

**REIMAGINING BEAUTY ADVERTISING: A
QUALITATIVE STUDY ON CONSUMER
PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSIVITY**

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ABSTRACT

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<p>As the world is becoming more interconnected and diverse, the question of how beauty advertising is affecting people's self-perceptions has been raised. The aim of this thesis is to increase understanding about how Finnish consumers perceive inclusivity in cosmetics advertising and what aspects of inclusivity they find important in beauty advertising.</p> <p>Participants for this study were recruited through snowball sampling, starting with a post on social media. In the Spring of 2023 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants, aged between 22-72 years and located in different parts of Finland. The interviews were analysed using the thematic analysis method.</p> <p>The analysis highlights the impact of harmful beauty ideals, tokenistic advertising efforts, outdated advertising campaigns, and enhanced racial inclusivity on consumer perceptions of inclusivity in beauty advertising. Furthermore, the representation of diversity, relatability, authenticity, and identity affirmation emerged as important aspects of inclusivity for the consumers.</p> <p>As the population in Finland is becoming more diverse, the unique differences of individuals should be taken into account in beauty advertising. This research offers new insights into consumer perceptions of inclusivity in beauty advertising.</p>	
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TIIVISTELMÄ

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<p>Maailman muuttuessa yhä enemmän yhdistyneeksi ja monimuotoiseksi kysymys siitä, miten kauneusmainonta vaikuttaa ihmisten minäkuviin on noussut esiin. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoite on lisätä ymmärrystä siitä, miten suomalaiset kuluttajat kokevat inklusiivisuuden kauneusmainonnassa ja mitkä inklusiivisuuden osa-alueet ovat kuluttajille tärkeitä kauneusmainonnassa.</p> <p>Tutkimukseen osallistujat rekrytoitiin lumipallo-otantamenetelmällä, alkaen postauksesta sosiaalisessa mediassa. Keväällä 2023 toteutettiin puolistrukturoituja haastatteluja 10 osallistujan kanssa, joiden ikä vaihteli 22-72 välillä ja jotka sijaitsivat eri puolella Suomea.</p> <p>Haastattelut analysoitiin teema-analyysin menetelmällä. Analyysi korosti haitallisten kauneusihanteiden, tokenististen mainostamispyrkimysten, vanhanaikaisten mainoskampanjoiden ja parantuneen etnisen inklusiivisuuden rooli kuluttajien käsityksissä kauneusmainonnan inklusiivisuudesta. Lisäksi monimuotoisuuden näyttäminen, samaistuttavuus, aitous ja identiteetin vahvistaminen nousivat tärkeiksi osa-alueiksi kuluttajille.</p> <p>Suomen väestön monimuotoistuesssa yksilöiden ainutlaatuiset erot tulisi ottaa huomioon kauneusmainonnassa. Tämä tutkimus tarjoaa uusia näkemyksiä kuluttajien käsityksistä inklusiivisuudesta kauneusmainonnassa.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

"The double bind of beauty is a well-kept secret, or we could not sustain a trillion-dollar fashion and cosmetic industry for women" (Young-Eisendrath, 2004).

For a long period of time, the question of how beauty advertising is affecting people's self-perceptions has been the topic of debate. The extremes of this phenomenon have been witnessed through cautionary tales of individuals going to great lengths to change their appearance to rise in the global beauty hierarchy (Pheonix, 2014). Although the cosmetics industry is often seen as something that only concerns the female population, it permeates all our lives shaping our perceptions of ourselves and what it means to be beautiful (Jones, 2021). Be that as it may, most cosmetics commercials represent a standard of beauty that requires people to conceal their flaws to be considered beautiful (Frisby, 2019). The majority of beauty advertising carries the message that appearance can be improved with the aid of products. These improvements are often described as the opportunity to look younger, slimmer or otherwise more desirable (Ringrow, 2016).

Advertisements and other marketing efforts have been shown to have a significant impact on the people who consume them, namely in the shaping of values, beliefs and societal norms (Williams, Lee & Haugtvedt, 2004). The digital revolution and the vast access to information that has come with it have exacerbated this issue, as studies show that advertisements and marketing can be one of the biggest influencers in a person's life surpassing their societal surroundings such as educational and religious groups. Therefore, at the hands of corporations and marketing practitioners lies the power to impact an individual's development, through the formation of self-identity and perception

all the way to unconscious prejudice and attitudes towards groups of people (Sauders, 2008). Given their position of power, it is of utmost importance for corporations and marketing professionals to take into consideration the impact their marketing efforts are having on society at large (Williams et al., 2004).

Inclusivity has emerged as a significant and increasingly discussed topic within the realm of beauty advertising. As societal perspectives on beauty continue to evolve, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of representing and celebrating diverse individuals across various dimensions, including race, age, gender and physicality. This thesis aims to increase understanding about Finnish consumers' perceptions on inclusivity in cosmetics advertising. The Oxford Dictionary defines inclusivity as "a practice that provides equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized." In the context of the beauty industry, inclusivity refers to cosmetics that cater to everyone, regardless of their skin tone, age, gender or physical ability etc. (CBInsights, 2021). In existing literature, it has been found that approximately half of the people consuming advertisements feel underrepresented by them (Middleton & Turnbull, 2021). Advertisements are known to mirror shifts in cultural norms and values (Wiles et al., 1995) and as a result, inclusive marketing efforts have become more popular in recent years with many studies showing that they can have a positive impact on customer perception, such as increased relatability (Puntoni, Vanhamme & Visscher, 2021). Nonetheless, examples of cosmetics brands being unsuccessful in their inclusive marketing show that it continues to be a complex and sensitive space to navigate.

Moreover, many of the studies on inclusive beauty advertising have been conducted in America (Frisby, 2019; Miller, 2018; Collier-Green, 2017; Newman, 2017), because the United States has a large and diverse population that includes a significant number of minority and underrepresented groups. These studies have mainly focused on the context of diversity in America for examining the role of inclusivity in beauty advertising and understanding how different groups respond to different types of beauty advertising. Conducting research in the Finnish market can provide several benefits, including filling the gap in research for this region, which has its own unique cultural and social context. By examining consumer perceptions of inclusivity in the Finnish beauty industry, this study can provide insights into how Finnish consumers respond to different types of beauty advertising. This can be valuable for Finnish beauty brands looking to create more inclusive advertising campaigns that resonate with their target audience. Additionally, studying the Finnish market can help to broaden the scope of research on inclusive beauty advertising and contribute to a more global understanding of the phenomenon. By examining how inclusivity is perceived and valued in a different cultural context, this study can help to uncover new insights and ideas that can be applied to other markets around the world.

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore consumer's perceptions on inclusivity within the beauty industry. The topic of inclusivity covers gender, age and skin tone and physicality in this study. The thesis topic was chosen because the beauty industry is a highly visible and influential industry that has a significant impact on consumers' perceptions of beauty and self-image (Frisby, 2019). In recent years, there has been increasing public discourse around the issues of inclusivity and representation in the beauty industry (Pheonix, 2014), which makes the topic relevant and timely. Therefore, understanding consumer perceptions towards the topic is imperative. The implications of studies exploring consumer perceptions on inclusivity could be far-reaching and could have both academic and practical implications. Firstly, it informs the development of more effective marketing strategies that better meet the needs of diverse audiences. Secondly, it encourages the beauty industry to become more inclusive and representative of diverse beauty standards. Thirdly, the study raises awareness of the importance of inclusivity and diversity in the beauty industry and beyond. Finally, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge around inclusive beauty advertising and consumer perceptions. The research questions for this study are the following:

- How do consumers perceive inclusivity in beauty advertising?
- What aspects of inclusivity do consumers find important in beauty advertising?

These questions are relevant to current discussions around inclusivity and representation in the beauty industry. Examining consumer perceptions of inclusivity in beauty advertising sheds light on how consumers are responding to these discussions. The questions are also both specifically focused on a particular aspect of the beauty industry, namely advertising. By focusing the research questions on advertising, the study is able to explore the impact images and messaging have on consumer perceptions of inclusivity. The second research question is more complex and requires careful consideration of multiple aspects that may be important to the consumers' perceptions on inclusivity in beauty advertising. By exploring these factors, the study may be able to develop a more nuanced understanding of how consumers think about inclusivity in this context. The second question also hopes to uncover perceptions on different advertising strategies that influence consumer perceptions of inclusivity in beauty advertising.

1.3 Structure of Thesis

The study begins with an introduction that sets the context and rationale for the research. This is followed by a theory section that discusses the concepts of inclusive advertising and inclusive beauty advertising and provides an overview of the key theories that inform the research. The research design section of the study outlines the methodology that is used to collect and analyse data. This includes a description of the selection of respondents, data collection method and data analysis method. The findings of the research are then presented. Finally, the study concludes with a summary of the key findings, a discussion of the implications of this research, and suggestions for future research in this area.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, an overview of the concept of inclusive advertising and how it relates to the beauty industry will be provided, drawing on relevant academic literature and research studies to develop a comprehensive framework of this emerging topic.

2.1 Inclusive Advertising

Inclusive advertising is defined as advertising tactics and strategies that take into consideration diversity in all its forms, including but not limited to age, gender, ethnicity and physical appearance (Marketing Dictionary, 2021). In general, inclusive advertising aims to create a more inclusive visual culture which represents a variety of different identities. Society has become more diverse than it has ever been before (Dimitrieska, Stamevska & Stankovska, 2019). Finland, like the rest of the world, is also becoming more interconnected and diverse, which means that a Finnish business will have stakeholders from a wide range of backgrounds (Taylor & Costello, 2017). Approximately half of the people consuming advertisements feel underrepresented by them. Advertising typically portrays humans as stereotypes, which results in added pressure for the consumer to adjust themselves to fit within those moulds. Some consumers' appearance differs from these portrayals so much that they are just simply excluded (Middleton & Turnbull, 2021).

Nonetheless, inclusive marketing efforts have become more popular in recent years as many studies show that they can have a positive impact on customer perceptions (Puntoni et al., 2021). Advertisements are known to mirror cultural norms and values and therefore cultural shifts have resulted in new and improved portrayals of the people partaking in them (Wiles et al., 1995). It could also be said that society has become more accepting of peoples' differences and more aware and sensitive towards forms of discrimination. A good example of a

cosmetics company receiving backlash for non-inclusive practices was when beauty brand Dior chose 25-year-old supermodel Cara Delevingne to be the face of their anti-ageing campaign (Miller, 2018). It is common for beauty brands to underrepresent older models even in campaigns which promote products targeted towards a more mature consumer segment.

Some companies have taken strides to improve the inclusivity aspect of their marketing. Some examples include Urban Decay, Curology (Sukhraj, 2021) and Fenty Beauty (Frisby, 2019). Urban Decay became one of the first beauty companies to feature a model with Down Syndrome in one of their social media campaigns in 2021. Similarly showcasing an underrepresented consumer segment cosmetics brand Curology created a video of a male model removing a full face of makeup using the brand's skincare products. Furthermore, artist Rihanna launched her own cosmetics brand Fenty Beauty in 2017, with a foundation shade range of 40 shades catering to a variety of different skin tones. The ad campaigns from this launch received worldwide praise and the brand is now seen as the golden standard of racial inclusivity within the beauty industry.

However, as companies' target audiences are becoming vastly more interconnected, diverse and media savvy, achieving an authentically inclusive marketing strategy can be difficult (Dimitrieska et al., 2019). Traditionally, marketing messages have been directed towards white, heterosexual and cisgendered people (Hendricks, B. 2019). However, recently a new trend of inclusive marketing has emerged that allows marginalised and/or underrepresented groups to connect and identify with a brand regardless of sex, race, nationality, religion, age, sexual orientation or physical ability (Xavier, 2020). The trend comes with the emergence of digital marketing (Bist et al., 2022). The largest cohorts with the highest buying power in the digital marketing space are Millennials and Gen Zers, who want to align emotionally with a brand that supports the same values as they do (Salsabila et al., 2022). Demographers define Gen Zers as being born early to mid-1990s to mid-2000s (Fromm, 2018) and millennials approximately 1977-1995 (Dimock, 2019). From a marketing standpoint, these age groups, especially Gen Zers, will no longer accept a visual culture of unattainable ideals. They rather demand brands to reflect their own lifestyles and identities. They are realistic and want to consume authentic stories about real people (Fromm, 2018), which is what inclusive marketing is all about.

Be that as it may, globally consumers uphold a diverse range of different values and beliefs, which affect their expectations and ways of interacting with a company. These differences surpass just ethnicity and include age, gender, religion, physical environment and economic status, for example. This means that the differences between subgroups within a single country can be vast and varied (Dimitrieska et al., 2019). For this reason, Dimitrieska et al. (2019) argues that generalised marketing is no longer a viable option, as it has the potential of missing so many customers. Inclusive marketing on the other hand, acknowledges that marketing efforts directed to a diverse target audience is beneficial for both the brand and its consumers.

From a corporate social responsibility standpoint, it is also encouraged that messaging is inclusive. Leaning towards biases that already are apparent within the industry, such as using models who are young, white and slim, can have a damaging effect on marketing performance by provoking negative attitudes and perceptions towards the brand (Taylor & Costello, 2017). However, as consumers become increasingly knowledgeable and savvy, they have identified forms of corporate social responsibility-washing. This entails a company making grand political statements within their marketing merely to satisfy consumers and other stakeholders, whilst failing to live by these statements internally (Sterbenk Cahmplin, Windels & Shelton, 2019). The criticism is caused by a lack of consideration for the diversity within different representations and tokenism. Tokenism is described as "the practice of only making a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing" (Oxford Reference, nd.). Tokenism covers many characteristics of models within the beauty industry, such as age, gender and disability. Dove's 'Real Beauty' campaign is one of the best examples of this phenomenon. The campaign launched in 2004 featuring models of different sizes, ages and ethnic backgrounds. However, prior to this campaign from the years 2000 to 2003, Dove has not featured any women of colour in their advertising. Therefore, the campaign has been criticised for being mercenary and tokenistic (Gale, 2021).

Racial, gender, age, and body inclusivity are all critical social issues that have been subject to significant discussion and debate in recent years. As such, the following sub-categories in this study are responding to current social concerns and attempting to contribute to broader conversations around these topics. By focusing on multiple dimensions of inclusivity, the research can explore the complex ways in which different identities intersect and interact with one another, as studies show that consumers respond more positively to ads where models represent themselves (Lee et al., 2014). This can provide a more nuanced understanding of how inclusivity operates within beauty advertising. Furthermore, racial, gender, age and body inclusivity are all increasingly important issues in the beauty industry. Brands are beginning to recognize the importance of reflecting the diversity of their consumers in their advertising, making these dimensions of inclusivity particularly relevant for the research.

2.1.1 Racial Inclusivity

Racial inclusivity refers to the extent to which people of different races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds are represented, included, and celebrated in advertising. It involves promoting diversity and understanding across different racial and ethnic groups and creating an environment that values and respects different cultural traditions, beliefs and identities. It is important to note that racial inclusivity is not the same as colour-blindness or ignoring race altogether. Rather, it involves recognizing and valuing the diversity of racial and ethnic backgrounds and creating an inclusive environment that celebrates and respects these differences.

Historically, racial representation in advertising has been dominated by white people (Mayo et al., 2006). This is problematic, because it idealises and favours a biased standard of beauty (Shinoda et al., 2020). Previously it has been said that matching the race of the models in advertising to that of the target audience is fruitful (Jones, 2010), however in society today target audiences are vastly diverse and interconnected. Therefore, it is no longer viable to divide target audiences into different races (Shankar, 2020). A recent study that explored consumer attitudes towards diversity in advertising showed that over 54% of the 1200 surveyed participants located in the UK, US and Brazil did not feel like they were being adequately represented and a further 64% would like to see more racial and cultural diversity in advertising. A thought-provoking response that stood out from the study was that participants felt that models always look the same, often with white skin and straight hair (Alcantra, 2021). However, recent social justice efforts such as 'Black Lives Matter' have made an impact on the marketing industry. A movement coined 'brand activism' is defined as consumer behaviour that demands brands to take a stand on social issues (Duarte, 2020). When it comes to racial inclusivity, consumers are urging brands to put in place strategies that change common biases and blind spots (Schiffer, 2020). According to a study by Alcantra et al. (2021) 71% of the respondents expect brands to advance inclusivity and racial diversity.

Be that as it may, taking part in racial inclusivity can be difficult to navigate for brands. Consumers have taken issue to stereotypes and cultural misrepresentations of races in advertising. Furthermore, members of minority groups are 1,8 times more likely to spot stereotypical portrayals of races in advertising (Alcantra et al., 2021). Different stereotypical representations are linked to age, body type, skin tone and sexualization among other things. This notion was echoed by a study by Facebook that claimed that although they are seeing improvement in the representation of different races in advertisements, negative tropes and stereotypes are still very much present (Facebook IQ, 2017). For example, a study that investigated the skin tones of black women in print media identified forms of whitewashing and colourism in four fashion publications. All four publications were most likely to feature light-skinned black women as opposed to dark-skinned black women. The study concluded that the reason for this is that although the publications were partaking in some form of racial inclusivity, the main target audience remained white women (Mitchell, 2020). Colourism is defined as the belief that darker skin tones are not the accepted beauty standard. Whitewashing means digitally modifying the skin tone of models in post-production to get them to appear lighter.

Catering to different races and skin tones in advertising is not only ethical but may also be profitable in the beauty industry. As an example, reports show that women of colour are known to introduce beauty and fashion trends that come to have a significant effect on mainstream culture (Grace et al., 2017). This type of influence can affect people's purchase decisions at large. Furthermore, the number of people with a foreign background has grown steadily over the past

two decades in Finland. In 2021, the number of people with a foreign background was 469,633 (Tilastokeskus, 2021).

2.1.2 Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes in advertising refer to the use of traditional and outdated gender roles and expectations in advertising. These stereotypes are often based on societal expectations and norms surrounding gender, such as the idea that women should be nurturing, emotional, beautiful and domestic, while men should be strong, competitive and assertive. Gender stereotypes in advertising can be subtle or overt and can manifest in a variety of different ways, such as gender-specific colours or the portrayal of women as objects of beauty.

Stereotypical portrayals of people have always been used in advertising (Middleton et al., 2020), because a set of generalisations can be used to amplify a marketing message. Gender stereotypes are based on the notion that a certain set of attributes can be assigned to different genders thereby differentiating and dividing the genders from each other (Eisend, 2009). Stereotypes are not necessarily always shining a negative light on the gender in question; however it is undoubtedly always oversimplifying it (Knoll et al., 2011). For example, a study has found that the portrayals of women in advertising can be compiled into merely six categories: “the housewife, the trophy, the sexual object, the sexually powerful being, the professional, and the object of beauty” (Middleton et al., 2020). These decorative roles come with the stark contrast to male portrayals in advertising, that seem to always lean more towards the independent, professional (Grau & Zotos, 2016), strong and athletic roles (Holt & Thompson, 2004). As innocent as these juxtapositions may seem, they can sometimes be viewed as unattainable ideals that come with a whole host of negative impacts such as anxiety, lowered self-confidence and eating disorders (Antoniou & Akrivos, 2020).

By and large, these portrayals are now seen as outdated. This has been made evident through the changing portrayals of men in more family-oriented roles (Goedecke, 2021) and women in more career-oriented roles (Antoniou & Akrivos, 2020). Furthermore, a growing portion of the population is unable to fit themselves within the binary male or female gender identity (Antoniou & Akrivos, 2020). The belief that genders are a social construct rather than a biological fact is gaining more and more traction (Van Hellemont & Van den Bulck, 2012). Recent trends in advertising also include the rise of ‘femvertising’. ‘Femvertising’ is described as a movement that ‘challenges traditional female advertising stereotypes’ (Åkestam, 2017). In practice femvertising often includes no modifications or editing of body shapes or skin texture (Hainneville et al., 2022).

Due to these cultural shifts in regard to gender, stereotypical gender portrayals in advertising can lead to negative brand perceptions (Drake, 2017; Åkestam et al., 2021). On the contrary, challenging gender roles in advertising has been shown to increase profitability (Castillo, 2014). It is important for brands to take into consideration the concept of gender fluidity and the challenging of

traditional gender roles. The challenging of traditional gender roles can look like portraying a person in a non-stereotypical environment for their particular social category (Åkestam et al., 2021).

2.1.3 LGBTQ+ and Gender Inclusivity

LGBTQ+ inclusivity refers to the representation and inclusion of people from these diverse gender and sexual identities in advertising campaigns. This may include portraying same-sex relationships, featuring transgender or gender non-conforming individuals and promoting the overall acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities. Gender inclusivity in advertising refers to the representation of diverse gender identities beyond traditional binary categories of male and female.

By and large, the LGBTQ+ community has been underrepresented in advertising (Elliot, 2013). LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning. The plus sign at the end stands for the effort to be inclusive. Furthermore, the lack of gender diversity in advertising has become a bigger topic of conversation in recent times (Kemp, 2018). As the rigid boundaries of gender and sexual identity are beginning to erode, traditional categorizations of consumers may no longer apply (Walters et al., 2002). For brands, this means a requirement for a deeper understanding of how this group of people identify themselves as a consumer. Some brands have expressed worries of alienating their mainstream consumers by catering to the LGBTQ+ community (Oakenfull et al., 2008). However, the mainstream is not a homogenous set of individuals and neither are brands' target audiences (Read et al., 2018). Furthermore, studies find that consumers who consider themselves 'allies' have favorable reactions to LGBTQ+ representations in the media that lead to purchase intentions and positive word of mouth (Armstrong, 2020). Allies are people who support the rights of the LGBTQ+ community.

Although recently advertisers have made more of an effort to include a diverse range of gender and sexual identities, many consumers perceive these efforts to be disingenuous (Pounders et al., 2016). According to a study, many of the portrayals are often stereotypical in nature and tend to be mostly promoted during Pride Month (Tsai, 2011). The participants of the study made it clear that consumers who represent the LGBTQ+ community would like to see advertising content that matches the communities they participate in, the social circles they are a part of and the professional lives they lead. A need to eliminate stereotypical portrayals in advertising (e.g. feminine gay man or masculine lesbian) was brought up in the study (Tsai, 2011).

Some brands justify the exclusion of these groups due to their lack of spending power. However, a report shows that the LGBTQ+ community accounts for an estimated \$3.9 trillion spending power globally (Li, 2022). Furthermore, a study conducted in Canada indicated that a member of the LGBTQ community has 22% more spending power than the average Canadian (Veilleux, 2021). It is also important to note that a large portion of the younger consumer groups such as Millennials and Gen Zers consider themselves allies to the LGBTQ+ community (Milkman, 2017). According to a 2017 survey, 7.3% of

American Millennials present themselves as a part of a sexual or gender minority and Gen Zers are notably challenging gender roles (Ciszek & Pounders, 2019). The younger consumer groups actively seek out brands that align with their own values and identities.

2.1.4 Age Inclusivity

Age inclusivity is defined as the representation and inclusion of people of all ages in advertising campaigns. Age inclusivity involves challenging age-related stereotypes and promoting understanding and acceptance of diverse age groups. It involves showcasing the diversity of experiences and perspectives across different age groups and promoting a more equitable and respectful society for people of all ages.

For a while now, the representation of the age group ranging from 18-49 has been disproportionately higher in comparison to older age groups (Robinson, 2003). This stems from previous research that indicates that the attractiveness of the models featured in advertising plays a big role in how consumers respond to the ad. Society seems to regard older models as less attractive than their younger counterparts (Kohlbacher et al., 2014). This bias is echoed in many cultures where ageing is directly linked to the loss of status (Perry, 1995). This, however, is a largely outdated view of ageing. The modern over-fifties age group represents a completely different profile in comparison to the 'seniors' that have come before them. They lead healthier and more active lives and express a desire to look and feel younger for longer. Therefore, in many cases they do not resonate with the portrayals of elderly people in advertising today. Another belief among marketers is that even older people don't want to see their age group in advertising (Szmigin, 1999). This notion can quickly be debunked, as research has shown that older people want to see aspirational portrayals of their age groups that align with health, fitness and good looks (Marrin, 1999).

Be that as it may, when elderly people are portrayed in advertisements it is often through the lens of detrimental stereotypes, for example always only appearing in ads that promote pain relief medications. Studies show that stereotypical portrayals of older people can lower their self-esteem and lead to them feeling misunderstood. On the contrary, positive representation of elderly people has been shown to have physical benefits for the elderly viewers (Robinson et al., 2003). A lack of deep understanding of the consumer needs of older people have led to advertisements that miss this new generation of over-fifties entirely (Szmigin et al., 1999). Negative stereotypes have been viewed as ageism or discrimination for some time now (Palmore, 1990).

The older consumer segments hold a significant amount of untapped potential within them. Many brands are currently targeting Millennials and Gen Z because they are perceived as trend followers who are willing to spend money on new things (Robinson et al., 2003). However, the older age groups are often the ones with the most spending power. According to Robinson et al. (2003) the disposable income of people over fifty is 42% higher than that of younger consumers. Likewise, the Baby Boomers hold 80% of wealth in the UK and

Canada (Sawchuck, 1995). Furthermore, those born between 1945 and 1949 are referred to as the large age groups in Finland. A total of around 520,000 children were born in those years. Now there are still 372,000 of these age groups living in Finland. There is also a total of 1 391 291 old age pensioners living in Finland in 2023 (Tilastotietokanta, nd.).

2.1.5 Body Inclusivity

Body inclusivity is described as the inclusion and representation of diverse body types and sizes in advertising campaigns. This includes promoting a positive and diverse portrayal of different body shapes, sizes, and abilities, including people with disabilities. Body inclusivity involves challenging harmful and unrealistic body standards and promotes the understanding and acceptance of diverse body types.

In the context of marketing, Heiss (2011) describes the human body as politically charged space, shaped and perceived in accordance with socially constructed notions of what is considered normal and desirable. Therefore, it is not surprising that for years advertisements have categorically focused on portraying stereotypes of how the human body ought to look and perform (Gills, 2009). These stereotypical portrayals often look like white, able-bodied men and slim women with no impairments or flaws (Garland-Thompson, 2002). As advertisements impact how viewers understand the human body (Gills, 2009), these repetitive representations have led to wide-spread dissatisfaction of one's own body, both on a societal and individual level (Heiss, 2011). Advertising has contributed to the illusion of the ideal body – how it should look, how it should be taken care of and how it should be experienced. This ideal representation differs a lot from the average human body (Wendell, 2006).

Non-normative bodies have been discriminated against in the media for a long time, as a large portion of the cultural messaging has perpetuated weight stigma and a beauty standard of looking slim (Selensky & Carels, 2021). Furthermore, studies have shown that the disabled body is often undervalued in advertising (Wendell, 1996) People with disabilities have been depicted as something that opposes the norm and represent less valuable members of society (Morris, 1992). They have been portrayed as flawed able-bodied people, rather than celebrated for their own unique identities (Barnes, 1992).

The body positivity movement started by feminist communities, aims to denounce the societal constructs that form body norms and beauty ideals. The movement has gained a lot of popularity over the last few years by promoting self-acceptance of one's body regardless of size, shape, impairment or disability (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). Today, people with non-normative and disabled bodies are featured in various different promotional roles. As this group of people is no longer being fully excluded, it is now important to examine how disabled and non-normative people are being portrayed in ads. It is important for brands to avoid tokenistic representation of disabilities and impairments (Houston et al., 2022).

Studies show that advertising that aligns with the viewers identity is received better. Therefore, in many cases it doesn't make sense for a brand to uphold these unrealistic standards of beauty in the modern age, because they don't represent their target audience. To give an example, Kilbourne found (1999) that models weigh 23% less than the average female. Furthermore, around 15% of the world's population have experienced disability and most will experience some form of disability during their lifetime that varies in severity and duration (University of St. Andrews, 2023). A body that opposes societal norms stands as a reminder that the normative body is highly susceptible to change and disruption (Schildrick, 2005). This should be normalised, instead of perpetuating the falsehood of an unchanging, ideal body (Garland-Thompson, 1997).

2.2 Inclusivity in Beauty Advertising

Inclusivity in beauty advertising refers to the representation of a diverse range of people in advertising campaigns for beauty products (Amalia, Andani & Guterres, 2023). Traditionally, beauty advertising has focused on a narrow definition of beauty, which excludes people who do not fit within certain idealised standards of appearance. This can include people from different races, ethnicities, ages, body sizes, abilities and gender identities.

In recent years, there has been a growing movement towards greater inclusivity in beauty advertising, driven by consumers who are demanding more diverse and representative images in the media. Visual imagery in advertising has been shown to contain underlying messaging that has vast and varied impacts on one's self-concept (Goffman, 1979). The images form our understanding of identities and people (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2005). In beauty advertising, the intersection of ethics and aesthetics is particularly strong because of its global reach (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2002) and constructed storytelling aspects (Schroeder, 2007). As images of people dominate beauty advertising, it is of high importance that advertisers take into consideration the subtle meaning that underlies the models featured through their visual characterization (Heiss, 2011) Brands are now responding to this demand by featuring more diverse models in their advertising campaigns. Inclusive beauty advertising is not only important for promoting diversity and representation, but also for creating a more positive and inclusive culture. Be that as it may, there are also challenges to achieving true inclusivity in beauty advertising. For example, some brands may engage in tokenism, featuring a single model from a diverse group in their advertising campaigns without truly addressing systemic issues of exclusion and inequality.

However, as Young-Eisendrath (2004) so sharply put it "the double bind of female beauty is a well-kept secret, or we could not sustain a trillion-dollar fashion and cosmetic industry for women". It is well known that the cosmetic industry runs on women's insecurities about themselves. Feminist communities have long critiqued the beauty industry for this through theories of capitalist

exploitation (Jeacle, 2006). The industry has long been based on the idea that women need to look a certain way in order to be considered attractive or successful and has capitalised on this by marketing products that promise to fix perceived flaws or imperfections. An example often used for this argument is brands that sell skin lightening creams, who have exploited the beauty standard of fair skin and amplified it by presenting it as a prerequisite for beauty in order to sell their product (Radzi & Musa, 2017). Another example is how the cosmetic industry relies heavily on the idea that ageing is a negative thing that must be fought against at all costs (Szmigin & Carrigan, 1999). Beauty advertising often features models who have been airbrushed and digitally manipulated to create a flawless, impossible-to-attain image of perfection. These images can lead to women feeling inadequate about their own appearance, and to seek out products that promise to help them achieve this unrealistic ideal (Jones, 2021). Nevertheless, the beauty industry isn't the sole culprit; according to anthropologist Michael Taussig the female body occupies a prominent position as the radiant focal point of consumption within modern global capitalism (Aizura, 2009). Female bodies have been objectified and commodified for a long period of time.

2.3 Consumer Perceptions of Inclusivity in Beauty Advertising

The following section comprises viewpoints that complement each other in providing a more comprehensive understanding of how consumers perceive inclusivity in beauty advertising. The impact of beauty advertising on individuals' perceptions of social reality is a key aspect to consider in the context of advertising, because it delves into the notion that beauty advertisements, through their portrayal of exclusive and narrow beauty ideals, can shape people's notions of what is socially acceptable and desirable (Gerbner, 1998). The concept of perceived value in beauty advertising recognizes that consumers derive value from beauty advertisements (Ducoffe, 1996). Examining the interplay between beauty advertisements and perceived value provides insights into how consumers perceive and evaluate the inclusivity of these advertisements. Consumer perceptions of identity are deeply intertwined with beauty advertising (Fournier, 1998), as these advertisements often portray certain beauty ideals that individuals may relate to or aspire to embody. Through examining these viewpoints, this study endeavours to shed light on the complex interconnections between beauty advertising, consumer perceptions and the broader social context in which these advertisements operate.

2.3.1 Beauty Advertising and Perceived Social Reality

Gerbner's Cultivation theory is an important point of view to take into consideration while exploring inclusivity in cosmetics advertising and how it affects those who consume it. According to Gerbner's theory, consumers' views

on reality are formed by advertisements and media (Gerbner, 1998). The theory proposed that frequent viewing of mass media content cultivated a certain attitude towards society and the world (Romer et al., 2014). Cultivation is a sociocultural theory with three intrinsically intertwined components, namely media institutions, message production and message effects on viewers (Shrum, 2017). This study will mainly focus on the third component.

When this theory was first introduced, the media landscape was dominated by television and radio (Potter, 2014). Although it is said that the technology used in marketing does not itself create an impact, it amplifies the message that is being delivered. This happens due to the repetitive and inescapable nature of advertisements within mass media (Shanahan et al., 1999). Therefore, the primary assumption in this theory is that the more people are exposed to mass media content, the more their perceptions of the world change accordingly. Although at first glance, mass media marketing may seem to incorporate a wide variety of themes, stories and people, systematic analysis has shown a significant consistency in the values and norms that are being represented (Shrum, 2017). It is precisely because of this consistency paired with the inescapable nature of mass media messaging today that makes advertising such a powerful force in forming values both at an individual level and within society and **perpetuating social norms**.

As the media landscape has come a long way since the 70s and 80s, audiences now interact with the messages in a completely new way. Many critics of this theory have claimed that the interactive, selective and virtual nature of today's media landscape has rendered the cultivation theory obsolete (Romer et al., 2014) The grounds for this criticism is that because the production and distribution of mass media are no longer controlled by a handful of major networks, it no longer perpetuates a significantly consistent set of value systems (Shrum, 2017). Furthermore, Gerbner's (1986), assumption that "television provides a relatively restricted set of choices for a virtually unrestricted variety of interests and publics. Most of its programs are by commercial necessity designed to be watched by nearly everyone in a relatively nonselective fashion" has been widely questioned. Although at face value these criticisms seem valid, the theory has held the test of time through subsequent research. Studies have shown that the cultivation theory still very much applies to the digital age because it was born out of issues that still affect people in the modern mass media landscape (Ruddock, 2020).

As cultivation theory suggests that media viewing can influence our feelings and opinions on minority groups (Tan et al., 2000), leaving out certain groups of people based on their characteristics (race, age, gender, disability) can cultivate a perception that people who represent these characteristics are not part of the conversation. There is a tendency for beauty advertisements to leave out people of colour (Watson et al. 2004), elderly people (Searing et al., 2017), and disabled people (Heiss, 2011) and to predominantly cater to cis-gendered females (Alli, 2022). Therefore, the consistent and unavoidable outpouring of beauty advertisements in digital media can have a massive influence on how viewers perceive these groups of people. Therefore, the **diversity of models** represented

in beauty advertisement is important. The effects are not always seen as short-term behaviours or responses but rather as create unconscious belief systems through underlying messaging that are ingrained into society (Shanahan et al., 1999). This highlights the role media messaging and beauty advertisements can play in forming inclusive attitudes and opinions (Collier-Green, 2017).

2.3.2 Beauty Advertising and Perceived Value

As this study aims to provide credible results on how some consumers view the aspect of inclusivity in beauty adverts, it is important to understand how and why responses to advertising are formed. In fact, how an individual will respond to an advertisement depends on whether they form a negative or positive attitude towards it (Bamossy et al., 2016). According to Ducoffe (1996), advertising that consumers find valuable will likely result in desired outcomes. In order to further understand what makes advertising valuable to a consumer, Ducoffe (1995) identified three perceptual antecedents, which define what kind of benefits and perceived costs consumers derive from advertisements: Informativeness, irritation and entertainment. Later, some additional factors were added to the theory, including demographic variables and credibility (Saxena & Khanna, 2013).

According to Ducoffe (1996), a consensus exists that consumers are seeking adverts that aid them in making the most satisfactory purchase decisions possible. Information-rich content is seen to increase the effectiveness of marketing, by giving in-depth details about the product or service (Saxena & Khanna, 2013). Studies indicate that one of the main reasons that consumers spend time viewing an ad and approving of it is because of the amount of **information** provided (Ducoffe, 1996). Modern consumers view multiple ads a day and are highly media literate. Therefore, consumers are intrinsically aware of the underlying messages of advertisements and place their trust in the information accordingly. In a modern commercial environment, which is not necessarily conducive to transparent marketing, consumers are likely to not place much value on information received from an ad in the first place. Therefore, this can lead to difficulty to form a meaningful line of communication between the marketer and the consumer (Taylor, 2011).

When it comes to other goals that advertisements should fulfil, there is less of a widespread agreement, although naturally one of the main things to avoid is causing negative reactions within a consumer. Although criticism towards advertisements in general has a long history, Ducoffe (1996) suggests that criticism from the actual consumer usually concerns the tactics that are being used. When advertisements cause a negative reaction, such as annoyance, offensiveness or manipulation, it becomes less effective (Ducoffe, 1995). Moreover, the negative emotion can take the form of anxiety (Lee et al., 2006). However, it is not the negative reaction itself that causes a decrease in effectiveness, but rather the consumer's cognitive evaluation of such reaction (Ducoffe, 1996). This is a prevalent phenomenon within the beauty industry,

where consumers take offence to an advertisement based on the lack of inclusivity.

Credibility in advertising has been defined as “the extent to which the consumer perceives claims made about the brand in the ad to be truthful and believable.” (Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989). More recent studies support the notion that there is a relationship between a consumer’s perception of the ad’s credibility and consumer attitudes (Bracket & Carr, 2001). Furthermore, studies have indicated that when consumers deem an advertisement as credible it has a positive impact on consumer attitudes (Tsang et al., 2004). Therefore, it can be stated that advertisements that meet the consumer’s required level of credibility will be accepted as a valuable message (Van der Walddt et al., 2009). Lastly, relevant demographic variables such as age and gender that can impact consumer perceptions on beauty adverts will be taken into consideration in this study (Brackett & Carr, 2001).

2.3.3 Beauty Advertising and Consumer Perceptions of Identity

Identity and how well a consumer identifies with a given brand plays a vital role in how people respond to inclusivity in cosmetics advertising. Fournier (1998) describes a brand as an active and contributing member of a brand-consumer relationship, rather than a passive object of marketing transactions. It has been highlighted that consumers tend to humanise brands in order to interact with the nonmaterial world by assigning personality traits to brands. Therefore, a natural extension of these findings is to suggest that all marketing actions are viewed as behavioural incidents (Fournier, 1998). One of the relationship facets that Fournier (1998) identifies is self-connection, which “reflects the degree to which a brand delivers on important identity concerns, tasks or themes, thereby expressing a significant aspect of self”. Studies suggest that strong **identity and value alignment** supports a loyal and thriving brand relationship. Furthermore, this type of connection is said to elicit feelings of dependency and tolerance within the consumer which are unique to this particular set of circumstances (Drigotas & Rosbult, 1992; Lydon & Zanna, 1990). There have been further studies which indicate that if a consumer’s identity aligns with the marketing messages of the brand it positively impacts perceived value (Confente et al., 2020). The same applies for marketing imagery, whereby consumers are more likely to respond positively to an advert where they can observe similarities between themselves and the model (Watson, 2006). Therefore, inclusive marketing has the potential of attracting a diverse range of customers (Cunningham & Melton, 2014). This study will focus on identity as it relates to race, gender, age and physical ability.

Because consumers like to identify with the advertising that they are viewing, studies indicate that an effective marketing tactic is to match the skin tone of the featured models to that of the target audience (Jones, 2010). Studies also show that both those with a lighter and darker skin tone want to view advertising images that represent their own race (Shankar, 2020). However, dividing people into racial groups doesn’t represent today’s social climate. For

example, the sameness of light skin tones represented in advertising is seen as problematic, because it favours biased beauty standards (Shinoda et al., 2020). Be that as it may, it is important for a marketer to understand what ethnic group their consumers identify with, because it widely affects how they respond to marketing messages (Meyers, 2011). A good example of this is that minority groups are often more attached to their racial identity (Watson, 2006), and therefore more sensitive towards the subject.

When it comes to age, most developed countries are undergoing a shift in demographics (Bloom et al., 2011), meaning that the amount of people over 60 will overtake the amount of under 18-year-olds in the coming years. Nevertheless, elderly faces are being left out of beauty campaigns in the vast majority of cases. The ads that do feature mature models, often do so in an ageist way. Ageism is described as “a social construct of old age that portrays ageing and older people in a stereotypical, often negative, way.” This can be seen as problematic, because media representations of old people create and maintain a construct of how ageing is perceived (Loos et al., 2018). Coming across such stereotypes in the media can have a negative impact on elderly people, causing decreased self-esteem, health, wellbeing and cognitive performance (Levy et al., 2002). For decades, there has been an emphasis on youth and beauty and people have started to have heightened concerns about ageing. As a result, the segment of society that was once praised for their wisdom and life experience, is now being disregarded and marginalised (Berger, 2017). Elderly models have been reduced to only advertising pain relief medication or cleaning products (Loos et al., 2018), which can add to these negative associations towards the age group. Similarly in the beauty industry, elderly people gain the most visibility in anti-ageing campaigns, describing ageing as something negative and sparking concern in younger and younger consumers about the effects of ageing (Vorster, 2015). Due to the adverse impact that these advertisements (or absence of representation) have on the self-identity of elderly people, it is reasonable to assume that they will not find them valuable. Nevertheless, it comes at no surprise that beauty companies want to take advantage of the yearning for everlasting youth (Loos, 2013), therefore depicting elderly models in campaigns as a healthy and wealthy target group is favourable to all parties involved (Loos, 2018).

Gender stereotypes are a dominating trend within the advertising space (Eisend, 2009). However, in today’s social climate, gender stereotypes make it difficult for consumers to identify with, as they may not fit into simple ‘male’ or ‘female’ categories (Antoniou & Akrivos, 2020). The modern view on gender seems to be that it is a ‘social construct’ that perpetuates a society that tells the consumer how they should act and look (Van Hellemonst & Van de Bulck, 2012). For decades, stereotypes have been used in advertising to simplify and condense information. However, recent studies show that this might not be a favourable advertising tactic. Challenging stereotypes, and therefore showing people in circumstances that are not related to the characteristics assigned to their sex on the other hand seems to advance the profitability of marketing efforts (Åkestam,

2017). Therefore, considering different gender expressions in beauty marketing may have a positive impact (Eisend, 2009).

Advertisements have a significant impact on how the public understands the human body. However, they often also heavily feature stereotypical representations of how the body should look and perform (Heiss, 2011). These stereotypes contribute to understanding of the ideal beauty standard of the body (Wendell, 2013). Marketing messages often locate the 'norm' of the female body to consist of 'high cheekbones, long legs and the absence of fat, wrinkles, physical disabilities and deformities' (Heiss, 2011 cited from Kilbourne, 1994; Garland & Thomson, 2002). According to Wendell (2013), the norm represented in advertising is significantly different to the reality of what most human bodies look like. This has an impact on how people identify their own bodies compared to the bodies featured in advertising. As the bodily beauty standards are becoming more and more difficult to achieve, consumers are finding it harder to identify with advertising messages as they do not affirm their identity (Heiss, 2011).

2.3.4 Theoretical Framework

To sum up, considering the viewpoints in this study it can be concluded that 1) perceived social reality, 2) perceived value and 3) perceptions of identity can influence how consumers perceive inclusivity in beauty advertising. Considering the viewpoints mentioned in the study, there are several factors that can influence how consumers perceive inclusivity. Firstly, the cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998) suggests that exposure to media messages and images over time can shape our perception of the world. In the context of beauty advertising, this means that repeated exposure to a narrow range of beauty standards (such as thin, white, conventionally attractive models) can reinforce those standards as the norm. Consumers may perceive brands that consistently use this type of imagery and messaging as less inclusive, because they feel excluded from the narrow definition of beauty being portrayed. Ducoffe's value advertising theory (1996) suggests that consumers are intrinsically aware of the underlying messages of advertisements and place their trust in the information accordingly. Lastly, Fournier's self-identification theory (1998) suggests that consumers use brands to construct and communicate their own identities. Studies show that consumers may be more likely to identify with brands that feature models who look like them or represent their values. Overall, this theoretical framework guides the collection of empirical data in this study by informing the structure of the interview guide (Appendix).

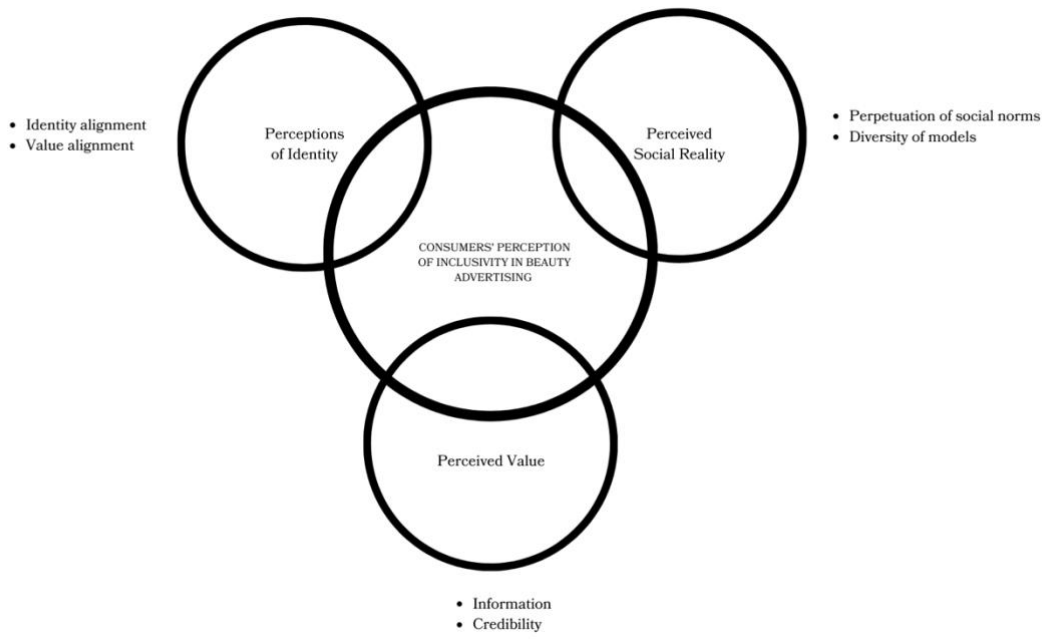


FIGURE 1: Theoretical Framework

3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Qualitative research is a method that involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data. Qualitative methods are described as methods that deal with words and phrases in order to understand concepts, thoughts, perceptions and feelings (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Streefkerk, 2019). Because the study is aiming to build insights on consumers' perceptions, thoughts and feelings towards inclusivity within the beauty industry, a qualitative research method was chosen.

The qualitative method is particularly useful for this study because it offers an in-depth understanding of the topic by allowing the researcher to obtain detailed and nuanced insights into a particular phenomenon. Furthermore, it allows for a level of flexibility for the researcher to adjust their approach based on the unique characteristics of each participant. This enables the researcher to gain rich data that may be missed by a more rigid research method. The qualitative method also allows for themes to emerge from the data rather than imposing preconceived notions on it. This may lead to unexpected insights to be identified. Lastly, qualitative research methods are often better suited for exploring sensitive or taboo topics such as this one, which may include discrimination (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.2 Selection of Respondents

Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method, where participants are selected based on referrals from other participants (Parker et al., 2019). This method was utilised in this study, because the population of interest was hard to reach otherwise. The population of interest in this study was people who are

interested in the Finnish cosmetics industry and has experience of cosmetics advertisements.

In snowball sampling, the initial participants, also known as ‘seeds’, were selected based on specific criteria related to the research question. The criterion for this study was anyone who is interested in the Finnish beauty industry. This was done by posting a recruitment post on the author’s personal social media, specifically Instagram. After the seeds were recruited, they were asked to refer to other individuals they know who fit the criteria and might be interested in participating in the study. The process continued until saturation was reached at 10 participants. Because geographical location may possibly be a factor in consumer perceptions, different localities were deliberately included in this study as much as possible. Table 1 provides detailed information about the participants, including their ages, genders, localities, and the durations of the interviews.

Snowball sampling was an efficient method for recruiting participants for this study, because it resulted in a more diverse sample of participants compared to only interviewing the author’s own circle of contacts. Furthermore, snowball sampling is recommended to be used in cases where the subject matter can be seen as sensitive (Nikolopoulou, 2022). Although the participants shared a similar interest in beauty advertising, they were in different stages of life and resided in different geographical locations. Moreover, this form of sampling enabled a higher level of trust and rapport between the interviewer and the participants (Parker et al., 2019). The participants were recruited to this study by people they know, therefore they may have been more likely to provide open and honest responses. This may have resulted in higher quality data.

TABLE 1: Participants

Code	Age	Gender	Interview Time (min)	Locality
P1	57	Female	17.32	Central Finland
P2	28	Female	35.30	Southern Finland
P3	32	Male	25.19	Central Finland
P4	23	Male	37.02	Central Finland
P5	55	Female	24.50	Central Finland
P6	24	Female	55.13	Central Ostrobothnia
P7	25	Female	38.52	Northern Finland
P8	23	Female	47.21	Western Finland
P9	22	Female	41.01	Eastern Finland
P10	72	Female	16.27	Central Finland

3.3 Data Collection

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), data collecting is the most important aspect of any research effort. Primary data is obtained during the data collection procedure in order to produce a credible empirical data set which was used in the analysis of this study. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method for this study. Semi-structured interviews are well suited to exploring complex and subjective topics, such as consumer perceptions of inclusivity in the beauty industry. Semi-structured interviews provide a balance between the flexibility of open-ended questions and the structure of predetermined themes, which allows for a rich and detailed exploration of the research questions (Wilson, 2014).

To begin the process of data collection, the author first recruited potential participants for the study through snowball sampling as mentioned before. Once participants had agreed to take part in the study, the author provided them with information about the study and obtained their informed consent. Next the author developed an interview guide which included a set of open-ended questions related to the research questions and the theoretical framework. The interview guide first introduced the participant to the topic of beauty advertising and then gauged the participants' knowledge of beauty advertisements in general. Next, the interview leaned on the theoretical framework to explore whether the participant has cultivated any messages from beauty advertising and whether they are aware of how these messages affect their perceived social reality. After that the interview aimed to investigate what aspects are important to the participant in beauty advertisements and what affects their perceptions towards them. This part of the interview was informed by the 'perceived value' section of the theoretical framework. Likewise, the next part of the interview was supported by the 'perceptions of identity' part of the theoretical framework, exploring whether identity and the ability to identify with the models featured in beauty advertisements had any significance in their perceptions of the beauty advertisements. Lastly, the participants were given a chance to freely share any further comments on the topic.

The interview guide was designed to allow participants to elaborate on their experiences and opinions, while also maintaining a degree of structure to ensure that all relevant topics were covered. The interview guide aimed to fill a gap in knowledge about Finnish consumers' perceptions on inclusivity in beauty advertising. The interview was piloted first with a small group of the author's friends to identify any problems beforehand. The pilot round's participants had prior knowledge of the beauty industry and were therefore able to give constructive feedback. The initial interview guide included beauty advertising images to be shown to the respondents to get their feedback on them. Although some valuable information was gained, it would have been difficult to make any types of conclusions based on the respondents' personal opinions on beauty adverts. Therefore, this part of the interview was left out of the final interview guide.

An online interviewing method has been chosen for this study. Online interviewing allows for an elimination of some constraints that would otherwise make in-person interviews unfeasible. Because of this chosen method, there is a possibility of an increased pool of participants that are geographically dispersed and may be disabled (Salmons, 2014). Furthermore, given the sensitivity of the topic, participants may find this method less stressful because they can take the interview in a familiar setting, from the comfort of their own home for example (Gruber, Szmigin, Reppel, & Voss, 2008). Similarly, conducting an interview in an online setting that is commonly used between friends, family and colleagues, may result in the participant being more open to discuss sensitive matters such as feelings and emotions (Ayling & Mewse, 2009). For this study, videoconferencing is the most optimal medium of online interviewing.

Ten online interviews were conducted in this study ranging from 16 to 55 minutes in duration. The variations in duration were mainly due to the participants' willingness to elaborate on their responses. Some participants needed more time to express their thoughts fully. On the other hand, the brevity of certain interviews may be attributed to a lower level of rapport between the researcher and the participant. All ten interviews were meticulously transcribed in their entirety, capturing the participants' responses verbatim. Each interview consisted of 13 core questions with around three supplementary questions for each of these initial queries, fostering a more comprehensive exploration of the research topic.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyse and report patterns (or themes) within data. The method used in this study was guided by the steps outlined by Kananen (2008) in Figure 2, while leaving space for the interpretation and creativity of the researcher.

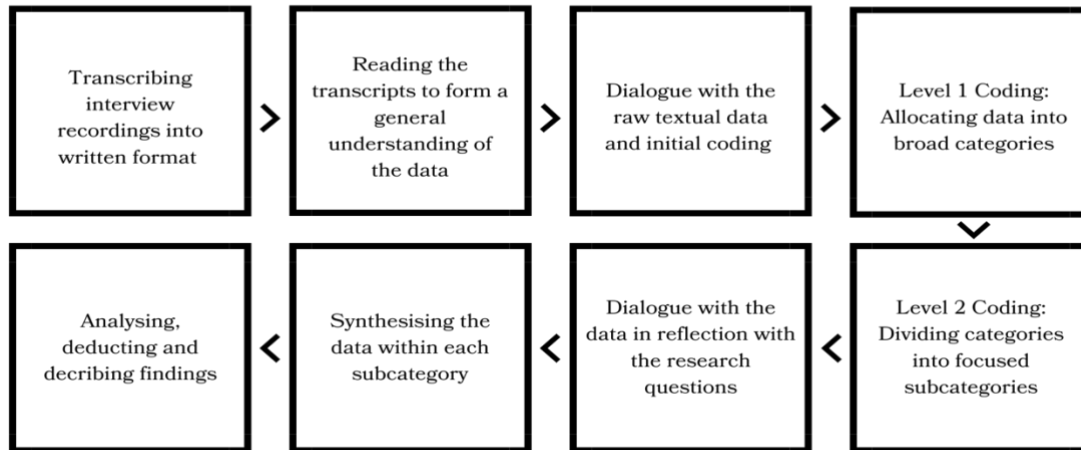


FIGURE 2: Data Analysis (Adapted from Kananen, 2008)

The management of the data is an important part of the data analysis process (Bryman & Bell, 2007). All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. After that the transcripts were carefully read through several times to get a sense of the data, while making notes about potential themes or patterns that were noticed.

The transcriptions from the interviews were subjected to a coding process based on the methodologies outlined by Kananen (2008) and Vaismoraldi, Jones & Turunen (2016). The coding was conducted using tables created in a .docx document. Initially, the transcripts were roughly coded by hand, and then categorised into broader topic categories that captured and described the explicit textual content. These categories were further divided into more focused subcategories. Through a deeper interpretation of the implicit ideas conveyed by participants, themes emerged from the analysis. To uncover the underlying meanings and abstract concepts within the text, the researcher engaged in a iterative process, moving back and forth between categories and considering the wide context of each individual account.

The identified themes were then connected to the established theoretical framework. These themes represent the analytical findings derived from the qualitative analysis. Following the cyclic analysis process as suggested by Vaismoraldi et al. (2016), a coherent story line was developed to present the findings. In this research, the interviews were synthesized into sections that align with the theoretical framework and overall objective of the study. The analysis process was mainly concerned with reducing the large amount of information into a more easily digestible form (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

4 FINDINGS

The primary objective of this research was to delve into the depths of consumer perceptions regarding inclusivity in beauty advertising and to identify important factors that shape those perceptions. Through data-driven analysis of the collected data, several prominent themes emerged, shedding light on the intricacies of consumer perspectives. The first notable topic that surfaced was the presence of **harmful beauty ideals** perpetuated by beauty advertising, which fuel unrealistic standards and exclusion among participants. Another salient topic uncovered the prevalence of **tokenistic advertising efforts**, as participants felt that brands superficially incorporate diversity without genuine representation or meaningful engagement. Additionally, the analysis brought attention to the persisting issue of Finnish brand's **out-dated advertising campaigns** that fail to resonate with the evolving consumer mindset regarding inclusivity. Lastly, an important topic that emerged from the analysis was the **enhancement of racial inclusivity** in recent years, highlighting a need for other forms of inclusivity to progress as well.

Furthermore, the analysis identified aspects of inclusivity that the participants found important in beauty advertising. The **diversity of models** emerged as a critical aspect, as consumers expressed a strong desire to see a wide variety of individuals represented across various dimensions, including age, gender, race and body type. The notion of **relatability** also played a vital role, as participants sought advertising that mirrored their own lived experiences and showcased real people with whom they could identify. **Authenticity** was another essential aspect, with participants valuing genuine representation and transparency in beauty advertising, rather than highly edited or airbrushed portrayals. Lastly, the analysis emphasized the importance of **identity affirmation**, whereby participants responded positively to advertising that celebrated their unique identities, including their cultural heritage, physical attributes and personal journeys.

4.1 Consumer Perceptions of Inclusivity in Beauty Advertising

4.1.1 Harmful Beauty Ideals

Through the analysis of participants' perspectives, a prominent theme emerged regarding the detrimental impact of harmful beauty ideals perpetuated by cosmetics advertisements. Participants expressed a shared sentiment that these ads continue to portray a specific standard of beauty characterized by flawless skin, slim figures, and youthful appearances.

"Well, cosmetics ads still represent a certain kind of beauty ideal, perfect skin, slim, young." - P3

Participants of this study indicated that for a long period of time they have been exposed to narrow and exclusive beauty ideals. The theme of harmful beauty ideals emerged strongly from the interviews, with participants expressing their concerns about the impact of beauty advertising on society's perception of beauty. This prevailing ideal, as participants emphasized exerts a negative influence, particularly on young people who may not conform to or resemble this narrowly defined beauty archetype.

"[Beauty adverts] just reinforce that one ideal and then it's really harmful, especially for young people who don't necessarily fit it in or look like that"
- P2

Another recurring pattern that emerged during the interviews was the perception that brands favour one specific audience over others. Many participants expressed frustration with the lack of representation for diverse age groups, skin textures, and skin tones in beauty advertising. These quotes shed light on the participants' profound awareness of the damaging repercussions of beauty advertising's perpetuation of unrealistic and unattainable standards. Participants conveyed a sense of concern and compassion for those who may feel marginalized and excluded due to their deviation from the prescribed beauty ideal. The participants' reflections underscore the potential harm inflicted upon individuals who do not conform to the conventional notions of beauty perpetuated by beauty advertisements. Such narrow portrayals may foster feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and a sense of not belonging.

"Well, considering that the target audience of these cosmetic brands often includes more than just young, slim, white-skinned women, it would also be cool if those ads represented others as well." - P4

Participants showed concern for younger consumers with less critical media literacy to navigate the messages conveyed by media and how they may begin to internalise and accept these ideals as the norm. The participants raised the point

that if beauty advertising consistently portrays only narrow and exclusive beauty ideals, such as slim-white, young, white-skinned women, individuals may come to believe that this is the only acceptable and desirable form of beauty. A participant noted that this can be harmful for those who do not fit within these narrow beauty ideals and may contribute to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and body dissatisfaction.

“I would like cosmetics brands to emphasise individual beauty and even flaws. Today they would be seen as flaws, but in the future, they would also be seen as beauty.” - P8

The consensus of the participants seemed to be that inclusive beauty advertising that portrays a diverse range of individuals with different skin tones, ages, body types, and gender identities may challenge narrow beauty ideals and help individuals to see the beauty in diversity. This type of advertising may help to shift the perceptions of beauty over time and promote more accepting beauty standards.

4.1.2 Tokenistic Advertising Efforts

The participants’ perceptions regarding tokenistic advertising efforts in beauty advertising shed light on the prevalent theme that emerged from the analysis. Their insights highlighted the tendency of advertisements to incorporate diversity without genuine understanding and thorough consideration.

“How I imagine that it happens is like, when an advertisement is planned, the people planning it are like, 'Oh right! We should add some diversity, okay let's go get a different person here now', they haven't actually researched what kind of models truly represent their target group. So, it seems a bit clumsy at times, at other times it seems like it's fake. It's also the fact that that model has to fit into that environment and that model has to represent that brand in some way.” - P3

Although all participants appreciated the efforts that brands are making to diversify their advertising, most also had mixed feelings about how successful it currently is. Some felt that attempts at inclusivity can come across as clumsy or inauthentic. One participant commented on the seeming lack of research that goes into planning of inclusive advertising, stating that it often feels like an afterthought. Participants expressed a recognition of the challenges faced by brands in approaching inclusivity in a genuine and believable way. This sentiment suggests that brands may be grappling with the complexities of inclusivity and struggling to strike the right balance between authenticity and marketability.

“Now it is perhaps a bit of a phase where the brands are at a loss as to how this matter should be approached in a believable and genuine way.” - P7

The participants' comments also suggest that some inclusive marketing efforts come across as tokenistic. They, for example, expressed disappointment in the lack of representation of certain marginalised groups, such as those with the darkest skin tones.

“Even if there are dark-skinned people, they are also very similar-looking dark-skinned people, in a way, it's like, for example, the darkest skin tones have been left out.” - P8

The participants highlighted the tendency to emphasize skin colour diversity while overlooking other forms of diversity, such as skin conditions and acne. This observation underscores the participants' desire for a more comprehensive and nuanced representation that embraces various dimensions of diversity beyond surface-level characteristics.

“The skin colour has been emphasised a lot, but still there is no acne face or atopic face. There are no such real flaws represented that all people have. Models always have that perfect and flawless skin.” - P5

These quotes reflect the participants' keen awareness of tokenistic practices in beauty advertising and their desire for more thoughtful and authentic approaches. Participants expressed the need for advertisers to go beyond superficial attempts at diversity and engage in thorough research to truly represent their target audience in an inclusive manner.

“And especially if I can tell that the brand has gone for diversity for diversity's sake. Like just chosen 4 different looking people to stand in a row. I rather like it when it is done in an authentic way that reflects the target audience.” - P4

Many conversations implied that it may be necessary for brands to invest more time and resources into researching their target audience and understanding the nuances of representation.

4.1.3 Out-Dated Advertising Campaigns

During the interviews, the Finnish beauty industry was called into question regarding the cultural shift towards inclusivity. Participants expressed their perceptions regarding the topic of outdated advertising campaigns, shedding light on the differences they have observed between international beauty brands and Finnish beauty brands.

“[International brands] seem to be a little further along in these matters than Finnish makeup brands. They show a little more of that kind of difference and diversity.” - P8

A common perception among participants was that Finnish beauty brands are falling behind their international counterparts when it comes to representing diversity and inclusivity in their advertising campaigns. This sentiment was echoed by a participant who noted that Finnish beauty ads repeat themselves a lot and are not up to date. Participants noted that international beauty brands appeared to be more progressive in embracing diversity and showcasing differences, while Finnish brands seem to heavily rely on promoting 'Finnishness', 'Nordicness' and Scandinavian features.

"Well, there is a lot of emphasis on Finnishness, Nordicness and things like that. I think it excludes a lot of people, because those other people don't fit into that mould." - P5

"Finnish brands mostly prefer Finnish-looking models." - P1

"Such young, beautiful people, often perhaps Scandinavian-looking." - P10

Participants expressed a sense of dissatisfaction with the repetitive nature of Finnish cosmetics ads, perceiving them failing to keep up with current trends. This sentiment suggests a desire for fresh and contemporary approaches that break away from conventional beauty norms. Furthermore, participants expressed a desire for greater diversity and inclusion in Finnish beauty adverts, noting that the emphasis on Finnish and Nordic identity can feel exclusionary to those who do not fit into that mould. Nonetheless, most participants felt that there has been progress.

"In my opinion Finnish cosmetics ads repeat themselves alot, I don't think they have gone forward, they are not up-to-date. It would be nice to see more people with different looks, different ages and also more men and representatives of different genders." - P4

These quotes collectively indicate that the participants perceive Finnish beauty brands' advertising campaigns as outdated and lacking diversity compared to their international counterparts. The emphasis on Nordic looks was seen as excluding those who do not fit into those predefined molds. Participants expressed a desire for brands to showcase a wider range of individuals and embracing diversity in terms of appearance, age, and gender. By modernizing their advertising strategies and embracing inclusivity, the participants felt that Finnish beauty brands could better connect with a diverse consumer base and resonate with the evolving beauty ideals of today.

4.1.4 Enhanced Racial Inclusivity

Participants expressed their views on the topic of enhanced racial inclusivity in beauty advertising, highlighting both positive advancements and areas that still require improvement. Many participants acknowledged the increased

representation of dark-skinned models, noting a broader range of diversity compared to previous years.

“I feel that diversity has increased in the last few years. You see a lot of dark-skinned models in ads. Even in stores you can see models of different looks. The wider scale has really increased.” - P2

However, participants highlighted that there is still much work to be done to fill in the gaps of other forms of representation. They highlighted the need for more nuanced and authentic representations. While there has been progress in showcasing individuals from different backgrounds, some participants felt that certain portrayals could be exaggerated or stereotypical, detracting from the goal of genuine inclusivity.

“I must say that nowadays you see a little more people with different skin colours, for example, different ethnic backgrounds, but then again, sometimes when I see a person in my age group, they can be surprisingly exaggerated or stereotypical, that it goes a little too far in my own mind.” - P1

Moreover, participants observed that while skin colour has been emphasized, there is still a lack of representation when it comes to common skin conditions such as acne or atopic skin. Participants noted that models always seem to be flawless and perfect, which may not accurately reflect the realities and diverse experiences of individuals.

“The skin colour has been emphasized a lot, but still there is no acne face or atopic face. There are no such genuine flaws that all people have. Models always have that perfect and flawless skin.” - P5

These quotes collectively suggest that while there has been progress in enhancing racial inclusivity in beauty advertising, there is still room for improvement. The common sentiment among participants was that more genuine and nuanced representation can further enhance the consumer perceptions of inclusivity.

4.2 Important Aspects of Inclusivity in Beauty Advertising

4.2.1 Representation of Diversity

The theme of diversity of models emerged as a significant factor in consumer perceptions of inclusivity in beauty advertising. Participants expressed concerns about the lack of diversity in beauty advertising, emphasizing the need for representation of diverse models. This sentiment was echoed by others who

highlighted the common portrayal of fair-skinned, thin individuals with flawless facial features, which they found to be unrealistic and lacking uniqueness.

“Maybe cosmetics ads are still at that level where only people with a certain look appear in them. There isn’t much diversity.” - P8

“It is quite common that they are fair-skinned, thin, and their facial features are over perfect. There is nothing distinctive or unique. It seems that today's cosmetics aim for everyone to look the same.” - P7

Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of diversity in cosmetics ads, with many feeling that the models represented a narrow definition of beauty that did not reflect the diverse range of people in real life. Participants commented on the pressures that these ads can create for people who do not fit into the idealised standard and expressed a desire to see more emphasis on the unique features of individuals.

“It probably causes a lot of appearance pressure for people. They think they should look like that. In real life, not everyone looks exactly the same, so cosmetic ads could also aim to emphasise the special features of individuals and each person's own beauty.” - P6

The absence of diversity in models used in cosmetic ads was seen as a missed opportunity to engage with a wider audience and increase interest in the product. They believed that featuring models who represent a wider range of appearances would not only reflect the reality of the consumer base but also increase engagement and interest with the advertisements.

“A selection of different models could increase interest.” - P4

The participants responses implied that by representing a diverse range of models’ brands can send a powerful message of inclusivity and acceptance.

4.2.2 Relatability

The interviews revealed that participants valued relatability in beauty advertising. Beauty ads were seen to emphasise aspirational ideals by featuring stereotypically attractive models who embody a desired lifestyle or appearance. This is typical for brands that offer products that have a symbolic significance, such as beauty. However, the portrayal of aspirational ideals seemed to have a negative response from the participants of this study. The participants expressed concern that younger age groups might be particularly susceptible to these ideals and may feel compelled to conform to these standards. They recognized the potential impact advertisements have on shaping perceptions of self-image and urged brands to be mindful of the implications.

“They are probably aiming for someone to see the ad and get the feeling that I want to look like that too. And then go buy that product. With that comes a great responsibility, in terms of which beauty ideals they are maintaining.” - P7

“Younger age groups might fall for it. Think that ‘that's how I should look’. So they immediately go to buy everything that is advertised.” - P1

Rather, participants expressed a desire in seeing models they could identify with. Furthermore, they showed interest in seeing the product results being demonstrated on ‘normal people’ like themselves for informational value. Participants mentioned that they preferred brands whose models represented a wide range of appearances, as it made them feel more confident in finding suitable products.

“If I see brands whose models have been taken from a very narrow variety of appearances, then I usually don't want to buy from those brands because I don't usually find suitable products from those brands.” - P4

“I have atopic dermatitis so I can't use just anything on my skin. I'm not interested in many of the ads because they're not aimed at my skin.” - P5

The things participants tended to value about informational advertising when it came to inclusivity was finding out about the products’ performance of different skin types and skin tones. In terms of emotional value derived from ads, words and phrases such as ‘self-expression’, ‘identity’ and ‘feeling welcomed’ were brought up in conversation. The interviews uncovered that the participants do not respond well to the promotion of aspirational appearances or lifestyles.

“Well, for example, I'm not really interested in seeing any celebrities, because it doesn't really do anything for me, it's like, in a way, the celebrity endorsement thing is starting to be a bit old-fashioned. It's nicer to see more genuine people and genuine experiences.” - P3

Many of the participants claimed to respond more favourably to advertising campaigns that feature relatable, everyday people rather than highly curated and staged celebrity endorsements. Affirmation of self-concept and belongingness seemed to be among the values that the participants appreciated in inclusive beauty advertising.

“To be honest, it feels really good to identify with a model in a cosmetics ad. Like we just talked about the fact that, of course, they always choose the models who conform to the ideals of beauty, but when there is someone who looks like you, you get the feeling that it's okay, I can be beautiful.” - P8

To further underscore the importance of relatability, participants indicated that by fostering a sense of beauty that is inclusive, it can create a stronger connection to the brand.

4.2.3 Authenticity

Participants expressed their concerns about the lack of authenticity in beauty advertising. Many participants noted that if the ad is upholding an unattainable standard of beauty through retouching and editing, they do not believe in it. Participants emphasised the importance of genuine representation and real experiences in beauty advertisements.

“For example, if some mascara is advertised, saying you will get really thick eyelashes and you can see that it's a completely edited picture, I won't believe it. I don't believe in cosmetic ads.” - P5

“So many brands are trying to promote naturalness, but then you can see that their ad images are blurred and edited. Some ads fake it a little more and some fake it a little less. But they are all fake to some degree. It's really sad.” - P6

Many participants expressed frustration in the common practice of using heavily edited and retouched images in beauty advertising. The conversations suggested that the participants are increasingly attuned to the ways in which advertising creates unrealistic beauty standards. The participants showed positive perceptions towards brands that authentically explore and celebrate the unique identities and expressions of their target audience.

“What I've been paying attention to is the prevalence of photoshopped pictures. If there was more authenticity and facts, it would probably arouse more interest. I don't care at all if there is a person whose skin is photoshopped. These days I can easily spot it.” - P8

The participants highlighted the need for transparency and honesty in beauty advertising. They expressed a desire to see real people, free from excessive editing and artificial enhancements. The collective responses from the participants implied that by prioritising authenticity, brands can foster trust in their messages.

4.2.4 Identity Affirmation

Participants shared their perceptions regarding the topic of identity affirmation in beauty advertising, highlighting the importance of seeing individuals who reflect their own age group, gender, skin type and body type. They expressed a

desire for greater representation that aligns with their personal identities and experiences. One participant noted the positive impact of seeing people their age in advertisements.

“Well, I must say that if there are people of my own age group in the ad, then such an ad immediately feels much nicer and more interesting.” - P10

The findings of the semi-structured interviews revealed a common desire among all participants to identify with the models depicted in beauty advertising. Participants also emphasized the need for greater acceptance and normalization of diverse identities. One participant highlighted the evolving attitudes towards men wearing makeup.

“[...] it's been considered strange for a long time, that is, a man who wears make-up. It's much more accepted now than before, but I feel there's still a lot of room for improvement. I wish it would be more normalised. - P5

The notion that emerged was the need for greater inclusivity and normalisation of male makeup use. This sentiment was emphasised by other participants who expressed a desire for advertising campaigns to challenge traditional gender norms and promote greater inclusivity in gender identities.

“I have never seen a single picture with pimples or acne. Why can't there be someone with acne, why does it always have to be the one with smooth skin. I also have atopic dermatitis, so I would really like to see a model like that.” - P8

“I would love to see different body types in beauty advertising. I feel like my ability to relate to the model is important for the ad to be successful in my eyes.” - P9

Participants also expressed a desire for greater representation of skin textures and conditions, such as acne, atopic dermatitis and eczema. Participants revealed that they resonate more strongly with advertising campaigns that showcase a similar skin texture or condition to what they themselves are experiencing. Participants also emphasized the importance of seeing different body types represented in beauty advertising. The sentiment highlighted the need for diverse body representation, as it enhances relatability and effectiveness of advertisements.

“I want to support brands that have the same values as me.” - P2

According to participants of the study, beauty advertising that aligns with their values and identity can facilitate and strengthen the connection they have towards a brand. The inclusion of diverse representations in advertising was seen as a reflection of a brand's values of equality and tolerance. Participants also

noted that seeing diverse individuals in advertising helped them feel welcomed by the brand.

“I like to see that there are different people and different sizes. Different skin types, textures, and more. [...] it helps both to understand how those products work on different people, but also tells about the brand's values and makes you feel welcome.” - P3

“So the fact that [a brand] represents equality and tolerance at least raises points in my eyes.” - P10

By featuring diverse representations of beauty in advertising, brands can create a sense of self-connection among consumers who may have previously felt excluded due to age, skin condition, skin tone or age. Participants revealed that they feel a stronger sense of connection and affinity towards a brand when they can see themselves represented in their advertising. Furthermore, many participants noted that they strive to align with brands that authentically and genuinely share the same values of acceptance, equality and tolerance as them. In fact, one value that came up among all participants was authenticity.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

The study aimed to explore consumer perceptions of inclusivity in beauty advertising and identify important factors that influence these perceptions. Through the thematic analysis of qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews, several key themes emerged shedding light on the participants' perspectives.

By employing qualitative research methods, the study was able to delve deep into the participants' perceptions of inclusivity in beauty advertising. The study also considers multiple dimensions of inclusivity, such as age, gender, race and physicality. This intersectional perspective adds a novel aspect to existing literature, which has often focused on singular dimensions of inclusivity (Eisend, 2022), by for example merely focusing on racial inclusivity. In addition, by examining the Finnish consumer context, the study provides insights that are specific to the cultural, social and market dynamics of Finland in a field that has previously predominantly focused on American contexts.

5.1.1 Consumer Perceptions of Inclusivity in Beauty Advertising

Harmful beauty ideals. A prominent theme that emerged from the data was that the participants perceived that beauty advertising perpetuates harmful beauty ideals. This sentiment echoes previous studies where participants felt that models always look the same, often with white skin and straight hair (Alcantra, 2021). Participants in this study expressed concerns about the unattainable beauty standards portrayed in advertisements and the negative impact they can have, particularly on young individuals who may feel pressured to conform to these ideals. This finding aligns with Gerbner's cultivation theory (1998), which suggests that repeated exposure to media messages shapes individuals'

perceptions of reality. In the context of beauty advertising, the study highlights the potential cultivation of unrealistic and exclusionary beauty ideals and the subsequent implications for consumer well-being and self-image. This finding is particularly interesting because it suggests that the images and messages conveyed in beauty advertisements can contribute to the cultivation of unrealistic and exclusionary beauty standards. This aligns with the broader discussions around body positivity, mental health and the need for more inclusive and diverse representations in media. By uncovering the participants' concerns regarding harmful beauty ideals, the study underscores the importance of promoting healthier and more realistic beauty standards in advertising. The findings encourage (It calls for a) greater responsibility and ethical considerations within the beauty industry in order to ensure that advertising practices do not perpetuate harmful societal norms or negatively impact individuals' self-perceptions. This study also highlights the need for marketers and advertisers to be mindful of the messages they convey and the potential effects it may have on consumers.

According to the cultivation theory, the more a person is exposed to media content, the more they come to accept the messages conveyed by that content as representative of the real world (Gerbner, 1998). Cultivation theory suggests that heavy exposure to media content can cultivate or shape a person's perception of reality by creating a shared set of values, beliefs, and attitudes (Romer et al., 2014). In this study participants expressed their opinions on how the cosmetics industry continues to perpetuate harmful beauty ideals that can lead to appearance pressure.

Gerbner's theory argues that this cultivation effect can occur across all media, including television, film, print and online media. The participants were looking at beauty advertisements across all these platforms. The theory posits that media content is a dominant force in shaping people's perceptions of the world and that this effect is cumulative over time, meaning that the more a person is exposed to media content, the greater the cultivation effect. The theory also suggests that media content is not always explicitly or overtly persuasive, but rather works through gradual accumulation of messages and images that shape people's perceptions of reality. This process can be subtle and unconscious, and the effects may not be immediately noticeable (Shrum, 2017). Nonetheless, the interviewees showed an increased conscious attunement to the underlying messages involving cosmetics advertising. Many participants noted that the beauty ideals presented in beauty advertisements were trying to evoke insecurities in the viewer making them desire to look like the flawless models in the advertisements. They also felt that portraying a narrow set of ideals is exclusionary and harmful towards those who don't fit into that mold, and that it slowly but surely distorts the definition of beauty. The participants found the common practice of beauty advertisements presenting conventionally attractive women unsatisfactory.

Tokenistic Advertising Efforts. Another key theme identified in the study was the need for genuine and authentic representation of diverse models in beauty

advertisements, emphasising that brands should go beyond surface-level diversity and actively engage in research to understand the needs and preferences of their target audience. Tokenism is described as the act of making superficial or symbolic efforts to fulfil a particular task or goal (Oxford Reference, nd.). In this context, tokenism involves a company making bold declarations of inclusivity in their marketing to appease consumers, but not genuinely following through with those commitments (Sterbenk et al., 2019). The participants expressed scepticism towards cosmetic brands' attempts to showcase diversity and inclusion in their advertisements. They perceived these efforts as superficial and driven by a desire to appear socially conscious rather than reflecting genuine representation. This finding is interesting because it raises important questions about the authenticity and sincerity of cosmetics brands' diversity initiatives. It suggests that simply featuring a diverse range of models without considering their genuine representation of the target audience may come across as inauthentic and tokenistic. The finding challenges the notion that mere visual diversity in advertising is enough to promote inclusivity. It highlights the importance of genuine representation and the need for brands to engage in thorough research and understanding of their target audience's diverse characteristics and experiences. By uncovering participants' perceptions of diverse representation in beauty advertising, it sheds light on the potential gap between cosmetic brands' stated values and their actual advertising practices. It calls for brands to adopt a more holistic approach to inclusivity, going beyond surface-level diversity and considering the diverse identities, experiences, and needs of their target audience.

According to Ducoffe's value advertising model (1996) consumers view multiple ads a day and are highly media literate. Aligning with the findings of this study, the theory posits that consumers are intrinsically aware of the underlying messages of advertisements and place their trust in the information accordingly. In today's media environment, advertisements are not known for being particularly transparent, so consumers are likely to not place much value on information received from an ad in the first place. According to Taylor (2011) this can lead to difficulty to form a meaningful line of communication between the marketer and the consumer. Another key theme that Ducoffe (1996) brings up in his theory is credibility. Credibility in advertising refers to the degree to which consumers perceive the claims made about a brand in an advertisement as being authentic and honest (Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989). Advertisements that do not meet the consumer's required level of credibility are typically not accepted as valuable (Van der Walddt., 2004). This aligns with the participants negative responses towards inclusive advertising efforts that did not feel authentic or genuine.

Out-dated Advertising Campaigns. As most of the findings of this study align with previous research, what adds to the existing body of knowledge on the subject is the Nordic, specifically Finnish, context of the study. Participants of this study expressed their perception that Finnish cosmetics brands tend to rely on outdated and repetitive advertising strategies that fail to reflect the diversity of

their modern target audience. They highlighted the prevalence of Finnish and Nordic-centric ideals in these campaigns, which may exclude individuals who do not fit into that narrow representation.

This finding is significant because it sheds light on the need for Finnish cosmetic brands to evolve and adapt their advertising strategies to align with the changing societal norms and expectations. It suggests that relying on traditional and Nordic beauty standards may hinder brands' ability to effectively engage and resonate with their diverse consumer base. It also highlights the importance of Finnish cosmetic brands to stay current and relevant in the ever-changing landscape of the beauty industry. It emphasises the need for Finnish beauty brands to embrace diversity and inclusivity in their advertising. Moreover, this finding highlights the importance of understanding the modern local cultural context and preferences when developing advertising campaigns. It calls for brands to find a balance between celebrating Finnish and Nordic heritage while also embracing the multicultural reality of their consumer base.

This finding aligns with previous studies that argue that generalised marketing is no longer a viable option for anyone, as it has the potential of missing so many customers. Inclusive marketing on the other hand, acknowledges that marketing efforts directed to a diverse target audience is beneficial for both the brand and its consumers (Dimitieska et al., 2019). Previous studies show that inclusive marketing efforts have become more popular in recent years as it can have a positive impact on customer perceptions (Puntoni et al., 2021).

Enhanced Racial Inclusivity. Many participants of this study had observed that a lot of progress has been made when it comes to inclusivity in the beauty industry, but that there is still lots of room for improvement. They noted an increase in representation of dark-skinned models and recognized the efforts made by brands to showcase diversity in terms of ethnic backgrounds. However, it is crucial to recognize that participants also highlighted a limited representation of other forms of inclusivity, such as diverse body types, age groups and individuals with skin conditions like acne or atopic dermatitis.

Reflecting on the viewpoints employed in this study, Gerbner's cultivation theory suggests that while progress in racial inclusivity has been observed, the cultivation of inclusive beauty ideals across various dimensions is still evolving and requires further attention. Furthermore, the limited representation of other diverse characteristics highlights the need to enhance the informational value (Ducoffe, 1996) by showcasing how products cater to a variety of individuals, including those with different body types and conditions.

5.1.2 Important Aspects of Inclusivity in Beauty Advertising

Representation of Diversity. Participants expressed a desire to see a broad range of models in terms of appearance, age, and gender representations. They noted that many beauty advertisements still adhere to a narrow ideal, characterized by fair-skinned, thin models with flawless features, which undermines the celebration of individuality and unique beauty.

This aligns with previous findings that state that approximately half of the people consuming advertisements feel underrepresented by them. The findings suggest that advertising typically perpetuates stereotypes, presenting a narrow range of idealized human appearances. Consequently, this places additional pressure on consumers to conform to these societal molds. For individuals whose appearances deviate significantly from these portrayals, a sense of exclusion arises, further highlighting the limited representation in advertising (Middleton & Turnbull, 2021).

Identity Affirmation. Another key theme that was highlighted was the value of the consumer's ability to identify and relate to the models featured in beauty advertisements. The participants expressed a desire to see people who look like them or who represent their identity dimensions. They also expressed the frustration with the lack of diversity in beauty standards and the pressure to conform to a certain look or ideal. This finding is interesting because it underscores the importance of inclusivity in beauty advertising, especially in an industry that has historically excluded certain groups of people. From a theoretical perspective, this finding is linked to Fournier's self-connection theory (1998).

Fournier's relationship theory proposes that brands can create relationships with their consumers that are like those in interpersonal relationships (Fournier, 1998). According to Fournier (1998), consumer-brand relationships can be characterised by different relationship dimensions, including intimacy, passion, commitment, brand-partner quality, self-connection and interdependence. This study focuses on the self-connection theory, which refers to the extent to which the consumer identifies with the brand and perceives it as reflecting themselves and their values (Fournier, 1998). The responses from the participants of this study implied that consumers are more likely to form a strong relationship and view the brand as inclusive if they feel that the brand resonates with their personal values, world view, goals and self-concept. When a brand is perceived as aligning with a consumer's sense of self, it can enhance the consumer's self-expression and self-esteem, which in turn fosters a stronger emotional connection to the brand (Confente et al., 2020). Self-connection is therefore an important factor in how consumers evaluate inclusivity in beauty advertising.

This aligns with previous studies that indicate that an effective marketing tactic is to match the skin tone of the featured models to that of the target audience (Jones, 2010). Furthermore, studies show that the lack of representation or the overtly stereotypical representations of elderly people in beauty advertisements, has a negative effect on a viewer's self-image, therefore, on the contrary depicting elderly models in campaigns as an attractive target group is favourable towards them (Loos, 2018). Likewise, previous research states that considering different gender expressions in beauty marketing may have a positive impact (Eisend, 2009). Similarly, studies show that the bodily beauty standards are becoming more and more difficult to achieve, consumers are finding it harder to identify with advertising messages as they do not affirm their identity (Heiss, 2011). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that it is also

important for consumers to identify with the bodily features of the models, like the participants of this study have indicated.

Relatability. The theme of relatability emerged as an important aspect of consumer perceptions in beauty advertising. Participants expressed a strong desire to connect with the models and narratives depicted in advertisements. They emphasized the importance of seeing genuine and relatable individuals who reflect their own experiences. This desire seemed to stem from the participants' belief that when they can identify with the models, it enhances their sense of beauty and fosters a deeper connection with the advertised products.

The theme of relatability in beauty advertising aligns closely with Fournier's self-connection theory (1998). According to Fournier, consumers seek connections with brands and advertisements that resonate with their own self-identities. The participants' desire for relatable models and experiences in beauty advertisements reflects their need for self-connection. This connection enhances their overall satisfaction and engagement with the advertised product (Fournier, 1998).

Authenticity. The theme of authenticity in beauty advertising emerged as a significant aspect in the participants' perceptions. The participants expressed a desire for authenticity in beauty advertising, stating that they value real experiences and genuine representations of people. They criticised advertising that relies on excessive editing, blurring or endorsement from celebrities, as these practices were seen as inauthentic and detached from their own reality. Authenticity was seen to foster trust and credibility among consumers, allowing them to connect more deeply with the brand and its messaging.

This aligns with Ducoffe's theory (1996) that posits that credibility influences consumer's perceptions towards an ad. When an advertisement is perceived as credible, it tends to generate more positive perceptions and engagement. In the context of authenticity, the participants' preference for genuine representations reflects their desire for credible messages that resonate with their own experiences.

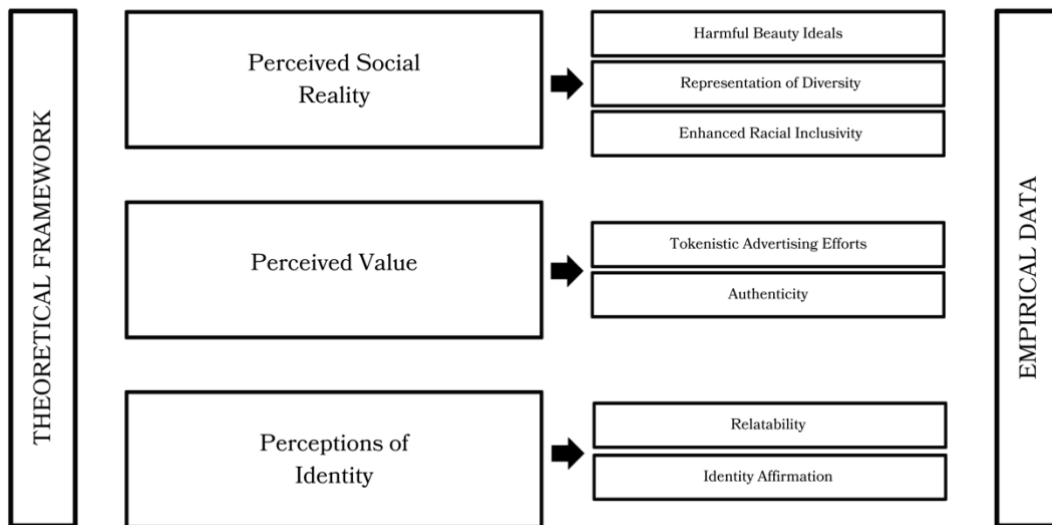


FIGURE 3: Theoretical Contributions

The synthesis between the theoretical framework and the empirical data of this study is illustrated in Figure 3. The findings derived from the empirical data interconnect and align with the theoretical concepts of this study. By integrating the theoretical framework with empirical data, this synthesis shows how the theoretical perspectives manifest and are supported by the actual experiences and perspectives of the participants. The theoretical grounding of the study and the insights derived from the empirical investigation highlight the valuable theoretical contributions of the research findings within the context of the theoretical framework.

5.2 Managerial Implications

More emphasis needs to be placed on the role and responsibility that advertisers hold in portraying inclusivity in advertising (Windels, 2016). Currently, the field of advertising is dominated by young, white males, who may have an unconscious bias towards representing those whom they can identify with the most (Thompson-Whiteside, 2020). This may partly explain the lack of inclusivity in advertising (Tuncay, Zayer & Coleman, 2015). Therefore, based on the findings of this study there are several managerial implications that can be considered. Firstly, the identification of harmful beauty ideals suggests that brands should challenge and redefine traditional notions of beauty. Advertisers can promote a more inclusive and diverse range of beauty ideals that reflect the diverse population and cater to a wider audience. The themes of representation of diversity and enhanced racial inclusivity highlights the importance of representing a broad range of individuals. Advertisers should actively seek to

include models of different racial backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, and body types to better reflect the diverse consumer base. The identification of tokenistic advertising efforts suggests the need for more genuine and thoughtful approaches to diversity and inclusivity. Brands should go beyond superficial diversity and conduct thorough research to understand their target audience and ensure that their advertising efforts are authentic. The themes of authenticity and relatability emphasize the importance of genuine representations in beauty advertising. Brands should strive to create content that resonates with the consumers on a personal level and reflects their real-life experiences and aspirations. By being transparent, avoiding excessive editing, and featuring relatable narratives, brands can foster trust with their audience. The theme of identity affirmation further highlights the significance of representing diverse identities and addressing specific concerns and needs of consumer segments. Advertisers should aim to affirm the identities of their target audience by featuring models and narratives that reflect their experiences, challenges and goals. All in all, the findings of this study indicate the need for continuous learning, adaptation and responsiveness to changing consumer perceptions and societal expectations. Advertisers should actively engage in market research, consumer insights and trend analysis to stay updated on the ever-evolving beauty ideals and consumer preferences. By incorporating these implications into their advertising strategies, brands can create a more inclusive and authentic brand image.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The limitations of this study should be considered when interpreting and generalising the findings of this study. The first thing to consider is the small sample size of the study. Interviewing only ten people may not be enough to get a comprehensive understanding of consumer perceptions of inclusivity in beauty advertising. A larger sample size could have provided more diverse perspectives and a broader understanding of the topic. Future research can aim to include more diverse samples to ensure broader generalizability of the findings across different consumer segments. Secondly, the study included limited demographic representation. While the study has included participants from various regions in Finland, the age bracket and gender distribution may not be representative of the entire population. Furthermore, the study was conducted in a specific context, namely Finland. It is essential to recognize that cultural, social and economic factors can vary across different markets. Therefore, the limited demographic representation may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, in qualitative research, the potential bias is always present (Queirós, Faria & Almeida, 2017). Participants may have personal biases and experiences that influence their perceptions. Future research could consider employing quantitative research methods to complement and validate the qualitative findings, allowing for statistical analysis and broader generalizability.

In terms of further suggestions for future research, an interesting study would be to explore the intersectionality of several identity attributes. According to Eisend (2022), only a few attempts have been made to study the connectedness of different dimensions of diversity. Furthermore, with the rise of social media influencers and user-generated content, future research could also explore how social media impacts perceptions of beauty and inclusivity in advertising. Most studies made on the subject have focused on print media and other forms of traditional advertising. Only very recently has there been a shift towards studies that focus on the sharing of content within online and social media (Eisend, 2022). Furthermore, comparing perceptions of inclusivity in beauty advertising across different cultures and regions would make an interesting study. This would shed light on how cultural factors influence perceptions and identify any unique challenges or opportunities for brands operating in specific cultural contexts. Another interesting study would be to examine the impact of inclusive beauty advertising on purchase behaviour to find out whether consumers are more likely to purchase products from brands that portray inclusivity in their advertising campaigns. Additionally, examining the effectiveness of authentic, unedited portrayals in beauty advertising and how they influence consumer attitudes and brand perceptions. This would shed light on whether authentic representations lead to higher levels of trust, loyalty and engagement.

5.4 Quality of Study and Ethical Considerations

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness are commonly used to assess the quality of qualitative research studies. The first criterion is credibility, which refers to the rigor of the research and the extent to which the findings accurately represent the experiences of participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study used a data-based thematic analysis method, which is a widely accepted and rigorous qualitative data analysis technique. Additionally, the conducted interviews strived to include a diverse group of participants, which aimed to ensure that the findings represent a range of perspectives. Therefore, to ensure the credibility and quality of this study it was important to make sure that the research design is well constructed, valid and reliable (Ali & Yusof, 2011). For example, it was important to ensure that the sampling method is representative of the study's target population to avoid bias. This means the study aimed towards recruiting participants from diverse backgrounds and experiences through snowball sampling. Furthermore, it was imperative that the interviews were conducted in a comfortable environment, where the participants could speak freely and without distractions. Therefore, the study opted for video-interviews, as the interviewees could respond to questions from the comfort of their own home. The open-ended questions in the interview were formulated so that they would encourage the participants to share their experiences and perspectives without bias.

The next criterion is dependability which refers to the consistency and stability of the research findings over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure dependability it was important to describe the data analysis process in detail and make sure that the findings were grounded in data. The dependability would have been even stronger if there had been a second coder to review the data and confirm the themes identified. Furthermore, Eskola and Suoranta (1998) claim that the material of qualitative research can be assumed to be sufficient when it starts to be saturated. This means that increasing the number of interviews will no longer result in enriched research material in such a way that new information would be obtained. ten interviewees participated in the empirical research of this study, and it is likely that with a larger group of interviewees, the material would have been even more nuanced in nature. On the other hand, saturation was very strongly noticeable already after five interviews, so this can be seen as a sign of the dependability of the data.

The next criterion is transferability, which refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This involves providing a detailed overview of the context and execution of the study, so that the reader has the means to evaluate how it can be applied to different contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The concepts of transferability and validity have been developed to assess the reliability of research. Primarily, however, transferability and validity can be utilised for the evaluation of quantitative research, and no full consensus has been reached regarding their utilisation in the evaluation of qualitative research. Research transferability refers to the repeatability and validity of research results. According to Hirsjärvi, Sajavaara & Remes (2005), qualitative research typically does not aim to be fully generalizable, the material is often somewhat subjective. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018), have come up with criteria that would define the reliability and credibility of qualitative research. The criteria includes that the research should be a coherent whole, which shows its object and purpose as well as the data collection process, informants, practical implementation, analysis of the data, and reporting of results and conclusions, which this study has also aimed to do.

The last criterion is conformability, which refers to the extent to which the findings are objective and independent of the researcher's own biases and perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, it was important for this study that the interviews were properly recorded and transcribed as soon as possible after the interview had taken place. The interviews were also transcribed verbatim. In the case of interview studies, the reader doesn't get to read the raw interview material themselves but must rely on the researcher's own interpretation of it. Therefore, in this study the author aimed to write a precise description of how they arrived at the conclusions they did. This can be done by supporting any claims made with direct quotes from the interviews. Furthermore, it is imperative for the researcher to be reflexive about one's own biases and assumptions during the data analysis process by making sure that one remains aware of how one's own perspectives may influence the analysis. Be that

as it may, it is worth noting that qualitative analysis is always limited due to the researcher's own individual perspective.

According to Salmons (2014), any time people are involved in a study the researcher has a moral and ethical responsibility for them. In terms of ethical considerations, the researcher of this online interview study addressed four connected issues: consent, identity, privacy, and data protection. Firstly, the participants were approached at the outset of the study to request consent in order to respect their rights to privacy and confidentiality. Participants in this study were made aware of the researcher's goals and anticipated obligations, and they voluntarily consent to participate. Showing respect towards the participants when touching on sensitive subjects such as race or disability was important, as not to exploit their experiences or emotions for the sake of the study. The interviewer avoided asking leading questions that could bias the responses of participants.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE

No.	Question	Additional Questions	Theory	Purpose
1.	What kind of cosmetics consumer are you?	How important a role do cosmetics play in everyday life? On average, how much money do you spend on cosmetics every month? Do you prefer certain brands? Why?	-	Introduction to the topic of cosmetics
2.	How familiar are cosmetic ads to you and where do you usually see them?	Why is it familiar/not familiar? How do you select those channels? How often do you watch / in what situations do you pay attention to advertisements?	-	Gaining a general understanding of the participant's knowledge of cosmetics advertisements
3.	How interested are you in cosmetics advertisements?	Why are you interested / not interested? Has your attitude changed over the years?	-	Gaining a general understanding of the participant's knowledge of cosmetics advertisements
4.	What do you think about cosmetic ads?	Why do you have a certain opinion?	Perceived Social Reality	Exploring if the participant has cultivated

				any messages and whether they are aware of how these messages affect their perceived social reality
5.	How would you describe the (Finnish) cosmetic ads?	<p>What kind of themes / elements do you think are repeated in the advertisements?</p> <p>What is typically in the ads?</p> <p>What images do they evoke?</p> <p>What are they aiming for? What do you think about it?</p>	Perceived Social Reality	Exploring if the participant has cultivated any messages and whether they are aware of how these messages affect their perceived social reality
6.	What kind of message do you think today's cosmetic ads send?	In what ways do you feel that advertisements affect your own behavior or thinking? What about other people's?	Perceived Social Reality	Exploring if the participant has cultivated any messages and whether they are aware of how these messages affect their perceived social reality
7.	What things do you dislike about today's cosmetic advertising?	Why?	Perceived Value	Exploring what aspects are important to the participant in cosmetics advertisements and what affects their

				perceptions towards them
8.	What things do you like about today's cosmetic ads?	Why?	Perceived Value	Exploring what aspects are important to the participant in cosmetics advertisements and what affects their perceptions towards them
9.	What kind of models do you think typically appear in (Finnish) cosmetic ads?	What do you think about the choice of models commonly appearing in modern cosmetics advertising?	Perceptions of Identity	Exploring whether identity and the ability / inability to identify with the models featured in cosmetics advertisements affect the participants
10.	In your opinion, how well do the advertisements take into account the diversity of people?	How well do advertisements take into account age, race, gender, physicality?	Perceptions of Identity	Exploring whether identity and the ability / inability to identify with the models featured in cosmetics advertisements affect the participants
11.	Does the skin tone, age, gender or physical appearance of the models appearing in the cosmetic	What is the significance of skin colour? Age? Gender? Physicality? Why?	Perceptions of Identity	Exploring whether identity and the ability / inability to identify with the models featured in

	advertisement affect your attitude or opinion towards it?			cosmetics advertisements affect the participants
12.	What do you pay attention to in cosmetics ads?	What is the significance of skin colour? Age? Gender? Physicality?	Perceptions of Identity	Exploring whether identity and the ability / inability to identify with the models featured in cosmetics advertisements affect the participants
13.	Does the skin tone, age, gender or physical appearance of the models appearing in the cosmetic advertisement affect your perceptions or opinions towards it?	Why?	Perceptions of Identity	Exploring whether identity and the ability / inability to identify with the models featured in cosmetics advertisements affect the participants
14.	Do you have any other comments you would like to share on this topic?	-	-	Giving the participants a chance to share further comments on the topic