagram and on how communities can form around brands. I will also introduce research on the concept of authenticity on beauty marketing and any studies done on Glossier's brand identity.

Research on online marketing has been conducted in growing amounts as more and more brands move their marketing online. A particular focus of these studies has been the benefits that social media marketing offers, such as creating electronic word-of-mouth, reaching large audiences, and shaping brand communities (e.g., Lou, Xie, Feng, & Kim 2019). Additionally, the social media content a brand produces plays an important part in telling the story of the brand and building the brand image, which is why marketing scholars have paid attention to it (e.g., Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016, Colliander & Marder, 2018). However, most of this research seems to have been conducted on the different strategies used or on the effectiveness of social media marketing, instead of on the process of building brand identity on social media.

Saladich (2017), states that "the beauty sector has proved to be leading innovation within retail", not only on the side of creating innovative products, but also in marketing strategies and ways to attract and retain customers. As technologies have developed and the use of social media has become a norm, the cosmetics industry is also trying to take advantage of the new opportunities and interact with consumers more intimately. This happens, for example, through interactive social media, such as Instagram. Hassan (2014) looked at the Instagram marketing of brands specifically targeting women and found that there is more variability in the use of strategies of brands that target women than those for the general population and that brands that target women appear to prefer a sales response strategy.

Dormon (2016) stated that when marketing to millennials, brands should be aware that the generation is already weary of heavy editing of images, objectification and notions of exclusivity and glamour. Dormon notes that today's consumers are drawn to different sets of values and design, noting that Glossier is a brand whose "design ethos shows their playful personality". Increasing use of humor and playfulness in beauty marketing is in line with the general marketing trend of approachability and authenticity.

The marketing trope of authenticity, or what Findlay (2019) calls "aspirational realness", has also been studied in some amount since it has emerged in the digital communication of beauty brands catering especially towards social media-savvy female consumers. Findlay (2019: 1) defines the aspirational realness trope as championing "beautiful women with normalizing "flaws" as opposed to the flawless hegemonic fashionable ideal" and names brands such Reformation, Maryam Nassir Zadeh, and the focus of the present study Glossier, as examples of brands utilizing this trope in their marketing. Findlay continues on to state that this trope is aiming at constructing a discourse of intimacy and equivalence between the brand and the consumer.

Pejcha (2019) also focused on Glossier and authenticity, concluding that Glossier has played a role in turning the aesthetic of natural makeup into something aspirational. In addition, she argues that with its sheer, barely-there makeup products, Glossier is offering a self-improvement ritual for women who already fit the dominant beauty ideals. Glossier and the brand's relationship to feminism has also been under some scrutiny since the brand's creation, as the founder of the brand, Emily Weiss has stated that everyone at Glossier is a feminist (Mlotek: 2016) and the ideology has been at least somewhat visible in Glossier's communication. Regarding Glossier and its postfeminism branding, Cai (2017) noted that while Glossier appears to celebrate all things feminine, its advertising and social media profiles are free of any clear endorsements of any political views. According to Cai (2017), Glossier "sells a liberal vision of femininity but eschews feminism". Additionally, Cai (2017) concluded that with its advertising and social media presence, Glossier does not sell only products but also "a concept, an aesthetic, the chance to be a carefree, effortless, cool".

3 METHODOLOGY & DATA

In this section, I will describe the methodology of the present study. First, I will introduce the research question of the study and discuss its overall aims. Second, I will introduce the brand Glossier to give background information of my data and context to the aims of this study. I will also discuss my data collection process, the ethical considerations of conducting research with social media data and give justifications on why this particular data was chosen. Lastly, I will introduce my method of choice, multimodal discourse analysis, and how it was applied to the data of the present study.

3.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to analyze how the beauty brand Glossier uses the social media platform Instagram to build their brand identity. This is done by analyzing the posts from Glossier's official Instagram account, @glossier, and identifying the discourses used in the posts. The research questions of this study are:

1. What types of discourses does Glossier use in building their brand identity on Instagram?
2. What types of multimodal means does Glossier use in their Instagram posts to build their brand identity?

3.2 Introducing Glossier and 'cool girl beauty'

Next, I will briefly introduce the entity that produced the data used in this study. Glossier is a United States based beauty brand that was founded in 2014 by Emily Weiss (Glossier 2020). The brand produces and sells skincare and makeup products catered largely to millennial consumers and targets their customer base via online channels. Weiss already had a popular social media platform in the form of her blog, Into the Gloss, which served as the original marketing platform. Thus, Glossier had a strong presence online from the very beginning and has continued it to this day. Having a dedicated fanbase from the get-

go helped immensely, but Glossier has also widened their customer base by using brand ambassadors and, most importantly for the present study, by having a very deliberate social media presence on platforms such as Instagram. In fact, Glossier has been described as a brand that had its identity "primarily formed on Instagram" and has its "uniformed gang of 'Glossier Girls' (brand ambassadors) endorse its products all over the online platform" ("What Can We Learn"). Another term that is often used to describe the brand and that highlights Glossier's relationship to social media is the description "digital native beauty brand" (Krihely 2018).

When starting Glossier, Weiss hoped to create a beauty brand that would feel like "a close friend who was maybe a little older, and maybe a little cooler", a friend who was "more likely to cross her eyes in a photograph than make a duck face" (Larocca: 2018). This brand identity combined with the fact that Glossier's makeup products are often sheer (Nicholson 2019) and mostly designed for a natural look instead of full-face glamour has also led to Glossier sometimes being described as "makeup for people who are already pretty" (Hughes 2018).

From the very beginning, Glossier has been a direct-to-consumer brand, meaning that its products are not sold elsewhere (Turk 2020). This gives the brand more control over its relationship with customers, as there are no third-party intermediaries. This decision has also facilitated the creative and carefully designed pop-up shops Glossier uses to display and sell their products.

Since entering the market, Glossier has dominated the so-called "cool girl beauty" section of it (Mlotek 2016). Glossier is current, trendy, and different from many mainstream beauty brands. Nicholson (2019) describes Glossier's aesthetic as soft and radiant, and states that the brand aims for its products to make the customer's skin look dewy and healthy. Whereas many classic beauty brands are often seen creating unrealistic beauty ideals and spending large amounts of money on advertising campaigns with huge production values, Glossier trusts on word of mouth and most of all, on being authentic. Findlay (2019: 9) suggests that in Glossier's marketing the customers are not inducted into

entering a dream world, as in most mainstream beauty advertising, because Glossier's products "do not need to be glamorized because they are so desirable that it is enough to see them and be convinced".

According to their own website, the brand's tagline is "beauty products inspired by real life". While Glossier follows the trend set by other beauty brands by primarily casting women who appear to be in their early 20s, are able-bodied, and clear-skinned for their advertising, they have also regularly cast models who are ethnically diverse and have also cast women who are older or curvier than we are used to seeing in beauty advertising (e.g., Findlay 2019: 9, Branch 2017). Often, the brand uses its employees as spokespeople, and especially Weiss, the founder of the brand, has a strong personal brand, being described by one fan as "a capital-C capital-G cool girl" (Tiku 2016).

3.3 Data and data collection

The data for this study consists of 75 posts from the official Glossier Instagram account, @glossier. The profile is public, which means that I was able to see and screenshot all posts to store them for analysis. While taking screenshots of the data is more time consuming than other ways of collecting data, according to Laestadius (2016: 12), working with the data in this fashion has the benefit of being able to better understand the visual intent of the content and perceiving the user interface in the same way that the intended audience would.

 The data has two separate sets: first set is from July and August of 2019 and the second is July and August 2020. Choosing time periods from two different years allowed me to see which discourses were more continuous and which were more a reflection of the time.

To maintain the focus on Glossier's means of building their brand, I will only include content from the brand and therefore will not include comments from customers on the Instagram posts or other content clearly originally created by customers. I will also disregard Instagram Stories, a feature of Instagram that allows users to post content that

disappears automatically, from my data, as those are only visible for 24 hours and only to people logged in on Instagram. Additionally, due to the time limitations of this thesis, I have excluded videos from the data.

3.4 Ethical aspects of the present study

By nature, most Instagram profiles are public and most of the posted content does not require the viewer to have an account. The users of the platform are aware of and have accepted these terms of use. Despite this, I have chosen to exclude the posts from individuals not directly connected with Glossier, which Glossier sometimes shares on the account. It could be argued that while these posts were publicly shared by the original poster and they could have agreed to Glossier sharing the post on their platform, they might not have been intended to be shared for purposes such as my study. In the screenshots included in this thesis I have covered all usernames and profile pictures to avoid any problems with research ethics.

Regarding using social media data, it should be noted that the directive 96/9/EC by the European Parliament (2019), that concerns databases states that each "author's own intellectual creation shall be protected as such by copyright." However, the Parliament adds that stretches to the exclusive rights to the creation can be made for scientific research, as long as the source of data is indicated, and the extent of use is justified by the non-commercial purpose to be achieved.

I have also contacted Glossier prior to conducting this study and was granted permission to include descriptions and quotes from their online content in my thesis.

3.5 Method of analysis: Multimodal discourse analysis

The data collected for this study consists of Instagram posts, which generally include two elements: a picture and a caption and thus, are multimodal by nature. The text and image

in Instagram posts have a complementary relationship. Due to this reason, a multimodal approach to discourse analysis is the logical choice.

As Kress (2012: 38) explains, multimodality asserts that language is just one among of many different resources for meaning-making. In multimodal approach to discourse, the different means are seen in one domain, instead of linking different means with certain disciplines and theories. Multimodal approach is interested in the interaction of all semiotic elements used to communicate. The multimodal discourse analysis framework is useful for the present study, as it allows the exploration of the complex interrelations of social media discourse. The approach examines the text, image as intertext, and hypertext such as hashtags, both separately and together. To summarize, in the multimodal approach to analysis in the present study, the visual and linguistic features are seen as reinforcing each other and the ideologies and messages constructed.

In recent years, more and more focus has been paid on multimodality in advertising. According to Del Saz-Rubio (2009: 2539), there has been a notable shift from language-based advertising to advertising strategies utilizing images and other multimodal means to appeal to audiences. Del Saz-Rubio (2009: 2539) states that in order to influence audiences and drive the sales of products, advertisers now need not to only convey information about the products, but also appeal to audiences emotionally. Multimodality makes conveying emotions easier and quicker, as for example, in images there are several modes such as color, layout, possibly writing and font as well, all working at the same time (Kress 2012: 39). While the data analyzed in this thesis is not advertising in the most traditional sense, it can be argued that a brand's online presence as a whole is a form of brand building and similar tactics would apply to it as they would on more traditional advertising.

In my analysis, I will be utilizing multimodal discourse analysis introduced by Kress (2012) to identify and analyze the discourses present in Glossier's Instagram posts. Additionally, I will analyze the brand identity of Glossier using Kapferer's (2012) identity prism that was discussed in chapter 2.1.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As I used a multimodal approach for my analysis, I considered the Instagram posts as connected pieces of semiotic modes, instead of separating the photo from the accompanying caption. During the time period the data was gathered, Glossier posted on their Instagram account almost daily. When new products were launched, the number of posts per day was even higher.

As mentioned earlier, the data consists of 75 Instagram posts from two time periods, July-August 2019 and July-August 2020. I was able to identify five different discourses that were present during the time period of the data collection.

Next, I will introduce the identified discourses. After that, the next part of the thesis will define Glossier's brand identity in more detail by utilizing Kapferer (2012) brand identity prism.

4.1 Discourses identified

In this section, I will identify, name, and discuss the different discourses present in the data. To identify these discourses from the data, I analyzed each selected Instagram post from a multimodal perspective. This means that I considered both the photo and everything in the photo's caption as a single entity in which the different modes support each other.

From the selected Glossier Instagram posts, I was able to identify 5 discourses: cool girl discourse, social justice discourse, internet culture discourse, community discourse, and traditional advertising discourse. These discourses overlapped at times, as different discourses were simultaneously present in the same post, often supporting each other. The most common discourse was what I have in this thesis called traditional advertising discourse, which included all posts that were dedicated to displaying a product and its functions. After that, the most common discourses were community creating discourse

and 'Cool Girl' discourse, with internet culture discourse and social justice discourse being the less common but still influential discourses.

The chapter is divided into five sections, each section is dedicated to discussing the discourse characteristics and its possible aims. Throughout the chapter I have included examples from the data to illustrate the discourses.

4.1.1 Cool girl discourse

The most salient feature of Glossier's Instagram feed is its aesthetics. The feed looks less like a corporate account and resembles more an account of an individual. It is clear that the photos on the account are often taken with an iPhone rather than a DSLR camera, which representatives of the brand have also mentioned in interviews (Hart 2019), and this separates it from many other brands on Instagram. This approach to creating Instagram content makes the brand feel more relatable, which is exactly what the brand aims for.

A term that seems to be associated heavily with Glossier is 'cool girl makeup'. Pountain and Robins (1999: 19) give the term cool the working description of being an "oppositional attitude adopted by individuals or small groups to express defiance to authority", in Glossier's case this would be shown in their philosophy of "skin first, makeup second", a slogan that is also repeated in the brand's Instagram bio, and in believing that makeup is not something that is used to fix mistakes, it is something that lets individuals celebrate their already existing beauty.

Coolness is often associated with rebels, outcasts and punks, which are not types one would associate with Glossier, but there is a common theme of aloofness that can also be seen in Glossier's marketing. Effortlessness and rejecting the strict and fake perfection that other brands often curate in their social media presence is something that Glossier has done from the very beginning.

4.1.2 Social justice discourse

While Glossier does not have any direct political stance, the brand did ship "I'm Voting" stickers with their orders during the United States presidential election, as can be seen in the post from August 28th, 2020, which is a photo of stickers with the text "I'm Voting" and is accompanied by a caption:

> "The first step to voting is to register, and starting today you can do just that on Glossier.com/lets/vote. Register, check your registration status, request a mail-in ballot, tell a friend. And then show off 💫 With our limited edition 'I'm Voting' sticker that's shipping with all US orders starting today. A new three-eyed smiley who's happy to meet your phone case, water bottle, or favorite blank space that could use a little 😃 And through our partnership with @whenweallvote, we'll be sharing more ways for you to become more civically engaged in the coming weeks. Stay tuned 👍"

In a similar vein, on July 17th, 2020, Glossier posted the brand's second community resources pamphlet. The goal of the post is to shed light on creators of "networks of support for Black people and people of color". These posts were in response to the Black Lives Matter -movement, a social movement that focuses on inclusiveness and addressing racial injustices (Banks 2018: 710). Sobande (2019) discusses the concept of "wokeness" in advertising and brand identity building. In her paper, Sobande examines "how commercialized notions of Black social justice activism and intersectional understandings of oppression, feminism and equality are drawn on as part of current marketing efforts" and mentions that in brand marketing this can be seen in many ways, that can range from more subtle nods to "wokeness", such as using language and visual symbols associated with social justice movements, to explicitly stating the brand's support of specific movements and activists.

Glossier's posts, while a form of supporting companies that might not get the attention they deserve otherwise, can still be seen upholding the idea that social change could be done through consumption of products. There is social capital in appearing to be "woke", for both individuals and brands.

Instead of celebrities, Glossier usually uses their employees or customers as the main ambassadors and spokespeople of the brand. However, during the data set collected in July and August 2019, there were two exceptions to this: Glossier shared that both the captain of the National United States soccer team, Megan Rapinoe, and then First Lady, Michelle Obama, had been styled with Glossier products in posts on July 11th and July 8th, respectively. Aside from being a highly successful athlete, Rapinoe is known for being an activist. Associating the brand with political figures and activists can be seen as political activity since as Sobande (2019) states, the self-brands of celebrities can be incorporated to marketing efforts to construct a more "woke" image of the brand. However, this is not a very explicit form of it.

However, considering Glossier has declared itself a feminist company (Mlotek: 2016) there are very few posts of clear activism, feminism, or politics. Gill (2007: 153) mentions "almost total evacuation of notions of politics of cultural influence" as an aspect of postfeminist sensibility. By this, Gill is referring to the fact that postfeminism does not attribute the ways women feel about their looks and bodies to any outward pressure but instead paints beauty rituals as something women do to please themselves. This message is the implicit message of plenty of media content aimed at women (e.g., Gill 2007, Del Rosso 2017) and is arguably present in Glossier's Instagram content as well. In the data collected for this thesis, make up and beauty are largely portrayed as self-indulgence and fun routines.

4.1.3 Internet culture discourse

The discourse I have named internet culture discourse includes the posts that have clear references to popular internet culture, such as memes. The main objective of this discourse is to build the identity of the brand and build a relationship that resembles a friendship with the customers.

In the context of the internet, a meme in the simplest terms can be defined as an image, text or other piece of media, typically humorous in nature, that is copied and spread rapidly by internet users, often on social media. Bauckhage (2011) defines Internet memes as any phenomena that rapidly gains popularity or notoriety on the Internet. The functions of a meme can be hard to define, as noted by Castaño Díaz (2013: 84), because they can serve different purposes in different communities. However, according to Zappavigna (2012: 101) memes are used for social bonding rather than for sharing information. Creating memes by remixing existing pieces of media content shows familiarity with the same source materials and can solidify feelings of in-group and out-group. Knobel (2006: 417) adds that the use of memes can also increase one's "cool quotient".

Understanding and sharing memes is a mark of solidarity and carries the message of being similar to other people in the community. Zappavigna (2012: 126) describes how people will add more and more obscure intertextual references to meme templates to show skill and create an increasingly smaller and more gated in-group audience. Bauckhage (2011: 1) also notes that professionals in public relations and advertising have embraced Internet memes and they are used in, for example viral, marketing, where according to Bauckhage there are examples of memes that were "purposely designed to create publicity for products or services". The memes that Glossier share are an interesting example of a commercial Instagram account sharing memes that were created about the brand, but not by the marketing professionals. Memes are created by fans of the brand and the original aim of the meme is to entertain other people in the Glossier fanbase. However, Glossier sharing these memes makes them into a marketing device, as the memes are usually describing their products in a positive light. For example, a post from 22nd of July 2020 (see Image 1), features a cute photo of two otters holding onto each other accompanied with the text "me reuniting with my super pure". Super Pure is a serum from Glossier. The sharing of these memes is also a powerful way of building and reinforcing the community around the brand.

Glossier also posts images of cute animals that seemingly have nothing to do with the brand on their feed. An example of this from the data is a post from the 24th of August

2019, which features a dog with no clear link to Glossier and a caption that only states, "Have a great day everyone!!". Maddox (2020: 1) states that the relationship between images of cute pets and social media is particularly prominent on Instagram, thus it could be argued that some of part of the reason these images are featured is because of the platform and the brand using it in the same way that a person would. However, according to Plourde (2018: 297), pet images on social media create a type of relationship between the viewer and the object of the image that creates feelings of care and empathy. Maddox (2020: 7) states that when we are engaging with an image of something cute, we cannot help but to feel these things.

Thus, Glossier might be posting these images of cute animals to generate feelings of happiness and joy in their followers. Arguably these macros of cute animals could also have similar functions as memes, discussed above, in that they are mainly used to communicate an understanding of internet culture and make the brand seem relatable.

The internet culture discourse overlaps with the cool girl discourse in some areas, but I separated the two as I believe that they serve a different purpose in creating the brand identity: cool girl discourse creates an ideal, a type of person the customer aspires to be, whereas the meme-sharing makes the brand feel similar to the customer. The customer understands the meme, is in on the joke, and relates to the brand like they would to a friend.
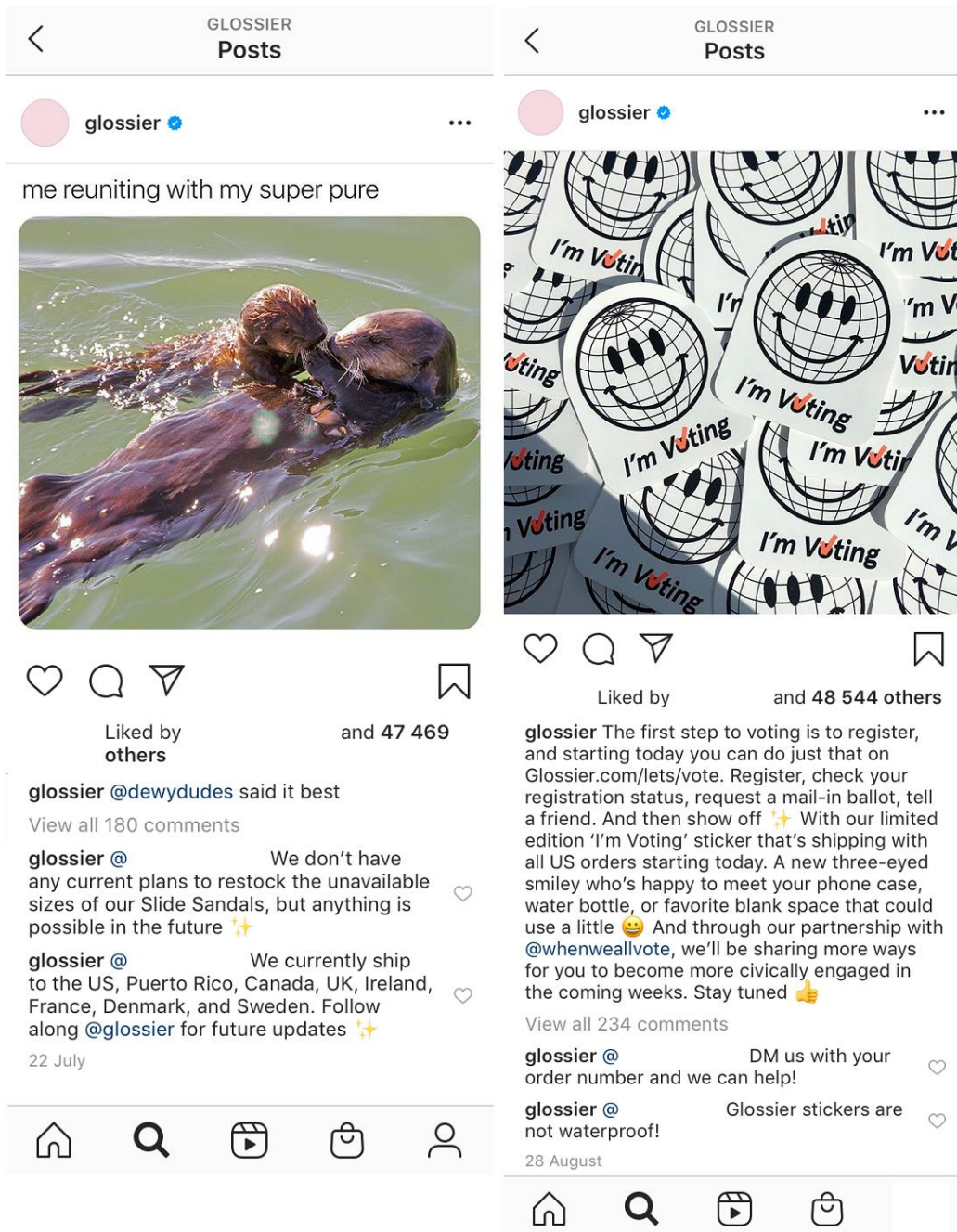
Image 1. Screenshots of posts on Glossier's Instagram account from 22nd of July, 2020 and 28th of August, 2020.

4.1.4 Community creating discourse

Brand communities are communities in which consumers identify, connect and interact with one another through the consumption of a certain brand (Kapferer 2012: 141). These communities are more significant than ever now in the era of social media. Social media platforms create opportunities for brands to communicate with their customers and for

customers to communicate with each other, by sharing experiences of the brand. The ways the brand engages with its community have an effect on its brand identity, which is why examples of community discourse are very relevant to this thesis. In Glossier's Instagram posts there are examples of discourse that aims at creating and enforcing the community that has emerged around its products. This discourse is visible in posts sharing fan-created content, asking questions to create conversation and asking the community for opinions on which type of products the brand should develop next.

Glossier will at times dedicate whole posts for asking questions from their community, as seen in the post on July 25th, 2019, which asks "If you were a Glossier product, which one would you be?" (See image 3). The photo is a screenshot of a tweet posted on the official Glossier Twitter account, which is also somewhat common in Glossier's posts as posting the same prompts in several social media channels will create more engagement. It could be argued that the main point of these types of posts is to increase the engagement in posts and thus, influence the Instagram algorithm is more likely to show posts with high engagement to users (Warren 2021). However, these posts can also have a strong effect on community building, as fans of the brand will share their opinions and see each other's replies.

Additionally, Glossier liking, commenting and sharing customers' photos on social media, such as on the brand's Instagram feed, could be read as approval or praise for the customer's makeup look from the brand. Glossier's brand personality is mimicking a friendship, and this mechanism of approval demonstrates a phenomenon that Alison Winch (2013: 2-6) calls "girlfriend culture", a popular media culture wherein female friendship is seen as empowering but at the same time is intricately bound with culture that paints the self as a project that should always be worked on. Winch (2013: 4) mentions how across many media platforms, female sociality is used as a marketing strategy.

An important part of most social media discourse is its searchability. A common way to do this is hashtags, which are a part of Instagram as well. Hashtags are a convention that allows users to mark the topic of the post with a key word or sentence (Zappavigna 2012:

36). Hashtags in their current form are used to make the post easier to find for other users posting about the same topic but can also be used as a stylistic means or as metacommentary for humorous effect. Zappavigna (2015: 6) describes three different linguistic functions of hashtags: experiential, interpersonal and textual. Experiential function is used when the user wants to mark the topic of the post and make it searchable and is the most common function. The interpersonal function is used to provide metacommentary in the post and can be used to build relationships. The last function, textual function refers to the use of hashtags as a tool for organizing the post. These functions are not mutually exclusive and in fact, often work simultaneously in any social media discourse. Thus, while hashtags often merely describe what is on display in the post and organize text, they can also be used for enacting interpersonal relationships.

In the data for this study, Glossier's use of hashtags was very sparse. The company does not seem to use hashtags for experiential topic markers often, in fact there was only one exception in the whole data set collected for this study. A post from 16th August 2019 uses the hashtag #babiesofglossier to describe what is pictured. The post has a photo of a woman in a Glossier store, taking a selfie and holding a young child.

However, some examples of using hashtags for humorous or metacommentary purposes were present. In a post from 6th of August 2016, a photo of what looks like a mood board for the brand's, at the time newly launched, product, Berry Lip dotcom, has the caption "Berry Balm #mood" (See image 3). Usually, hashtags are applied to direct the audience's attention to something in the photo or describe elements of the photo, but the hashtag #mood is a more meta description. Schwedel (2018) explains that the meme of #mood has been popular on the Internet for a long time and describes it as a "grassroots meme with no known originator". Schwedel adds that often the aim of the meme is not to actually describe the poster's current mood or situation, but rather to broadcast "your tribe, taste, cultural allegiances, or personal quirks". However, in the post Glossier is using the hashtag with a slightly modified meaning. The #mood, above all other communicative purposes, is communicating an in-group joke that combines the meaning of a mood board and the #mood meme.

Fans of Glossier have created several Instagram accounts dedicated to creating Glossier related content, such as @glossierstickeronalighter, which photoshops Glossier products and logos on photos of celebrities, @glossierboyfriends, an account dedicated to photos of bored boyfriends at Glossier shops and @dogsofglossier, for photos of dogs near Glossier products. The earlier mentioned use of the hashtag #babiesofglossier could be intended as a nod to these accounts created by the community.
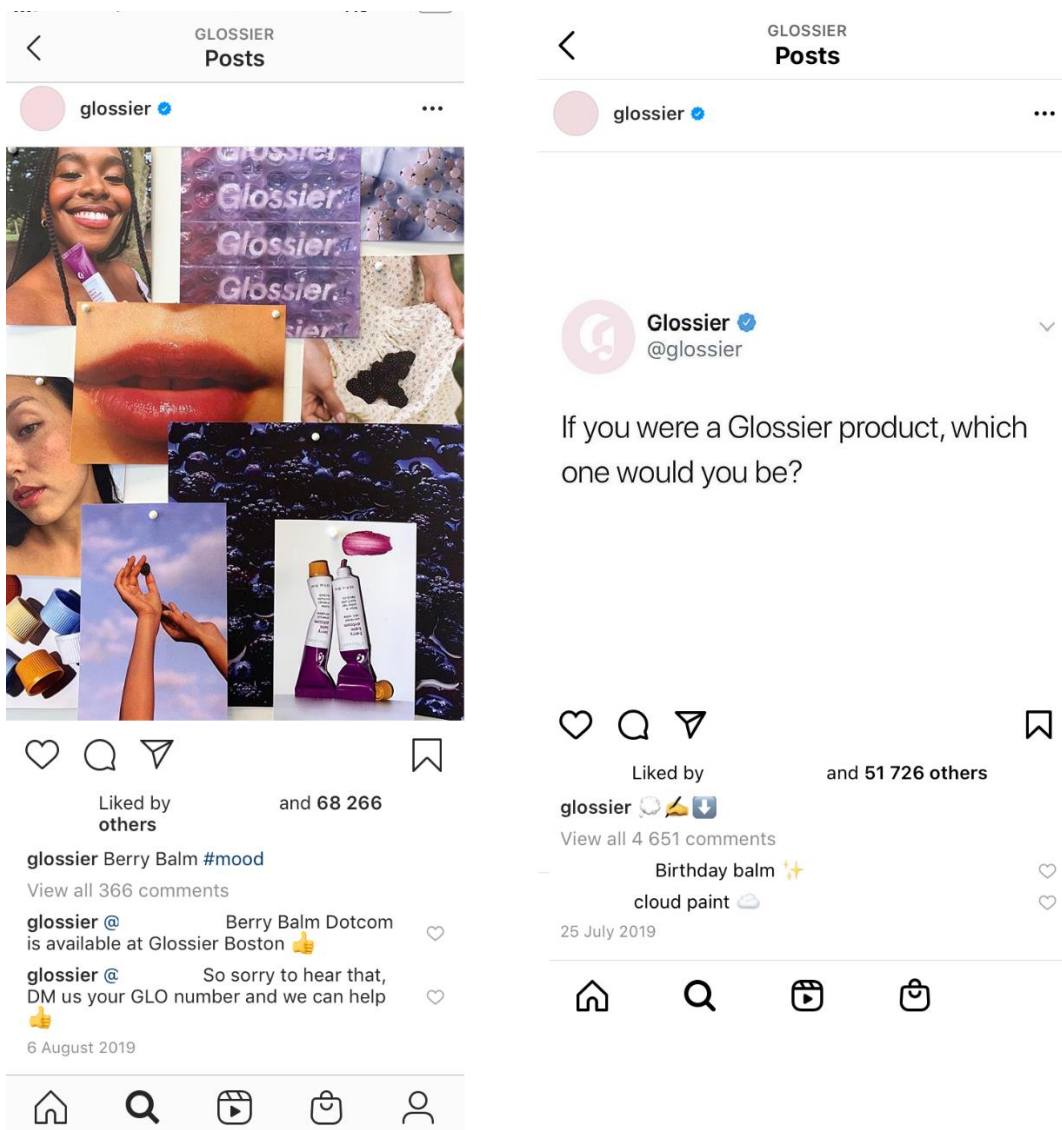

Image 3. Screenshots of posts from Glossier's Instagram account on 6th of August 2019 and 25th of July 2019.

4.1.5 Traditional advertising discourse

Despite having an online presence that differs from other more traditional beauty brands in many ways, a discourse that is very prevalent in Glossier's Instagram posts is one that could be described as traditional advertising discourse. Advertising is a complex and constantly evolving genre (Cook 2001: 219), but certain features are common and therefore several posts from Glossier's Instagram feed can be perceived as this. Some of the salient features of advertising discourse are that adverts often are embedded in other discourse, have elements that name and describe the product, appeal to the viewer's emotions and values to provoke social, moral and aesthetic judgements (Cook 2001: 219-221). Advertisements as a genre are also often referred to as "parasitic" (Cook 2001: 34), meaning that they not only occur within other discourses but also often imitate them freely. This aspect is especially prevalent in social media, where it can be hard to define which posts are advertisements and which ones serve other communicative purposes for the brand.

At the level of sentence structure, advertisers tend to favor short sentences (Cook 2001: 224), and imperatives and interrogatives are the two most common sentence types (Delin 2000: 125). According to Delin (2000: 127) another common practice is the use of short sentences with clauses that often do not contain a main verb, which suggests a conversational style possibly used by advertisers to mimic a face-to-face conversation. In Glossier's posts this is present in a post from 22nd of July 2019, when a photo of the new Glossier lip gloss was posted with the caption "Gloss, glossiest, Glossier".

Another common feature in advertising texts is the creative use of spelling or print (Delin 2000: 135). According to Delin (2000: 135), creative use of fonts and font sizes, colors, and unusual ways of spelling words are used to draw attention to the advertisement. It could be argued that in social media environments, this can also include the use of emojis. Glossier uses emojis in their Instagram posts very often. The emojis usually fit in with the theme of the post, for example using the emoji wearing sunglasses when discussing the brand's sunscreen or an emoji depicting water droplets when the product in the post is

described as moisturizing. Regarding sentence structure and emojis, Glossier tends to use emojis in place of punctuation marks. For example, in a post from 25th of August 2020, the caption is:

> Invisible Shield: The sunscreen you'll want to use every day 😎 Truly clear and feels like water on the skin, so you can expect a cooling finish that blends right in. Apply it for weightless protection from sun damage 🤷‍♀️ pollution 🤷‍♀️ and free radicals 🌞 Safe sun is here to stay.

In this caption the emojis are where commas and other punctuation marks would usually be and are all fitting with the theme of the post, sun protection. The use of a second-person personal pronoun is another common practice in advertising (Cook 2001: 157) and can be seen in Glossier's Instagram posts too. According to Delin (2000: 134) people in general do not like to feel that they are being addressed as part of a large mass and suggests that this is because individuality is culturally highly valued in Western society. The pronoun usage makes it seem that the advertisement is directly addressing the reader, making the advertisement feel more personal.

On Glossier's feed, advertising discourse is most prominently present whenever a new product is released. Often, Glossier has made its Instagram account the first channel to announce a new product, by first posting teasing photos of something that could be a new product and leaving customers guessing what it could be and then finally releasing the new product, often by posting several images at once. This is another way that Glossier differs from many more traditional brands: it does not regard social media as an afterthought but the first and most important channel for all brand communication.

Whenever a new product is released, Glossier tends to post several photos of the product in a very short amount of time. These images and the accompanying captions often resemble traditional beauty advertisements more than the other posts from the brand. When advertising a new lip gloss, Glossier posted an image of disembodied lips, shiny and perfect, biting a raspberry. This photo would not be out of place in a more traditional advertising platform, such as the pages of a women's magazine, for example. Glossier's

habit of portraying the models in these product photos in close-up shots of body parts instead of full-body shots fits a beauty advertising trend of depicting female models more as partial, "dismembered bodies" than as full bodies (for example, Mager et al. 2011: 241, Del Rosso 2017: 187). However, it should be noted that this trend is not as prevalent in Glossier's other posts.

4.2 Defining Glossier's brand identity

To get a clearer understanding of Glossier's brand identity and how different multimodal means are used to build it, I will in this section describe the brand's brand identity using Kapferer's (2012) brand identity prism as a guide. According to Kapferer (2012: 163) a successful brand is able to weave all these six facets together to create a clear and appealing brand identity, which is why I will consider all of them separately but also how they work together to create the Glossier brand.

Image 2. Screenshots of Glossier's Instagram posts, showing an overview of the profile's feed in July 2019 (left) and a post from 7th of August 2019 (right).

4.2.1 Visual identity

According to Kapferer (2012: 158) the visual identity of a brand is the first step in building a brand identity that differentiates the brand from its competitors through the tangible added value of unique appearance. At first glance, Glossier's visual identity is built around one thing: millennial pink. A specific shade of light pink that has become widely known as 'millennial pink' after becoming incredibly popular towards the end of the year 2015 (Bideaux 2019: 83), is present in almost all of Glossier's packaging and also in their Instagram posts. The shade of pink can be seen in photos such as the ones shown in Image 2 and even the brand's profile picture is only a circle of this particular pink. This color choice ties Glossier into the millennial generation. It could be assumed that rather than letting theories about how colors are associated with feelings and human reactions guide their choice of visual representation, Glossier chose millennial pink to strongly associate themselves with their target audience and to be current.

Color is an important part of visual meaning-making. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2002: 347-349) color can fulfill different functions, for example represent ideas and construct cohesion. In more specific terms, Kress and van Leeuwen (2002: 350) believe that color can be considered as its own mode alongside language, image and other modes, as while color is different from these other modes, it does have an impact on the meaning potential of a message. However, examining an individual color is not necessarily fruitful, but it is safe to say that Glossier's strong association with a certain color scheme is a deliberate brand identity choice.

The shade of pink is associated with Glossier so heavily, that fans of the brand post photos under the hashtag #glossierpink whenever they catch the shade in the wild. Using a color this heavily almost makes a logo almost futile, as the signature Glossier packaging can be identified by anyone who likes the brand on the shade alone. Del Valle (2019) states that everything Glossier releases is designed to be photographed and posted online on social media, for example, the millennial pink bubble-wrap pouches they mail their products in

and the stickers the brand includes in most orders. The stickers feature a mix of palm trees, cherries, happy faces, and Glossier's logos (Mlotek 2016). Paintsil (2019) found that the pink plastic packaging has even become symbolic of community membership and can present opportunities for interaction as customers can instantly distinguish the brand on social media and in offline interactions with other fans of the brand. In addition to a recognizable product packaging, Glossier also has a line of merchandise called GlossiWEAR which features clothing such as sweatshirts and sandals. An example of advertising this merch is a post from July 17th, 2019, which features a photo of a model wearing flipflops with the caption "The first drop of limited edition GlossiWEAR is here! Yours on Glossier.com 🌴🌴🌴".

The visual identity is also present in the pop-up brick and mortar stores of Glossier, which are pink and have plenty of mirrors that are seemingly perfectly placed for customers to take selfies on. The brand's Instagram feed features many photos from these stores, for example a post from August 7th, 2019 which can be seen in Image 2. The photos show a showroom full of the signature shade of pink and mirrors strategically placed for the perfect Instagram selfie for customers to share with their followers. Featuring the showrooms in the Instagram feed also allows customers who do not have the chance to visit a store in person to still know what they look like.

According to Bideaux (2019: 84) millennial pink has been associated with the feminine gender from the very beginning and additionally it was later presented as a specifically feminist color that would celebrate the return of a strong femininity, the celebration of feminine things instead of rejecting them as weaker or lesser. However, above all the millennial pink is associated with the Internet, and now, due to Glossier's effective marketing, also with Glossier, at least in the minds of its most loyal customers.

The brand's name is another part of the visual identity of a brand. The name Glossier is short, snappy and the knowledge that it is supposed to be pronounced "as if French, "gloss-ee-ay"" (Turk 2020) can create an in-group feeling for those consumers who are in the know. In most cases, a brand's name is visible in its products and marketing

campaigns, which is natural as brands want their name to be easily recognizable and remembered. In most of their products, Glossier has the brand name visible, often stylized with a full stop at the end of the word. Most products also feature the brand's logo, the letter G.

4.2.2 Brand personality

According to Kapferer (2012: 159), a brand's personality can be seen in the tone and the style it uses in advertising and other communication. In essence, brand personality is what the brand would be as a person, meaning it is all the human characteristics and personality traits present in the brand's communication. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Glossier's founder dreamed that the brand would be comparable to a close friend (Larocca: 2018) and this can be seen in their Instagram posts captions in instances such as describing a key ingredient hyaluronic acid as something that gives skin "that cushion-y, hydrated bounce -- like a big gulp of water for your skin". This caption includes the use of a second-person personal pronoun which as mentioned earlier is a common occurrence in Glossier's posts and according to Cook (2001: 157), makes the text seem more personal as it is directly addressing the reader.

Brand personality is expressed in the way the brand talks about itself, which in turn influences whether customers identify themselves with the brand. It is also the main source for tone and style of the brand's advertising (Kapferer 2012: 159). Both Glossier's tone and style in their Instagram captions are very informal and similar to the tone of non-professional accounts. Often the captions could be from an influencer who is just sharing their opinions and feelings, instead of a commercial entity. For example, the frequent use of emojis and memes is something rarely seen on official brand accounts.

The style Lazar (2017: 62) calls 'girl talk', is very clear in Glossier's posts. Girl talk is defined by Lazar (2017: 62) as "upbeat, chatty and colloquial". According to Lazar (2009: 391), youthfulness and girliness can also be represented in text by using informal adjectives and "playful, clever coinages". For example, a caption mentioned earlier in this

section includes the colloquial term "cushion-y" that mimics a playful and chatty style of speaking. However, in Glossier's posts discussing product ingredients the language is more professional and uses more scientific vocabulary such as listing the ingredients of the products and their strengths. In a post from July 21st, 2020, the ingredients of one of the brand's serums, Super Pure, are described stating that "niacinamide is a powerful form of vitamin B3, so you want to get the right daily dose. 5% (that's what you'll find in Super Pure) is the sweet spot" and that "Zinc PCA, the other star of the Super Pure show helps reduce the appearance of congested pores". The post also includes a reference to a clinical trial that was conducted to test the product's effectiveness. This way of describing the products is very different to the vague terminology associated with girl talk.

Lazar also discusses how in beauty advertising, beauty labor is presented as easy, fun and quick, by using language that emphasizes this. In Glossier's Instagram posts this trait can be seen in a post from 12 August 2020, a post introducing a new lip product that "gives you a full glossy look (liner, color and gloss) all in one step". According to Lazar (2017: 61) this register can be read as a form of symbolic entrepreneurship. By symbolic entrepreneurship, Lazar is referring to linguistic and semiotic creativity and innovation, such as "wordplay, flouting linguistic conventions and the use of irony" which can be used to indicate a light-hearted postfeminist identity. Lazar also describes the types of femininity and feminism present in this type of texts as "feel-good feminism" that differs from its earlier forms that can seem stiff and censorious.

A certain association of play and beauty labor is common in beauty advertising. Lazar (2017: 55) states that emphasizing playfulness and the feelings of fun derived from putting on makeup achieve a number of effects. It recontextualizes the beauty labor into something that is done for pleasure and additionally evokes feelings of nostalgia by linking makeup with small children playing dress up. Finally, according to Lazar, emphasizing play in beauty advertisements ties them to one playing with their own identity by using makeup products. This way, a consumer's sense of self is increasingly tied to what and how they consume. Glossier is using these allusions to play in their

language somewhat often, even naming their short-lived sub-brand Glossier Play (Smith 2020).

Talbot (1995: 154) mentions examples of text features used to simulate a friendship, such as the use of pronoun "we" to imply friendly gossip about the product that is being advertised, informal lexicon and punctuation to match the youthful vocabulary the audience might use amongst themselves and using projected facts and assumptions to create common ground and minimize the social distance between the author and the audience. These features are present in Glossier's posts, for example in a post from the 18th of August 2019 which has a caption describing the Glossier product Milky Jelly cleanser as "the kind of face wash you'll want to go to sleep with at night AND wake up to in the morning. Massage directly on dry skin to remove non-waterproof makeup 🌙, and use on wet skin to start your day 💦☀". The language used in the caption is playful and informal, and it also includes use of emojis in similar fashion that the target audience of the brand might use them.

Spokespeople and affiliates are another way of building brand identity (Kapferer 2012: 14). Glossier has an arguably unique way of using its employees and customers as the spokespeople of the brand, for example posting introductions of different employees of the brand on Instagram. For example, on the 22nd of August 2019, a post on the brand's Instagram feed introduces the head of Supply Chain Operations at Glossier. The post features a photo and short interview with the employee. Glossier also frequently shares posts from the brand's customers that the customers have tagged with #glossier. According to Djafarova and Rushworth (2017: 3) product endorsements from influencers instead of celebrities are more influential as they are perceived as more authentic and accessible. By choosing to include customers or employees in their marketing instead of big influencers, Glossier is taking a step further than many other beauty brands that moved from celebrities to arguably still unattainable and, to many, unrelatable influencers.

4.2.3 Brand relationship

Brand relationship is the way of conduct by the brand, which is an important part of the connection between the brand and its customers. Due to intense competition and imitation in product qualities being fast, brands have moved from conquering customers to keeping them (Kapferer 2012 :139). Kapferer adds that "internet technology has created the means to meet this demand for more and more efficiency in tracking, analyzing, servicing and selling to each one of these important customers." The key to keeping customers loyal to the brand is the relationship between the brand and customer.

The relationship that Glossier has with its customers is a friendship, with Glossier being the cooler friend who will give you advice on makeup and skincare. The brand creator has mentioned that this type of relationship has been the goal since the creation of the brand and it is clear from their Instagram posts, as discussed above in section 4.2.2 Brand identity.

Boogaard (2019) notes that since its creation, Glossier has had numerous different hashtags associated with their brand, some of them for specific products or campaigns. This makes it easy for the brand to engage with customer created content and share it on the brand's Instagram page. According to Boogaard (2019) the content that can be found with these hashtags perfectly matches the brand's aesthetic.

4.2.4 Brand culture

In Kapferer's prism, the brand culture is the values and principles of the brand. Often the country of origin is used as the source for cultural associations, however, in the case of Glossier, this does not seem to be the case other than in their encouragement of people to vote around the time of the United States presidential election of 2020.

One factor of branding that has risen in importance in the past few decades is social responsibility. Kapferer (2012: 128) states that brands of the future have to be authentically responsible in order to succeed. In addition to responsibility in manufacturing products,

corporate social responsibility includes good treatment of employees. In the data collected for this thesis, there were some examples of Glossier directly addressing their responsibilities as a company. In chapter 4.1.2, one example regarding the Black Lives Matter -movement was discussed. Another example of this is a post from 17th of August 2020, when Glossier posted an Instagram post that included a statement acknowledging that several of their previous employees had come forward about their bad experiences working at Glossier's retail stores. The post aimed to be a public acknowledgement and apology of the "pain and discomfort" these former employees experienced and a plan of action for future.

Glossier is also cruelty-free (Glossier 2021), meaning they do not test on animals at any stage of product development and only work with vendors who uphold the same standards, but this is not visible in the brand's Instagram content. It is possible that this was a conscious decision to give more attention to other parts of the brand. Considering Glossier's target audience, it could also be argued that for many of the targeted consumers, being cruelty free is a precondition.

Building brand communities is now part of the scope of brand management (Kapferer 2012: 141). Glossier's Instagram profile is one of the sites where customers can discuss products and the brand in general and form a community. Glossier encourages this behavior by posting content that encourages engagement from the account's followers, for example posts with questions in them as discussed previously in chapter 4.14.

Brand culture is often seen as the most important facet of the brand identity prism, as it is the key to reaching cult brand status. According to Kapferer (2012: 159), every brand wants to become a cult brand, at least for some group. As mentioned earlier chapter in chapter 2.1, brands that reach the status of a cult brand, reach it due to their values and culture. Wittwer (2014: 2) adds that brands become cult brands because they have "special, unique identities" which then help their customers express themselves. Glossier's strong online community full of customers who independently promote the products and align themselves as fans of the brand has made several people refer to Glossier as a cult brand

(e.g., Tiku 2016, Pejcha 2019). The customer's willingness to wear merchandise for the brand, which was discussed in chapter 4.2.1, also points to a cult brand status.

4.2.5 Customer reflection

In the brand identity prism, customer reflection is not an image of a consumer but something with which they wish to identify. According to Kapferer (2012: 162) brands do not need to portray a realistic reflection of the target audience of the brand and, in fact, it would be more beneficial to portray a person that will appeal to the target group. Meaning that brands can in reality have a much wider target audience but reflect a smaller one, thus in Glossier's case not all their customers are young adults working on the creative field and living in big cities in the United States, but this can still be the customer reflection of the brand.

Based on the discourses identified and discussed earlier in this thesis, Glossier's customer reflection portrays the brand's customers as young, cool, concerned about political issues and social causes, authentic and as someone who wants their natural beauty to be accentuated instead of hidden behind a mask of makeup.

4.2.6 Customer self-image

Compared to the customer reflection, customer self-image is the part of branding that consists of how the brand is perceived by the customers. Kapferer (2012: 162) describes the customer self-image as "the target's own internal mirror". The customer might think that others perceive them in certain ways because of the use of that particular brand.

This facet of the brand identity prism can be hard to decipher from a data set such as the one used for this thesis. However, it can be assumed that the stereotypical Glossier customer wants to be seen as one of "the Glossier girls", as someone who is a millennial, lives in a bigger city, is politically active, is effortlessly cool, and uses makeup as a means of self-expression, not as something to correct flaws.
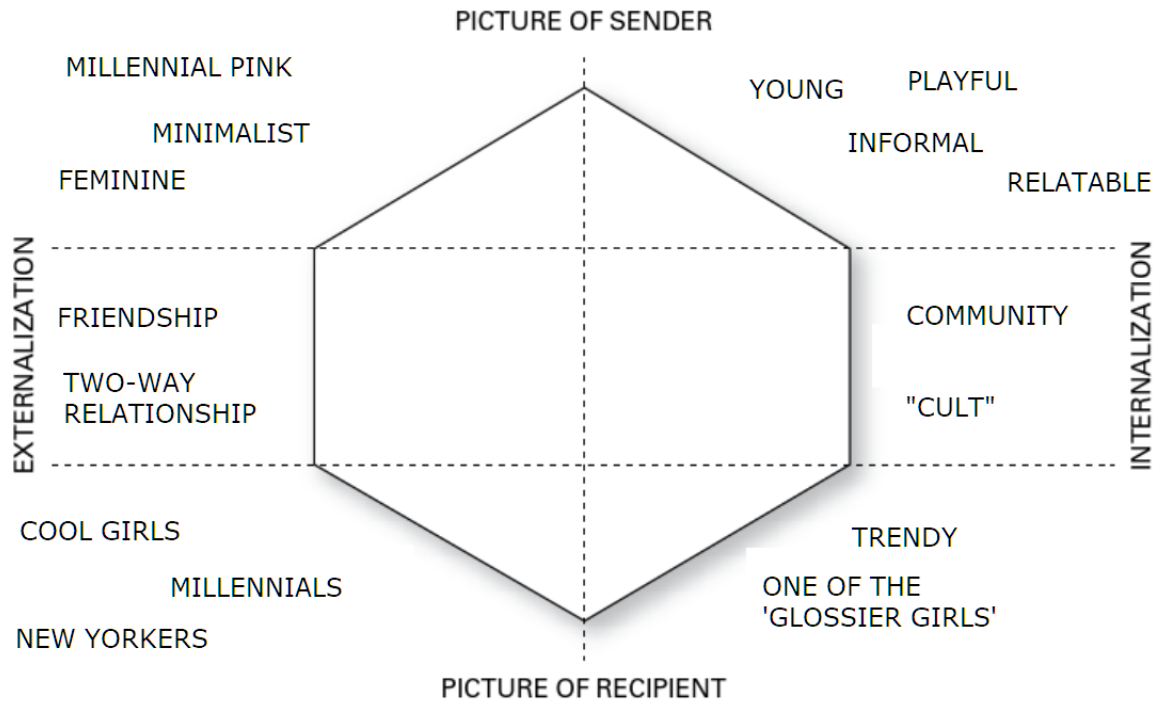
Figure 2. Glossier's brand identity prism

To illustrate Glossier's brand identity better, I have created a figure (see Figure 2) that describes my analysis results in few key words for each of Kapferer's (2012) proposed six facets of brand identity. Naturally, each facet is broader than the key words I have listed in the figure, but I believe the figure illustrates the most prominent parts of Glossier's brand identity.

6 CONCLUSION

This thesis explored the ways the beauty brand Glossier builds brand identity on Instagram. The goal of the thesis was to identify discourses present in Glossier's posts and then, using Kapferer's brand identity prism, discuss the different facets of Glossier's brand identity. To analyze the discourses and other features of the Instagram posts, a multimodal discourse analysis was conducted. Two different time periods were selected for the data collection of this thesis, yet after analyzing the data no significant differences in the content posted were observed. This could speak to Glossier having a consistent

brand identity which it builds and maintains through its communication with the audience on Instagram.

Glossier is a beauty brand that has gathered a dedicated customer base within the millennial age group. According to some, the brand has a cult-like status among the niche known as 'cool girl beauty' brands. Glossier has a very strong presence on social media and does most of its advertising and customer-care online. Due to this, its brand identity building is also mostly done on social media. To analyze the brand building Glossier does on Instagram, the research questions of the present study were: 1) What types of discourses does Glossier use in building their brand identity on Instagram? And 2) What types of multimodal means does Glossier use in their Instagram posts to build their brand identity?

The data for this study was collected from Instagram. In total, 75 Instagram posts were analyzed. The posts were collected from two different time periods, first set from July and August of 2019 and the second from July and August 2020.

I aimed to identify common discourses used in Glossier's Instagram content and was able to identify five discourses that were present in the posts clearly enough that they were worth analyzing. I named these discourses cool girl discourse, social justice discourse, internet culture discourse, community creating discourse and traditional advertising discourse. These discourses overlap in some posts but are all different enough to discuss on their own.

Cool girl discourse is linked with Glossier's reputation as the it-girl brand that is cooler and more authentic than other brands. The main founding when analyzing this discourse was that Glossier's Instagram profile resembles more an individual's profile than a professional one, for example in the tone of voice used in captions. This makes the brand feel more authentic and approachable.

Social justice discourse was analyzed through posts with mentions of political, feminist or social justice themes. These posts were for example posts discussing the Black Lives Matter movement or encouraging customers to vote in the then upcoming United States presidential election. The main findings in relation to this discourse were that while Glossier has stated being a feminist brand, it shares very few posts related to these themes.

Internet culture discourse included content such as sharing memes, cute animal images and use of emojis. Through my analysis, I concluded that Glossier uses this type of content to create feelings of belonging to an in-group in the followers of the Instagram account. Another discourse identified is one that I called community creating discourse, a discourse that aims at supporting the development of a community formed around Glossier's products. This discourse was present in posts that encouraged engagement from the followers of the account, for example posts asking for opinions or experiences. Glossier also clearly aims at being as transparent as possible and has made posts to address issues such as past employees coming forward with bad experiences.

After identifying the discourses, I used Kapferer's brand identity prism to get a more comprehensive understanding of Glossier's brand identity. This allowed me to pay more attention to features such as visual identity, which are important in brand identity building. Kapferer's prism includes six facets which are the brand's physique, personality, culture, relationship, customer reflection, and customer self-image. I analyzed Glossier's brand identity using all these six facets and created a figure to portray my results (see figure 2).

In essence, the brand identity of Glossier is in the affiliates, customers, employees and brand ambassadors that all overlap to create "The Glossier Girl" archetype. Glossier has a unique position as a beauty start up, a social media phenomenon but also as a provider of messages on how to be cool, feminine and trendy. In Glossier's case being a digitally native brand means that they have a clear and distinguishable social media strategy that is an essential part of their brand identity. Glossier also has a strong visual identity which

can be seen throughout their Instagram and in the pop-up brick and mortar stores they set up in different countries and cities.

In relation to earlier research, the present study differs from the earlier research into Glossier's relationship with feminism in several ways, mainly by being a discourse analysis of social media content collected over a specific period of time instead of analyzing advertising or interviewing consumers. However, the findings of the present study support many of the findings of earlier studies in relation to postfeminism, aspirational realness and capitalizing on feminism and femininity. Glossier's visual identity celebrates pink and girliness, which in previous research on the subject has been seen as a reaction to previous waves of feminism, in Glossier's case as a reaction to feminism that was seen as detesting anything traditionally feminine.

Regarding the limitations of the present study, the limited number of Instagram posts that I was able to analyze means that the analysis is only a comprehensive look of the brand identity at the time of the posts. Brand identity is fluid and can change whenever the brand feels that a trend is worth following to reach the target audience as efficiently as possible. Thus, it is possible that while this thesis describes Glossier's brand identity at the moment of the analysis, the brand identity might add or lose some aspects in the future.

Additionally, an important factor of Glossier's brand identity is how they connect and communicate with their customers. As this study was only focused on the content the brand puts out, I was not able to analyze the comments from customers or how Glossier communicates with an individual member of its customer base. This could be an enlightening facet to cover in future research. In addition, it could be useful to include some customer interviews in a similar study of brand identity building on Instagram. One approach could be to research why customers feel that they want to produce content and represent Glossier on social media despite not being paid influencers for the brand, to shed more light on the motivational aspects of spreading positive electronic word-of-mouth.

Any and all communication between people within the brand community of Glossier, for example in the comments of the brand's posts, were excluded from this study, but could be a valuable source of information for research in the field of brand communities. For the present study I also did not interview anyone working with Glossier, but that too, could give more insight into Glossier's brand identity building as social media content and communication is usually designed by a team of professionals.

For future research in the field of beauty brands, research on the ways beauty brands target other genders could be a fruitful subject. While conducting research for this study I came across some instances of brands moving towards more inclusive language use and widening their target audience. While most beauty marketing is still catered towards girls and women, it would be interesting to look into how other genders are taken into account in marketing plans and represented in beauty and make up advertising.

When doing multimodal discourse analysis, as was done in this thesis, it is inevitable that the researchers own interpretations guide the analysis process. However, I have given examples from the data to justify by findings to a hopefully sufficient degree. I hope that this research has offered some insight into building and cultivating brand identities on social media and on how brands build images of authenticity and realness.

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