"SIMPLE AND RELIABLE WATERDROP":

Analysis of the brand identity construction on Waterdrop's European website

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Waterdrop brändi perustettiin vuonna 2016 ja se on saanut suosiota viime vuosien aikana ympäri maailmaa. Waterdropin keskeisin myyntituote on microdrinkit, jotka ovat pieniä sokerittomia kuutioita ja ne sekoittavat hedelmäisiä makuja sekä vitamiineja nopeasti mihin tahansa veteen.

Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on tutkia Waterdropin brändi-identiteetin koostumista brändin virallisella eurooppalaisella verkkosivustolla. Valitsin brändiksi Waterdropin, koska se on kiehtova ja innovatiivinen brändi. Päätin tutkia brändi-identiteettiä, koska olen ollut kiinnostunut pitkään siitä, miten nykyaikaiset brändit rakentavat brändi-identiteettiään verkkosivustojen avulla. Tavoitteena on saada selville, kuinka Waterdrop rakentaa brändi-identiteettiä multimodaalisesti verkkosivustollaan sekä miten Waterdrop hyödyntää värejä brändi-identiteetin rakentamisessa ja sen ylläpidossa. Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu kymmenestä (10) kuvankaappauksesta, jotka ovat otettu Waterdropin verkkosivuston pääsivulta, valituilta tuotesivuilta ja ainekset sivulta. Aineistoa tutkittiin multimodaalisen diskurssi analyysin ja väriteorian näkökulmasta, keskittyen kieleen, sanavalintoihin, värien mielleyhtymiin, ihmisiin ja kuvakkeisiin.

Tutkimuksen analyysistä selvisi, että Waterdrop käyttää yksinkertaisia kuvakkeita, lauseita sekä valoisia, elinvoimaisia ja hienovaraisia värejä, joilla on positiivisia yhdisteitä tunteisiin. Waterdrop soveltaa myös paljon adjektiiveja, korostaa sanaa "yksinkertainen", käyttää markkinoinnin taktiikoita metaforasta persoonapronominin "sinä" asti ja toisinaan käyttää adjektiivin superlatiivimuotoa osoittamaan Waterdropin korkeaa laatua.

Waterdropin brändi-identiteetti rakentuu siis multimodaalisesti värivalintojen kautta, jotka antavat positiivisia mielleyhtymiä väriharmonian avulla ja koheesiosta tekstin ja visuaalisen puolen välillä. Se koostuu myös ammattimaisuudesta, uskottavuudesta, luotettavuudesta, ympäristöystävällisyydestä ja yksinkertaisesta ajattelutavasta, kun yritys kuvaa Waterdropin käytettävyyttä sekä toteuttaessa verkkosivuston elementtejä.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on a relatively new brand, Waterdrop, which has recently gained popularity around the world. I chose Waterdrop because it is a fascinating and innovative brand. I was also influenced by the Finnish streamer and YouTuber called Laeppa, who has been advertising Waterdrop in his live streams on the Twitch platform. As I was not familiar with the brand at the time of planning the thesis, I decided to explore it further. I bought one of the Waterdrop microdrink boxes to try it out and test it myself. I tested a microdrink called Sky and it has flavours of pineberry, passion fruit and cactus fruit. I came to a conclusion that the experience was worth the money and at the same time, I knew why Laeppa recommends Waterdrop. For the specific focus of the study, I thought it would be beneficial to orient to brand identity as I have been interested in the concept of identity for a long time. This study takes an in-depth look at modern brands that construct their identities through their websites.

So, what exactly is Waterdrop? Waterdrop is a brand that sells everything from microdrinks, water bottles and drinking glasses to other brand merchandised products, such as shopping bags and backpacks. The company is most focused on selling microdrinks, which are the original products created by the company itself. Microdrinks are small sugar-free cubes that quickly infuse into any water with fruity flavours (Waterdrop, 2023). The microdrink packs come in twelve-cube pieces and they come in a variety of flavours with positive components in them such as vitamins. The brand was founded in 2016 but became popular in 2021 when it expanded its business to United States. In eight years, Waterdrop has expanded to over 30 countries, has over 400 employees all around the world and most importantly, has over two million customers and followers (Waterdrop, 2023).

Waterdrop appears to be an exceptionally reliable brand. It focuses on sustainability, which is one of the company's core values. The brand has strong reusable water bottles that reduce waste; the company gathers one plastic bottle from the environment for every 12-pack of Waterdrop purchased, and compared to 500 ml bottled beverages, Waterdrop saves up to 98% in plastic and CO_2 omissions (Waterdrop, 2023). Moreover, Waterdrop's three other values of community love, product focus and self-improvement are evident in their development of the brand. The company proudly supports some non-profit organisations such as Outright International and

water.org, demonstrating Waterdrop's passion for making a difference to the future of communities.

The aim of this study is to find out how Waterdrop constructs its brand identity on its official website and how Waterdrop uses colours in relation to the brand identity. The data consists of ten (10) screenshots from the official European Waterdrop website (https://eu.waterdrop.com/). The data was collected at two separate times, in December 2023 and in January 2024 as the website has been changing since I started doing my research. I am going to draw on multimodal discourse analysis and colour theory as the methods of analysis to name and analyse the multimodal elements in the data. I will also apply visual grammar and colour associations of these methods in my analysis.

Because the brand is quite new, to the best of my knowledge it has not been academically studied. However, Niessing et al. have produced a teaching package about Waterdrop in 2019 with a title: "waterdrop®: Changing the paradigms of the beverage industry with limited resources and digital marketing". The brand has also been the subject of various articles and reviews online. As Ludmir (2023) mentions on the Forbes' website, the brand has expanded to over a dozen flavours in just four years, offering a wide range of tastes and preferences. Thus, this study fills the gap in the research field. The implication of my work is that it can help new companies gain inspiration for creating traditionally modern but unique brand identities. Researchers would be more likely to study relatively new companies with innovative marketing and branding.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As the best of my knowledge, there is no previous research on the brand in a scientific context because the brand is fairly a new one. However, previous research on brand identity construction through websites and online marketing are available. The theoretical background consists of sections on discourse, multimodal discourse analysis, colour theory, brand identity, online marketing on websites and previous research on brand identity on websites. These theories were found relevant to the thesis as they connect to the methods of analysis and the topic concepts of brand identity and website.

2.1. Discourse

The concept of discourse is notable in the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. The term itself has a range of various meanings. According to Hyland et al. (2021, p. 1), discourse is seen as the manner in which language functions in our relations with one another and the world, forming and modifying the social, cultural and political structures of our societies. On the other hand, Kress (2012, p. 35) argues that the term discourse is situated in between two "markers", which can be described as "uncovering significant social, psychological and political traits in text-like forms" and "providing narratives of linked lengths of language in use". Furthermore, Strauss and Feiz (2014, p. 2) emphasize that discourse is the social and cognitive process of using language and other semiotic resources to put our experiences, perceptions, feelings, understandings, and needs into words in order to create a shared language for expression and communication. Fundamentally, the views on discourse are based on the language and its everyday use among people.

According to Gee (2015), there are two types of discourses, one with a small letter "d" and one with a capital letter "D", better known as the big "D" in discourse. The concept of the big "D" discourse provides a more extensive framework for the discourse analysis of the little "d". As Gee (2015, p. 4) points out, discourse analysis of the little "d" is embedded into big "D" discourse analysis, which examines how language interacts with objects and bodies to form society and history. James Paul Gee has caught the essence of the definition of the big "D" in discourse. "The big "D" discourse is meant to capture the ways in which people enact and

recognize socially and historically significant identities or "kinds of people" through well-integrated combinations of language, actions, interactions, objects, tools, technologies, beliefs and values" (Gee, 2015, p. 1). In the light of the big "D" discourse defined by Gee, Discourse takes the form of simplified ways of thinking, saying, doing and being in the world. Therefore, people are seen as the big "D" discourse. On the other hand, the little "d" discourse is not the same, it needs some kind of language-in-use, for example, communication with at least one other person, to be defined as a discourse.

The previous definitions of little "d" discourse can be referred to an uncountable noun, but the term can also be used as countable. The plural form is discourses, which means that there are several types of discourse, for example, gendered or marital discourses. It is an established way of thinking and a social barrier that limits what can be said about a certain subject in specific contexts and situations. Discourses have the ability to influence people by imposing limitations on the topics that can be discussed and the definition of "knowledge" in specific contexts (Jones, 2012, p. 18). Furthermore, through a specific genre, participants can take on the very discourse that is associated with that genre. Tardy (2021, p. 54) discovered that users adopt biomedical discourse and are positioned in certain ways by that discourse when they apply genres, such as a diagnostic survey for depression or a medical list of symptoms. So, particular people find different discourses in different genres.

In this thesis, I use Strauss and Feiz's (2014) definition of discourse as an uncountable noun. I find their expression of discourse more relevant to this study than the other ones because brands usually want to communicate needs, feelings and understandings to their customers through a shared language. Strauss and Feiz's definition of discourse is therefore simple and appropriate to the concept of brand identity analysis.

2.1.1. Multimodal discourse analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) is an important part of the background theory, as it is seen as both a method of analysis and an approach. The central component of multimodal discourse analysis is discourse, which in Strauss and Feiz's (2014) simplified terms refer to written or spoken communication. On the other hand, discourse analysis itself focuses on the study of the language meanings and actions of language as people use language (Gee &

Handford, 2012, p. 1). In other words, it is the study of language use. Discourse analysis also studies how language moves through time and how the various connections and patterns within these moves make sense and serve as interpretation guides to us (Gee, 2015, p. 4). Sometimes discourse analysis is described as the study of the meaning, coherence and accomplishment of combined sentences. According to Gee and Handford (2012, p. 1), communication and action can be single sentences or even utterances, which are interesting for a linguist working on discourse analysis.

Multimodal discourse analysis differs from the broad terms of discourse analysis because it has specific analytical perspectives depending on what the focus is. According to the theory of multimodality, language is just one of the many resources that can be applied for creating meaning (Kress, 2012, p. 38). Other resources can be pictures and videos with elements such as gestural, spatial, audio and oral language. Kress (2012, p. 39) draws attention to the material qualities and the social shaping of the material's social-semiotic affordances over extended periods of time, which distinguish different modes. These (communicative) modes include language, images, sounds, actions and gestures. Jones (2012, p. 36) argues that the definition of a communicative mode should not be mixed up with modality, the term "mode" used by Halliday in his model of context, and modes of discourse such as narration and description. In linguistics, modality expresses the concepts of possibility, necessity, permission and so on. Halliday's term "mode" refers to the context, in which mode is the rhetorical or symbolic link and the function that language plays in a setting (Jones, 2012, p. 29).

Images can be analysed by using multimodal discourse analysis. The framework of visual grammar falls within such a context. The analysis of an image can include aspects of the gaze, social distance, perspectives and angles of view that show power relations, involvement and detachment (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 116-140). The gaze of a person or people in an image gives either a demand or an offer. As Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 118-119) explain that a demand always involves a gaze or a gesture towards the viewer, but an offer does not have a gaze at the viewer at all. Moreover, social distances are depicted in close, medium or long shots of the image. These distances are expressed as intimate, social or impersonal in relation to the length of the shots.

The different angles display power relations and either involvement or detachment. When an image is taken from a frontal angle, it displays involvement, but when an image is taken from an oblique angle, it shows detachment (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 148). Power relations

are categorized in three levels, which are the viewer power, equality and the represented participant power. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 148) state that low angle images show represented participant power, eye-level angle images have equality between the viewer and the image, and high angle presents viewer power. These matters thus demonstrate the interactive meanings of subjective attitudes in multimodal discourse analysis.

Analysis of written discourse is as vital as the analysis of any other element of multimodality. Word choices, sentences, meanings and cohesion are interesting aspects to take part in an analysis. Cohesion distinguishes written and spoken discourse from a random list of sentences. Cohesive devices are conjunction, reference, substitution and ellipses that create grammatical cohesion between sentences (Jones, 2012, p. 50). These devices have distinct features. As Jones (2012, p. 50-51) determines that conjunctions are used to bind clauses together by using a variety of connecting words, references use words that allude to terms people have already used in the text, substitution uses other words instead of pronouns to refer to an antecedent that has either already existed or will appear later, and the removal of a noun, verb, or phrase with the understanding that it is understood out of the linguistic context is known as ellipsis.

Multimodal discourse analysis faces the challenges of interdisciplinary research. O'Halloran (2021, p. 250) has drawn attention to the fact that the creation of theories and frameworks for semiotic resources other than language, modelling of social semiotic process, and the interpretation of the complicated semantic space within and across multimodal phenomena are the main challenges of MDA. The meaning systems that establish the "reality" of culture are known as the semiotic resources (O'Halloran, 2021, p. 249). Other approaches could so explore multidimensional complexity better than the multimodal analysis itself. Therefore, interdisciplinary research that seeks to solve similar issues has become common. "From 'an age of disciplines, each having its own domain, its own concept of theory, and its own body of method', the twentieth century has appeared as an 'age of themes' aimed at solving particular problems" (O'Halloran, 2021, p. 250).

2.2. Colour theory

Colours are part of people's everyday life. Because people are sensory-driven and intellectual animals, who get a huge amount of information about the world around them through their eyes,

colours play a crucial role in everyone's daily lives (Hanson, 2017, p. 3). Colours can affect mood and performance, for example, warm colours stimulate happiness and energy, and some colours increase attentional levels. In addition, colours dominate fashion aspects such as trends, and through colour symbolism, art, national flags and branding take on meaning. Thus, the concept of colour is viewed commonly as a property of light and materials (Agoston, 2013, p. 5). Colour theory encompasses multiple definitions and concepts, but it is usually based on three basic categories, which according to Color Matters website (2024), are the colour wheel, colour harmony and the context of how colours are used. On the other hand, colour theory explains how and why people perceive colours, how they influence emotions and thoughts, and the messages colours communicate to different kind of people (Joosten et al., 2012; De Bortoli & Maroto, 2001; Zammitto, 2005).

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002, p. 345) believe that there is no group extensive or powerful enough to uphold a collective understanding of what colours mean across society. At the same time, the global and the local ways of seeing colours live among people in complex ways. A collection of individuals dressed in black might represent mourners, priests, ninjas, Mennonites or attendees of a gallery opening (De Bortoli & Maroto, 2001, p. 4), depending on interpretations of the local or global context. Therefore, colours can have metafunctions, which can be categorized as ideational, interpersonal or textual meanings. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002, p. 347), in ideational function, colour can be employed to identify particular individuals, locations and objects, and to signify more basic concepts as well as exact classifications of people, places and objects. The interpersonal function of colour can be realized through colour acts. These acts work and are capable of being used to or for one another, such as power dressing to intimidate or impress, painting obstacles and other dangers orange to warn of impending dangers, or even subduing someone (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 348). The textual function then operates to help create coherence in texts. As Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002, p. 349) prove that while separating several departments from one another, the diverse colours of doors and other elements also serve to bring these departments together and create consistency.

Colour value is a distinctive feature to the approach of colour theory. Thus, there are two kinds of colour value, which are an associative value and a direct value. The direct value is the colour's real physical impact to the observer, due to the way colours move towards us or away from us because of their inherent physical characteristics (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 354-355). On the other hand, the associative value is, as the name itself implies. The value happens

when people associate colours to phenomena of high emotional and symbolic value (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 355).

A lot of colours have specific associations that are formed by the local or global ways of seeing them. Lanyi (2017, p. 620-621) demonstrates that red is associated with energy, passion and power, blue is for coolness, freedom and patience, green is seen as health, wealth and naturalness and white is purity, peace and youth. There are still many other colours with a large number of associations, and because colours have different associations, various cultures have their own definitions on them. As a survey by De Bortoli and Maroto (2001, p. 8) indicates that the participants from Eastern countries connected colour purple with expensive taste, while the American respondents connected it with inexpensive. It is common that cultural beliefs influence how people perceive the meanings of colours. However, culture is not the only factor affecting the colour theory. The technology used, different psychological factors, and the state of psychical and mental health are some of the other things that influence people's perception of colour (De Bortoli & Maroto, 2001, p. 11).

Colour theory can be implemented to marketing strategies. The colour choices made by businesses affect their sales and their popularity among consumers. Budelmann et al. (2010, p. 14-15) emphasize that even the most carefully designed mark can be weakened by colour choices that are excessively old, illegible, unsophisticated and many others that ultimately would drag the brand down. It is therefore important to know and understand the different cultural meanings behind assorted colours before connecting them with a brand identity. Cultural meanings can be anything, as for example Budelmann et al. (2010, p. 16) point out that the colour green can refer to the Brazilian football team, or the environment, or it can also imply "go" as in traffic lights. Thus, it is important to learn cultural connotations of colours. Furthermore, in diverse cultures over time, the power of particular colours varies (Budelmann et al., 2010, p. 18). This may be due to trends or current changes in the world.

2.3. Brand identity

Both brand and identity are especially important concepts in studying companies. The concept of a brand can be characterized as a reputation, public image or identity that is thought of as something, which ought to be advertised or promoted (Merriam-Webster, 2024). Blackett

(2003, p. 13) has expressed a similar view of the concept of a brand, which is primarily concerned with commercial application that brand is referred to a trademark. A brand can also be viewed as a lot beyond being just a logo, name or trademark. The distinctive values of a brand define its essence and serve as an implicit contract, guaranteeing satisfaction via constant quality delivery whether the product is bought, experienced or used (Slade-Brooking, 2016, p. 12).

Nandan (2005, p. 265) reveals that brand identity comes from a company or an organization itself. Thus, it originates from the way a company, or a group of people view and identify themselves. It is the duty of the business to develop a distinctive product with unique attributes (Nandan, 2005, p. 265). In addition, the construction of brand identity is formed through several types of components. Nandan (2005, p. 266) mentions that these components are brand culture, brand vision, personality, positioning, presentations and relationships. Constructing a brand identity helps a business in numerous ways, for example as Wheeler (2017, p. 13) points out, it distinguishes a business from its rivals and aids managing how the public views it. In other words, a name of the brand and distinctive designs, for instance in products, slogans and logos make a brand identity flourish.

Wheeler (2017, p. 13) states that brand identity helps to raise awareness and comprehension of a firm and its advantages among a variety of consumers and cultural backgrounds, which communicates rare value propositions. Moreover, "brand identity is tangible and appeals to the senses. You can see it, touch it, hold it, hear it, watch it move. Brand identity fuels recognition, amplifies differentiation, and makes big ideas and meaning accessible" (Wheeler, 2017, p. 4). Therefore, brand identity can be presented in multimodal forms.

Visual and verbal aspects are important prospects of multimodality. Allen and Simmons (2003, p. 114-115) found that the graphic elements that collectively create a system for recognizing and expressing a brand are referred to as visual identity, and the "basic elements" of verbal identity aspire to distinguish a brand's language. A brand's visual identity is made up of distinct types of logos, colours, symbols and typefaces. In contrast, the "basic elements" of a brand's verbal identity are the name of the brand or product, a strapline, the use of stories, principles of tone and the naming system for sub-brands, factions and products. Simmons (2014, p. 60) states that the purpose of each of these elements is intended to illustrate the brand's uniqueness from its rivals and to develop brand loyalty, affection and awareness. Thus, the process of selecting the right elements for a brand is essential. Brands are encouraged to convey their personalities

through their innovative use of language as well as visual illustrations (Allen & Simmons, 2003, p. 125).

Verbal identity is also referred to a language identity and brand's tone of voice (Delin, 2005, p. 10). Brand's tone of voice is part of the construction of a specific brand identity, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Delin (2005, p. 2, 10) claims that tone of voice is an effort to communicate the personality or values of a brand to a variety of audiences, where distinct language styles are developed; linguistic methods can be used to both characterize and prescribe a brand's language. The tone of voice is adopted in all kinds of brand discourse, for instance in advertisements and announcements. It is referred to written language but can be used in speech such as in videos as well. Thus, brand's tone of voice is the uppermost essence of the brand in every situation where the brand uses language to communicate with audience of customers or viewers.

Another view of brand identity is presented by He et al. (2016), who specify that while early research defines brand identity as an internal construct that embodies what managers of organizations want the brand to be, more recent research conceptualizes brand identity as dynamic and it arises through a variety of actors, including both customers and companies. So, brand identity can originate from the company alone, or it can be set of perceptions aligned by both consumers and the company. I accept Nandan's (2005) definition more than He et al. (2016) in relation of this thesis because it is not clear whether customers have anything to do with Waterdrop's brand identity, which leaves Nandan's definition clearer and more secure. Furthermore, self-identity of consumers is an expression of the features of brand identity. Customers are more inclined to choose a brand if they feel that it aligns with their own social or personal identity (He et al., 2016, p. 1313). Therefore, uniqueness and individuality are strongly needed when connecting consumer identity to the brand identity.

Brand identity and brand image can be considered the same or they can be defined with small distinctive differences. Both of them represent particular things within brands. Whereas a brand identity is sent from a company or a source, a brand image is only target audience or receiver focused instead (Nandan, 2004, p. 268). In other words, the image is created based on perceptions of consumers and the identity is formed within the company itself. However, the terms of brand identity and image can be connected with the consumer's identity, as explained in the previous paragraph. Brand image is created by consumers, but consumers' image of a

brand can be formed into a brand identity as well. Thus, it is the customers' actions and the company itself that can create the brand identity, not the brand image.

2.4. Online marketing on websites

In current times, online marketing is a particularly important and key matter that various brands are utilizing to gain more recognition. As Bostanshirin (2014, p. 2) points out, online marketing refers to strategies and actions used to advertise services and products and create relationships with customers digitally. Through a variety of online platforms, for instance social media and websites, brands can expand their business all around the world and reach a lot of people who could become customers or new employees or network partners (Chaffrey & Smith, 2017, p. 11-12; Niininen, 2023, p. 1). With professional and appropriate online marketing, brands can quickly gain popularity. Online marketing involves several aspects, including planning, executing, managing and the aims for the marketing. As Chaffrey and Smith (2017, p. 23) point out that with online marketing, brands' intentions are to grow sales, add value to the products, to get closer to customers, save money for instance on promotions, print and post, and most importantly, to reinforce brand values. In other words, it is known as the five S's: sell, serve, speak, save and sizzle.

Online marketing can be managed with electronic commerce. Electronic commerce, e-commerce, is understood to indicate the electronic delivery of products, services or information, and online purchasing and selling (Chaffey & Smith, 2017, p. 507). In other words, it can be online transactions and non-financial transactions between organizations and customers as well as between organizations and any third parties. Thus, companies manage online marketing to achieve e-commerce. In addition, there are some key online areas, where companies create the best user experience and have continuing content creation and optimization of their products on their websites.

Websites are multi-semiotic and at the same time multi-channel documents (Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 171), which makes them part of multimodal texts. Information is presented in multimodal texts in a number of ways, such as in written language, visual pictures, design components and other semiotic resources (Serafini, 2010, p. 87). These kinds of intricate, multimodal documents depend heavily on visual design to organize meanings both within and

outside of the page and give analysts a logical "way in" to the information (Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 171). Written language and visual images are controlled distinct ways in multimodal texts. Serafini (2010, p. 87) determines that the logic of time or temporal sequence regulates written text, while the logic of simultaneity, structured arrangements, and spatiality regulate visual images. As multimodal texts, websites play a role in online marketing to persuade people. So, the role of websites is to represent the provided products or services. In online marketing, the multimodal texts gather together to combine harmony that aims to realize unitary coordination.

Website as a genre is one of the digital genres online. While genre is an important tool for classifying the many literature and cultural forms, genre is much more than that, as it actively creates and shapes our understanding of the world (Frow, 2015). There are different varieties of websites, such as for advertising, blogging, shopping, streaming, social media matters and so on purposes. Since there are many various types of websites, Engholm and Salamon (2004, p. 80) have expressed a view that a conceptual and cognitive framework is based on a common norms and conventions among both parties of senders and recipients, which is set up by expectations. The genre characteristics of a website are thus developed by the social and commercial interactions between a substantial number of people. As the term "genre" is associated with cultural aspects, websites are generated, according to Engholm and Salamon (2004, p. 80-81), through cultural views of textual content, layout, navigational elements, graphics, the use of static and dynamic images as well as range of colours.

Websites present challenges and opportunities in relation to online marketing. Bostanshirin (2014, p. 5) discovered that advantages of online marketing include empowering effect, elimination of geographic barriers, 24/7 availability, cost-effectivity, trackability and personalization, but the challenges include integrity problems, lack of face-to-face contact, lack of trust, security and privacy. Empowering effect means that online marketing is available to everyone who needs and wants it. Due to enormous resources required, small businesses may not be able to afford to participate in national and international marketing promotions, however the internet has provided them with access to exceptional possibilities (Poon & Jevons, 1997, p. 1). Moreover, security and privacy are a challenge because internet is full of hackers and online consumers' information data can be taken without their knowledge. Bostanshirin (2014, p. 7) has drawn attention to the fact that the idea that customers have a choice over how their information is utilized once their data has been obtained by the specific online cite is the matter of choice and consent.

2.5. Previous research on brand identity on websites

Brand identity is a concept that is widely studied among disciplines. However, after searching for suitable previous research on brand identity on websites, I came to a conclusion that when researchers choose to analyse an online platform, websites are usually not the first choice. Therefore, in modern times it seems more interesting to choose social media as a platform, where companies form their brand identity through their social media behaviours. For the previous research section, I have found three interesting studies. One study is by Nørgaard 2023, the second is by Mafofo and Banda 2015, and the third is by Florek et al. 2006.

Nørgaard's study examines the new brand image of the Danish energy company Ørsted on its website. The method of the study is multimodal critical discourse analysis. The main findings of the study focus around three different discourses, which are corporate profits discourse, New Nordic discourse and sustainability discourse. Nørgaard (2023, p. 660, 676) found that the new brand image (the new green identity) strategically foregrounds the sustainability discourse enhanced by a dash of the New Nordic aesthetics, illustrating that corporate interests are reflected in the discursive choices made, while profits and the less sustainable aspects of Ørsted's operations are discursively relegated to the background.

Mafofo and Banda (2015) study the ways in which selected South African universities have redesigned their identities on their website homepages by appealing to a variety of domestic and foreign clients by utilizing verbal and visual semiotics. They used multimodal discourse analysis as the method in their study. The main findings show that the homepages used architectural landscapes, historical, global and transformational discourses, and cultural semiotic artifacts to create distinct brand identities, which in turn these identities transformed the universities from apartheid-era educational structures into equal opportunity establishments (Mafofo & Banda, 2015, p. 417). Thus, the multi-semiotic choices (font, images and so on) contributed to the creation of competitive, attractive, differentiated and powerful university brand identities.

Florek et al. (2006) investigate how New Zealand city administrations use websites to engage in place branding initiatives to communicate and thus aid the creation of place brand identity. The researchers have used a literature review and a content analysis as their method. The main results of the study have been categorised into four different outcomes, which are brand design, brand behaviour, brand communication and unique features of the website. While brand design

elements were the most diverse, brand communication features were the most frequent, slightly more than the brand behaviour tool (Florek et al., 2006, p. 292). A two-way approach to brand communication was found to be a common thing to integrate into websites. There were also results pointing to negative views of external links on the websites that the links confuse rather than confirm the place brand identity.

As can be seen, these previous research articles on analysing websites show that websites have been studied in different ways for many years. In addition, these chosen articles use multimodal discourse analysis or content analysis. Since websites can have a lot of different multimodal choices, it is prominent that all websites are unique in their own ways, such as font styles, colour palettes and so on. It can be a reason many researchers have studied and study websites. Moreover, the previous studies presented above help one to understand the relevance of this present study.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

In this section, I introduce the present study, which consists of the aims, research questions and data and methods of the analysis. I chose the brand Waterdrop because it is a relatively new one. I focus on brand identity because I have been interested in the concept of identity for a long time and I want to explore how modern brands construct their brand identities through the medium of website platforms.

3.1. Aim and research questions

The aim of the study is to find out what kind of brand identity the company constructs through their official European Waterdrop website. In addition, I am aiming to find out how Waterdrop uses colours in relation to its brand identity. To explore this further, I am going to analyse colours and their use in the chosen data and how the colours help to convey possible associations and meanings behind them. I have formulated two research questions for the study, and they are as follows:

1. How is brand identity constructed multimodally on Waterdrop's website?

2. How does the Waterdrop website apply colours when establishing its brand identity?

The first question means that I am going to analyse the use of multimodal resources in the discursive construction of brand identity, and to discover what kind of brand identity Waterdrop constructs from those resources. The second question conveys the importance of colours when establishing brand identity. Since different colours can have different associations and cultural meanings, I am interested in studying colour choices in this study. As previously mentioned in the theoretical background section, colours as well as other semiotic resources contribute to the meaning making.

3.2. Data and data collection

The data for the analysis was collected from the brand's official European website (https://eu.waterdrop.com/) on December 14th 2023 and January 24th 2024. I noticed that the website has been changing small things ever since I started doing my research, which is why I collected data on two different dates. Since the website remained mainly the same between these dates, it is acceptable to have one data set from two different dates in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic in question. I used a screenshot tool to take ten (10) screenshots from the Waterdrop website. I used a screenshot tool by Microsoft Windows 10, which made it easy to take the data and insert it to the analysis section. I divided the data into three categories, which are the main page, specific product pages and ingredients page. Anytime we talk about data, analysis of some kind has already taken place, and there are still other stages of analysis that need to be performed (Norris, 2019, p. 90), which made me choose these three categories because they initiated my attention for analysis.

The main page (https://eu.waterdrop.com/) briefly introduces Waterdrop products, feedback from people and customers, and a club/subscription possibility. As a whole, the product pages include all the information about the products, and the ingredients page inform the reader about the benefits and origins of the ingredients. Table 1 displays the data collection, dates and links to the sections of the website from which I have taken the screenshots.

TABLE 1 Data collection

Category	Website link	Date
Main page	https://eu.waterdrop.com/	14.12.2023 24.01.2024
Product Microenergy Taster Pack	https://eu.waterdrop.com/products/microenergy-tasterpack?_pos=1&_sid=ba7c879f9&_ss=r?variant=39878826918006	14.12.2023
Product Kids Glass Water Bottle	https://eu.waterdrop.com/products/kids-glass-water-bottle?_pos=2&_psq=kids&_ss=e&_v=1.0%3Fvariant%3D46378426728796&variant=46378426728796	14.12.2023
Product Koko Pina microdrink	https://eu.waterdrop.com/products/koko-pina?_pos=1&_psq=koko&_ss=e&_v=1.0?variant=46893931004252	14.12.2023

Product Ice Tea Blueberry	https://eu.waterdrop.com/products/ice-tea-blueberry?variant=46684305064284	24.01.2024
Ingredients page	https://eu.waterdrop.com/pages/ingredients	14.12.2023 24.01.2024

I have included different types of screenshots containing parts of the selected website pages, such as the top of the page, and only images without context. I chose to do this because I wanted to provide a diverse set of data for the analysis section, including pictures with context, such as text beside them, and images without context, to see if that would affect the analysis results. Since the data were taken as screenshots, I consider them as images. Even though two of the screenshots have text only, I decided to take screenshots of them as well and not to write them down myself to keep the data consistent.

There were some limitations to the data collection. I could not include everything that I found interesting or useful for this thesis, as this study would have become overly long. Some of the screenshots I took could not be found in their exact format on the website or the links no longer existed after the data collection. Regarding the research ethics of the study, I contacted the Waterdrop company by email to ask a permission to use their website and pictures as data for my study, and they were happy to grant the permission.

3.3. Methods of analysis

For the analysis, I am drawing on the method of multimodal discourse analysis by Kress (2012). I have chosen this analysis because the different modes play specific parts, which are essential in multimodal discourse analysis. As Kress (2012, p. 39) reveals, every mode has a distinct function such as writing tells, colour frames and highlights, image shows, and font and layout all contribute to the compositional arrangements. I use visual grammar as one analytical approach to multimodal discourse analysis. The analysis of each screenshot begins with an analysis of the language and word choices. When the screenshots contain a visual presentation of something, I then use visual grammar to analyse the angles, shot distances and their meaning. Lastly, in each analysis part, I analyse the colour choices in the screenshots and the possible meanings behind each of them.

I also apply insights from colour theory, which include colour associations by Lanyi (2017). Colour associations are the possible meanings behind each colour. I chose colour theory because, as Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002, p. 351) note, colour mode characterizes the multimodality era because it freely combines with other modes. Colour theory can be used as a method because it adds flexibility to the analysis of multimodal modes. Using colour theory, I examine how brand identity is constructed through the colour design and its use on the website. In other words, I am going to find out how the colours contribute to Waterdrop's brand identity or help to convey its meanings.

4. ANALYSIS

The analysis focuses on the screenshots taken from the Waterdrop's official European website. There are ten (10) screenshots in total, and not all of them are full webpage screenshots, but specific elements used on the main page, chosen product pages and ingredients page. In this analysis section, I analyse the different multimodal elements presented in the data. Thus, the analysis section is divided into three categories, which are the main page, specific product pages and the ingredients page.

4.1. Main page

The first screenshot of the analysis (Figure 1) shows the beginning of the main page of the official European Waterdrop website. At the time of taking the screenshot (24.1.2024), the main page had a video on it, which Figure 1 displays as a still picture. At first glance, the top part of the main page appears quite simple and inviting. The screenshot does not show the full page, which excludes some introductions to the products, subscription and community/customer feedback and pictures. The page uses subtle colours; white as the base colour, black as the text colour (or vice versa on darker backgrounds), and the notification section at the top is light green.
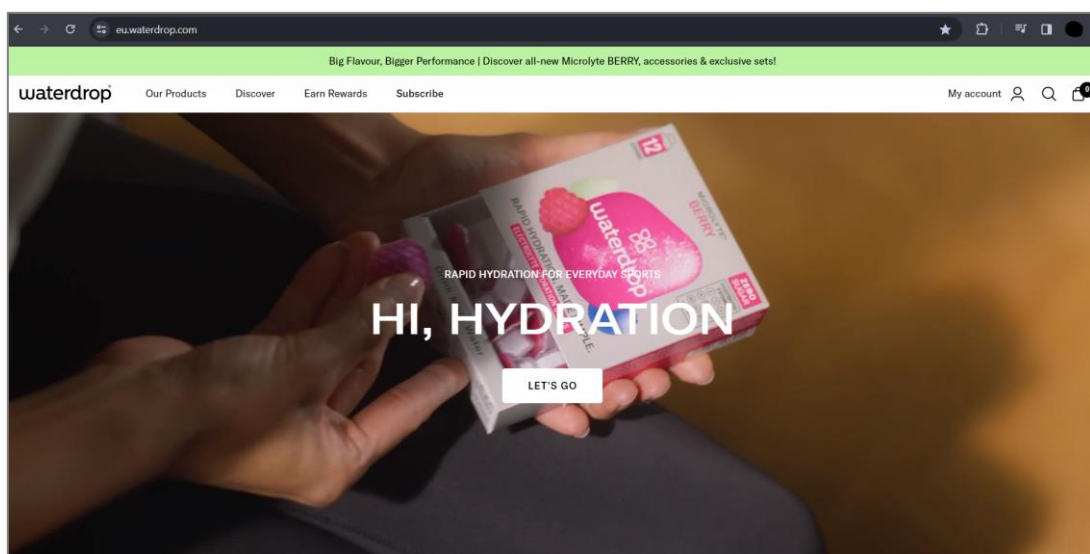

FIGURE 1 Start of the main page. Retrieved 24.01.2024 from https://eu.waterdrop.com/

In this way, Figure 1 has a colour and language metafunction of textual function because the colours on the main page help to keep visual cohesion and promote information value, salience and framing. Salience refers to the website elements that stand out the most and the graphic elements that join or divide packages of material on a website are referred to framing (Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 187). The still picture of the video uses great colour choices that highlight the product more than the person or the background environment. This can be seen in the subtle mix of colours yellow and brown in the background, but the Waterdrop product has a vibrant pink colour that pops out from the screen to the viewer as well as the white colour, which attracts attention away from the darker background.

Furthermore, the main sections at the top part of the main page are well-thought out, as just one to two words, "our products", "discover", "earn rewards" and "subscribe", even before they are opened, can be informative to the reader. They are also in simple noun and verb forms, and in describing Waterdrop products, the company uses "our products", which emphasizes the company as a whole with the pronoun "our". In the sentence "Hi hydration", there is a rhythm to it and a word play of alliteration. It immediately grabs the attention of visitors with the large letters. The word choice of "rapid" in the sentence "rapid hydration for everyday sports", influences the viewer to believe that Waterdrop is a way to get fast hydration into their body. Overall, the start of the main page is simple in structure and inviting in appearance.
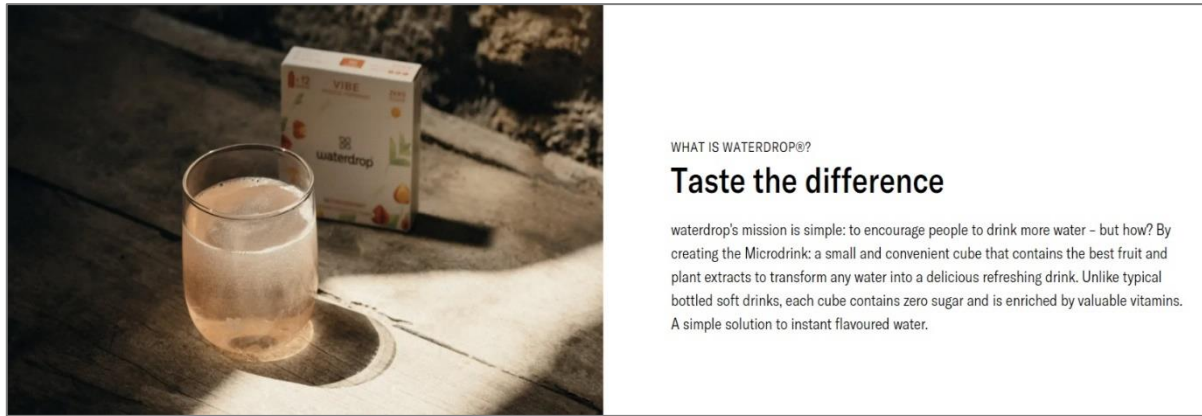
Figure 2 is a screenshot of the instructions for using Waterdrop microdrink cubes. The first sentence, "tasty hydration, made simple", is a catch phrase that neatly describes Waterdrop's core objective. Waterdrop is providing delicious flavours and hydration in a simple method. As the screenshot guides, one needs a cup or a bottle of water, then they need to add the chosen Waterdrop microdrink cube to the water, wait for it to dissolve into the water, and finally they have flavoured water ready to enjoy. This conveys the fact that the guide is really made in a simple way that no one can misinterpret. In addition, the icons are very easy to understand, and each of them relates to the context that is clearly communicated to the reader. Each part is described in a single sentence, as a result of which the entire process takes only three steps, which sounds an extremely easy and quick operation.

FIGURE 2 How to use Waterdrop, main page. Retrieved 14.12.2023 from https://eu.waterdrop.com/

The company has also played with words because the first two steps combined lead to the name Waterdrop (water + drop). Furthermore, if one combines the three words under the icons, they get "Waterdrop enjoy". This demonstrates clever marketing communication tactics. The instruction presents the Waterdrop as "maximum drinking pleasure". This communicates to the reader that it is guaranteed to enjoy the Waterdrop cubes because it is not the minimum, average or tolerable, but the highest of the statements. The word of the last step "enjoy" with the word "pleasure", suggest that Waterdrop is good because the words are associated with positive feelings. When the company instructs on using the cubes, they make use of imperative verb forms such as "fill", "allow" and "enjoy". Using icons and these imperative verbs, the screenshot can be identified as a typical instruction genre. Commonly instructions present the material to be learned and also to understand and carry out an action, which in this case is the same goal. With a simple method and convincing words, Waterdrop appears to be palatable and functional.

The third screenshot, Figure 3, briefly explains what Waterdrop is. The reader again encounters the word "simple" at the beginning and end of the text, affirming the simplicity of Waterdrop. The language is very descriptive because almost every word has something to describe, for example "small and convenient cube, the best fruit and plant extracts, delicious refreshing drink and valuable vitamins". In this way, Waterdrop builds positive perceptions of its products from facts and descriptive adjectives. It brings out a straightforward attitude by presenting the key element of the brand in a simple, but effective way. Moreover, a superlative form of the word "good" is used to convince the reader that the "fruit and plant extracts" are the best that Waterdrop uses and offers to its customers.

FIGURE 3 What is Waterdrop, main page. Retrieved 14.12.2023 from https://eu.waterdrop.com/

The text in Figure 3 is the brand's mission statement because it starts with the word "mission", and it passes the criteria of the mission statement. Mission statement helps to formulate brand identity. According to Cochran et al. (2008, p. 27), mission statement is a clear and effective statement of the company's business, its aims and how it intends to accomplish its goals. Waterdrop has presented the company's business as "a simple solution to instant flavoured water". with the objective of "encourage people to drink more water". Waterdrop will then reach its goal by "creating the Microdrink". On the other hand, the text can serve as a brand story. The question "What is Waterdrop?" initiates the story, followed by a clear and simple description of the company's ideas.

I will now use visual grammar to analyse the picture. The picture is a medium close shot because the picture is taken from far enough away, but the viewer is still able to read the package text. A medium close shot implies social distance because it is between the intimate and impersonal distances (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 148). The picture is taken from a high angle, which suggest viewer power. The detachment of the picture is also displayed slightly as an oblique angle. The perspective of the picture in Figure 3 is therefore seen as subjective. Subjectivity signifies that only from a specific point of view the viewer is able to see what is only visible to them (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 130).

The colours in Figure 3 are subtle. They are really close to the earthy elements and continues to give an impression of sustainability because the picture is using the Waterdrop's own drinking glass. As the background is a mix of brown and grey colours, Lanyi (2017, p. 621) points out that the colour brown is associated with feelings such as comfort, stability, credibility and strength, and colour grey is associated with security and reliability. Therefore, the picture of the Waterdrop products indirectly conveys that people are in a safe place and the product

itself is safe to use. The background of the picture itself represents being outdoors. The product is shot in a wooden and rocky environment. This could depict that Waterdrop is close to earth. The brand is constructing its brand identity through credibility, which can be conveyed through various colour and environmental choices.

The screenshot in Figure 4 is a quote from a Financial Times statement on Waterdrop. As can be seen, they have used very descriptive words when speaking positively about Waterdrop, which can be interpreted as an example of endorsement. With a huge company acknowledging Waterdrop, the brand comes across trustworthy and a huge player among the industry thanks to their innovative products.

FIGURE 4 A quote by Financial Times, main page. Retrieved 14.12.2023 from https://eu.waterdrop.com/

Through such comparisons to other companies, the brand identity of Waterdrop builds up to be confident and powerful one. It also underlines the brand's sustainability with the word "approach". Anyone who is familiar with Waterdrop knows that the Waterdrop's approach is to be sustainable. Many beverage giants are not seen sustainable. Waterdrop is sugarless, has no preservatives and contains valuable vitamins in just one small microdrink cube, which is something that is not found in beverage drinks such as Pepsi and Coca-Cola. Since Financial Times does not mention any specific names, their statement communicates that Waterdrop is not trying to damage one specific beverage drink, but the entire beverage industry as a whole. Brand identity can be constructed with credibility on the basis of what other companies have commented about Waterdrop.

In connection with Figure 4, I would like to share my assumptions based on my personal knowledge of the brand. Figure 4 can be examined from of a future perspective. Waterdrop's approach allows other companies to learn from it and build a more sustainable future. In other words, the use of plastic bottles or cans in beverages are bad and harmful to the environment,

which could be changed for the better if packaging choices were changed as well. In this way, when "disrupting the core model of the beverage giants", Waterdrop can take a leading and inspiring role in influencing the world and what people put into their bodies. In this context, brand identity gives the impression of seriousness, surprise and encouragement.

4.2. Product pages

This section of the analysis part includes screenshots of specific product pages. The screenshots are of the Iced Tea Blueberry Waterdrop, Kids Glass Water Bottle, Koko Pina Waterdrop and Microenergy Taster Pack. I chose these products because I wanted to bring different aspects to the analysis, as each product is not aimed at just one group of people or for one cause, for instance the Microenergy pack is for those who want energy, the kids glass water bottle is for children and so on. So, I took the screenshots to demonstrate the range of Waterdrop products, with images of context or without context.

Figure 5 was taken from the Waterdrop product page of Iced Tea Blueberry. The picture shows five people smiling at each other, laughing and enjoying themselves on the beach. I am going to do visual grammar-based analysis in the following steps. Since none of the participants are looking at the viewer, but only themselves in the picture, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 119), the picture serves as an offer for this reason. The picture offers the portrayed participants to the observer as thought-provoking objects and information, impersonally much like specimens in a case (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 119). The picture presents the participants as if no one is looking at them, when in reality it is the observer who is watching them closely.

Different types of facial signals are means to convey and communicate various types of messages. The participants in the picture are smiling and seem joyful. As Pantic and Bartlett (2007, p. 378) determine, exchanging smiles are regulators, conversational mediators between people, and joy is an affective mood. Through these elements, the viewer of the image can be affected by these people and then feel positive feelings themselves as well. It can indicate that because of Waterdrop, the people in the image have positive feelings and therefore are smiling and showing joy. In this way, Waterdrop is viewed as enjoyable and giving people a positive mood.

FIGURE 5 Promoting Ice Tea Blueberry, product page. Retrieved 24.01.2024 from
https://eu.waterdrop.com/products/ice-tea-blueberry?variant=46684305064284

Figure 5 is taken from a medium long shot because it displays the full figures of the picture participants. This length conveys the social distance between the participants of the picture and the viewer. It is a distance, where social and business interactions are more impersonal and formal in nature (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 125). The angle of the picture is slightly more oblique than frontal angle, as the photographer is not aligned with the subjects in the picture. This indicates a detachment of the viewer, suggesting that the viewer is not involved in the picture's world. Furthermore, power relations are not explicit in the image because it was taken from an eye-level angle. This angle of view shows equality between the participants and the viewer.

The participants in the picture are displaying Waterdrop products, which are clearly visible. The products in question are water bottles, in which Waterdrop cubes have presumably been dissolved. The water in the bottles is coloured, which indicates this phenomenon. The picture indirectly illustrates the sustainability and reusability of Waterdrop by using Waterdrop's own water bottles. It seems logical that Waterdrop would use its own products in conjunction with other advertised goods rather than forcing the products too close to the viewer's face in an attempt to avoid overselling or underselling.

The colours of the picture were carefully selected in the context of being at the beach. The colours are warm, which according to Zammitto (2005, p. 4), implies contact with the environment with a high temperature impression. The clothes of the people are mostly light in

colour and express occasional vibrant elements, such as the patterned shirts of the two people. The colours of the background, water and sand are roughly the same brightness, which makes them coherent. Even though the colours in the picture differ to some extent, such as the dark rocky background and the light sand, the picture still gives a sense of cohesion and happiness. Happiness comes from the matter that the colours seem to match each person's style, as can be seen from the smiling faces.

Figure 6 shows a promotional text from the Waterdrop's product Kids Glass Water Bottle. The title "1, 2, 3, 4 – let's find out a little more!", is a word play and a fun way to get people's attention. In this way it shows the playful side of the brand from the more professional one. It also displays the company's creativity in how words are used when targeting products at different age groups. The first sentence also has a metaphor of "child's play", which means that something is easily accomplished. In this context, it can be considered as "Kids Glass Bottle makes drinking very easy". Such use of metaphor is subtle and rare in this promotional context because Waterdrop does not rely on metaphors to get people's attention and customers to buy the products. Waterdrop can be convincing in other ways, such as the use of descriptive adjectives, where it has been successful.

FIGURE 6 Promoting Kids Glass Water Bottle, product page. Retrieved 14.12.2023 from
https://eu.waterdrop.com/products/kids-glass-water-
bottle?_pos=2&_psq=kids&_ss=e&_v=1.0%3Fvariant%3D46378426728796&variant=46378426728796

The way the product is promoted through the text allows the reader to imagine what kind of product it is, without seeing the product itself. There are used persuasive ways of using language for example "not only, but also" and "thanks to". As it is a promotional text, Waterdrop utilizes descriptive language to persuade people to buy the products. Once more, in this screenshot, nouns are preceded by adjectives, for instance "comfortable mouthpiece, extremely tight valve, perfect drinking experience and high-quality drinking bottle". The second-person pronoun

"you" offers the reader a more personalized message. It implies that the product is made directly for the reader.

The interactive meaning of Figure 6 has an objective attitude, which is considered to be knowledge orientation. Objectivity stands for everything that is necessary to know about the existing matter (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 130). The text is written from the perspective of what the viewer needs to know about the Kids Glass Water Bottle, and does not mention any extra unnecessary things. Even if it is a promotional text for a product page, it does not include information about the price, colour choices of the bottle or other things that can be found in other sections of that page. This demonstrates Waterdrop's organizational skills in putting the required information in the necessary places and in a concise manner.

In the following screenshot, Figure 7, a happy woman is pictured drinking a Waterdrop microdrink called Koko Pina, which is consumed from Waterdrop's own drinking bottle. Lanyi (2017, p. 620) has pointed out a principle that makes people believe, what you see is what you get, in other words WYSIWYG principle. Waterdrop has adopted this mentioned principle in Figure 7 and other promotional pictures under certain product pages (also in Figures 5 and 8). The brand wants the viewers to believe that they can be happy when drinking Waterdrop microdrinks. The picture connects Waterdrop with positive feelings because the woman smiles while drinking.

FIGURE 7 Happy woman drinking Koko Pina, product page. Retrieved 14.12.2023 from https://eu.waterdrop.com/products/koko-pina?variant=46893931004252

Gaze at the viewer is missing from the picture. The woman's eyes are closed, which suggests that the picture serves as an offer rather than a demand. Thus, the picture indirectly addresses

the viewer. In this context, the viewer is the subject, and the picture participant is the object, creating a sense of disengagement. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 120) have drawn attention to the fact that the portrayed participant must play the part that they are not being watched, giving the observer the impression that they are unaware that the participant is being observed. The picture presentation thus forms an illusion around the phenomenon.

Figure 7 differs from the interactive meanings of the other screenshots. Firstly, the picture is taken from a close shot because it displays the head and shoulders of the subject. It indicates an intimate and personal relationship, which means as Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 124) explain that one is able to grip or hold the other person. This time, the picture has a sense of involvement, as the picture was taken from a frontal angle. Involvement is depicted as part of our world and our involvement in it, which can be seen as the viewer being part of the picture's world or the other way around. Figure 7 proves equality between the viewer and the picture participant, as it is taken from the eye-level angle.

The colours used in the screenshot are bright, vibrant and lively, but still support an inviting perspective and connect to the mood of the picture. In Figure 7, the main colours are blue and yellow. These colours have mainly positive associations to them. According to Lanyi (2017, p. 620), yellow is related with moods of happiness and joy, and the colour blue is related to peace, freedom and trustworthiness. These colour associations allow Waterdrop to construct its brand identity around colours that evoke positive feelings in people, which results in trusting the brand and buying Waterdrop products.

Figure 8 shows a screenshot of a promotion of the Microenergy Taster Pack. The "at home and on the go" line suggests that Waterdrop cubes can be used anywhere and anytime. The cubes can be used for no particular reason as well, as the line expresses: "Whether it's a pick-me-up in the morning or an energy boost before a long night…". This whole subclause is a good illustration of what the Waterdrop product is all about. The line is thus straightforward, and it concludes the purpose of the Microenergy cubes, which come in three flavours. The phrase "you've got the power!", explicitly states that the viewer or the customer has the power, for instance to purchase the product or to gain the power from consuming the product. The effect is greater when the personal pronoun "you" is applied. If the brand had used the personal pronoun "we", it would have changed the meaning of the catch phrase. The pronoun is used a total of three times, which makes a powerful impact on the reader. It makes Waterdrop more approachable.
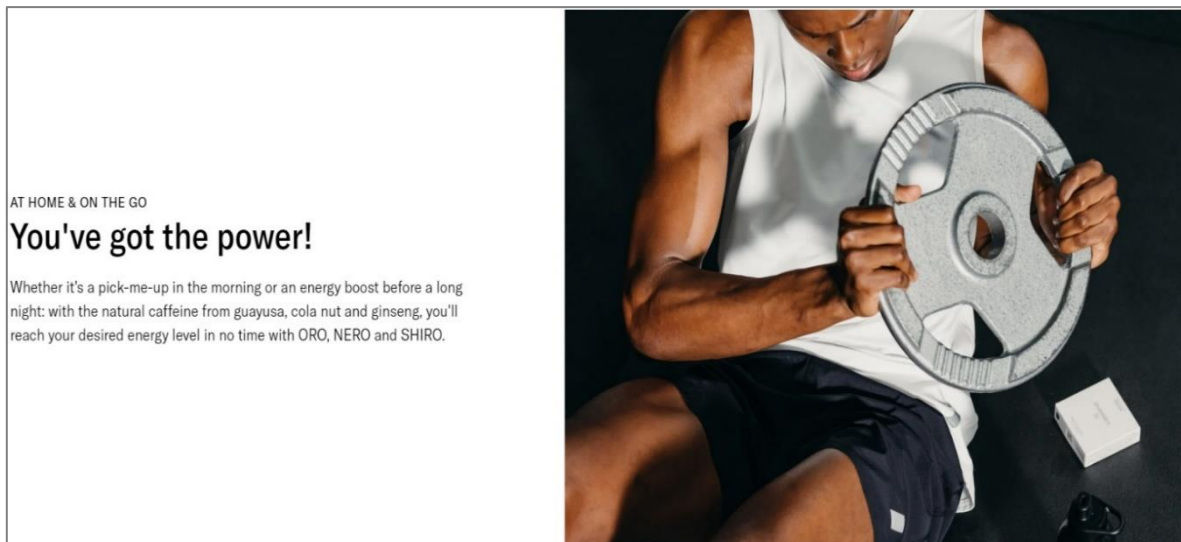
FIGURE 8 Promoting Microenergy Taster Pack, product page. Retrieved 14.12.2023 from
https://eu.waterdrop.com/products/microenergy-
tasterpack?_pos=1&_sid=ba7c879f9&_ss=r?variant=39878826918006

The participant in Figure 8 has the same gaze as the other picture participants in the data screenshots. The gaze is absent at the viewer, which makes it an offer. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 120) emphasize that a barrier, either actual or imagined, is placed between the viewer and the participant who is being portrayed. This initiates a sense of disengagement. This interactive meaning is to make contact with the person by requesting something other than what a demanding gaze at the viewer might do otherwise. In this context, the offer is to raise energy levels high enough to get the power to exercise, or it can be the power of the mind, as the Microenergy product can be used in any situation.

In the social distance of the picture, impersonal business is occurring. This social distance is achieved with a medium shot because the picture cuts off the participant at the knees. The oblique angle of the picture builds detachment between the viewer and the participant. Moreover, the high angle indicates a viewer power. The picture participant being portrayed is viewed through the lens of power (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 140). This can create an illusion that the viewer could be the participant's gym coach or personal trainer, who has a business relationship with the participant and has a higher power in that relationship, for example the participant listens to what the trainer needs him to do and so on.

The screenshot picture of the man working out differs in terms of colours from the rest of the screenshot data. In this case, the main and focused colours are black and white. These colours have associations of, white as cleanliness and youth, and black as power, elegance and mystery

(Lanyi, 2017, p. 621). The colour black connects with the text part as an instrument of power. In this one, Waterdrop has considered the connection between text and colours, even though not everyone would notice it at the very first glance. The dark background colour emphasizes the Waterdrop package better as well, which makes it easier to notice.

4.3. Ingredients page

Figure 9 is from the start of the ingredients page. The website maintains its base colour of white with black text, and then when there is a picture of darker background, the text is white. The background of the presented heading picture shown is subtle, but the main parts of the picture are well highlighted. In other words, it has a pop of colour when otherwise it is basic. The highlighted colours of the ingredients are red and green, which may be linked to the fact that this page is supposed to have an ingredients list because these notable colours convey so. The heading also takes advantage of indirect marketing, as the brand's drinking glass and two microdrink cubes are in the middle. When companies promote without specifically attempting to sell products or services, it is known as indirect marketing.
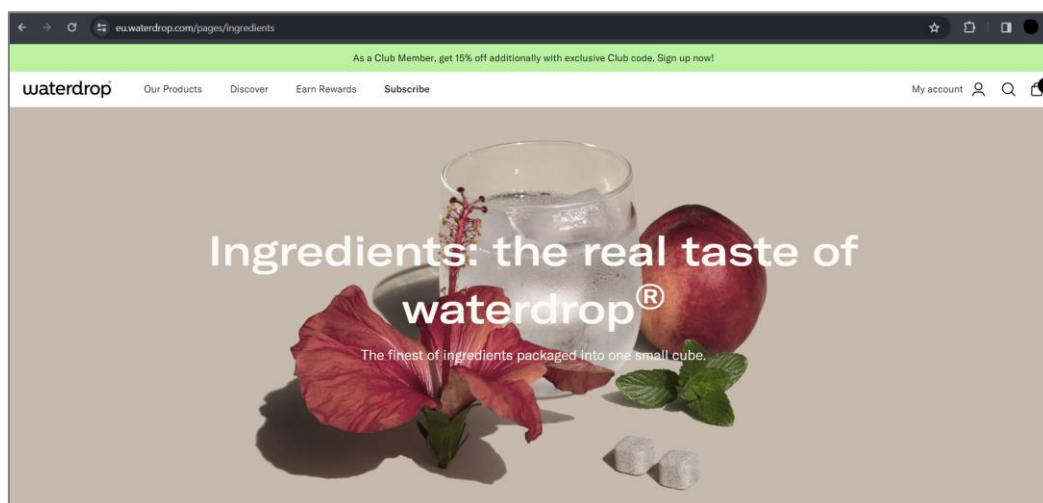

FIGURE 9 Start of the ingredients page. Retrieved 24.01.2024 from https://eu.waterdrop.com/pages/ingredients

The brand has emphasized the importance of ingredients in the page heading text. The brand announces that the ingredients in cube products are "the real taste of Waterdrop". Consequently, the things that set the brand apart and make Waterdrop products well-known to consumers are the ingredients. The use of an adjective in the superlative form is something that the brand

seems to be occasionally utilizing. In Figure 9, the superlative form of the adjective "fine" is used as "the finest". This form guarantees the impact of the word conveyed to the reader, which can imply to the high quality of Waterdrop. Additionally, with the phrase "the finest of ingredients packaged into one small cube", Waterdrop is undirectly praising itself for this achievement of getting everything important into "just" small cubes, which also serves as a promotional statement.

The text and visual elements are interlinked. When the text mentions cubes, the picture visualises the Waterdrop cubes. Moreover, on the visual side, the picture and the text are focusing on emphasizing the ingredients. The word "ingredients" is used twice in two different phrases. Therefore, the text has a visual presensation to the chosen picture. The picture has some ingredients from the ingredients list, which are apple, mint and hibiscus. The picture would not have the same impact if the text and the visual background did not match. Therefore, the text and visual parts produce cohesion between them.

Figure 10 is the last screenshot, and it is an ingredient description from the ingredients page. The brand has listed all the ingredients used in the Waterdrop microdrink cubes, and has also provided an explanation of what the ingredients contain. The way the brand has gone about providing information about the benefits of each ingredient and some background is very professional.
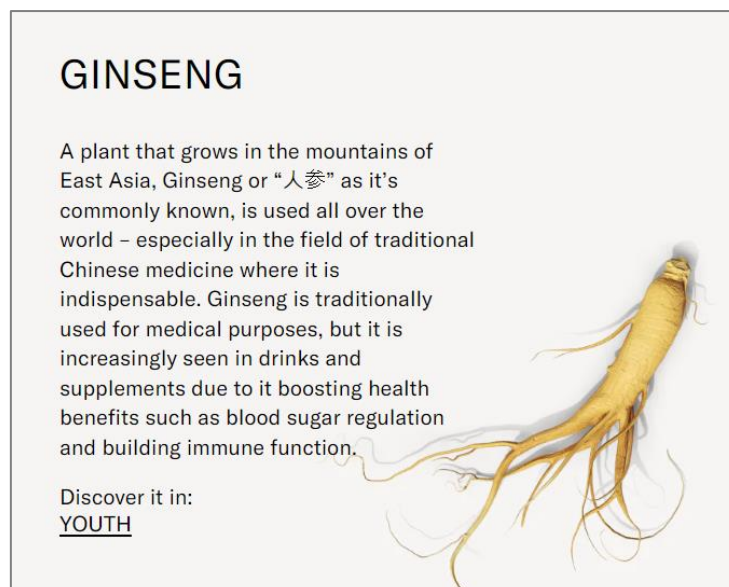

FIGURE 10 Ingredient from the ingredients list, ingredients page. Retrieved 14.12.2023 from
https://eu.waterdrop.com/pages/ingredients

A main clause, "Ginseng is traditionally used for medical purposes", displays how something completely different and beneficial can be developed from traditional ingredients. The name of the ingredient is written in large and capital letters, which makes it to stand out from the smaller informative text. The ingredient's name is also listed in a different language, which is Chinese. This emphasizes the ingredient's country of origin and the company's ability to embrace a different language for simple purposes. The microdrink name at the bottom is underlined and written in capital letters to highlight the importance of the information.

When some ingredients are unfamiliar to consumers, the brand has adopted a professional approach to present the ingredients with a visual presentation. The information on Ginseng is given concisely in two sentences, delivering the reader a sufficient understanding of the ingredient's relevance in the Waterdrop product. I was completely unfamiliar with the ingredient shown in Figure 10, which gave me as a consumer a good understanding of the ingredient's benefits and what it looks like. The brand is very smart to include a direct link to the Waterdrop product, where the ingredient can be found. So, I found that the company is a researcher, which suggests that the company has studied different ingredients to find out, which ones are beneficial and perfect for their products.

5. DISCUSSION

The discussion section reviews the main findings of the analysis from each category of pages. They are discussed in more detail, and the findings are compared to the earlier theoretical background. Using the analysis findings, I define the brand identity of Waterdrop.

In the first analysis section of the main page (4.1), Waterdrop emphasizes the word "simple" and uses a very descriptive tone when talking about the Waterdrop brand. "The best fruit and plant extracts", "valuable vitamins", "tasty hydration" and "rapid hydration" are examples of how Waterdrop uses descriptive language. The word choices have been selectively chosen, and with sections of the text consisting of one to four sentences. The colours are from earthy themes with pops of colours that are associated with positive moods and feelings such as comfort, credibility and security. Credibility is also constructed on the perceptions of another company, as the Financial Times has commented positively on the core model of the brand.

The promotional pictures on the product pages section (4.2) serve as offers, with the viewer disengaging and participating according to the angles and distances of the participants depicted. Most of the participants in the pictures are smiling, which convey joy and happiness. The sense of equality is displayed as two of the pictures are taken from an eye-level angle, but the high angle of one picture expresses the viewer power. Text and products are used to implement marketing strategies. The text applies the personal pronoun "you", "not only, but also", "thanks to" and "you've got the power". The product strategy used in the pictures are Waterdrop bottles and the advertised products. The colours are mostly vibrant, bright and colourful, which are associated with joy, peace and trustworthiness. However, one picture focuses on black and white that associate with youth and power. The screenshots consider participants of all ages.

The last section of the analysis, on the ingredients page (4.3), is a finding of an adjective superlative form "the finest". This adjective form is used to indicate the high quality of Waterdrop. There are connections between the text and the visuals, such as Waterdrop writes the word "cube" and visually displays cubes close to the text, and the visual representation of the plant Ginseng. These show cohesion between the text and visual parts. The colours used are subtle with a pop of colours, for example the heading has pops of red and green, and Ginseng is illuminating yellow. The professionalism of the brand is reflected in its ability to construct coherent and factual information about the specific content in question. The description of the Ginseng ingredient is also informative, and the company has used a different language to show

its ability to adopt languages for simple objectives and to present the original name of the ingredient.

The analysis shows that the Waterdrop brand has something for everyone, women, men and children, of all ages, who need hydration in their everyday lives. The screenshot pictures display men and women, a promotional product text implies that a product is for children, and the mission of Waterdrop does not specify a particular age group. Waterdrop is very considerate of the people, who view the brand. The company wants to leave a good, credible and professional impression through the use of descriptive and simple language. As Slade-Brooking (2016, p. 18) points out that a brand can be characterized with human characteristic, which are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Waterdrop fits the characteristics of competence because the analysis displays that Waterdrop is presented as a reliable, responsible, dependable and efficient brand. Simmons (2014, p. 55) claims that according to Siegel and Gale survey, 84% of consumers are "more likely to trust a brand that uses simple, jargon-free language". Thus, Waterdrop's tone of voice is clear and assertive that the brand is perceived as reliable through the use of language.

The Waterdrop website uses a white background with black text, which is a universal website element. The most reliable colour combination both online and offline is black text on white, which is the reason why brands use it so frequently (Lanyi, 2017, p. 620). Waterdrop seems to make conscious choices about its colour palette. The colours found on the website can be described as warm and bright varieties, often appearing in universal colour combinations. Moreover, Zammitto (2005, p. 3-4) notes that coded meanings of colours have common implications to sensations, emotions, moods, ideas and atmosphere, for instance saturated colours are related with enjoyment and fun. The analysed colours have positive associations that, through the competence characteristics, influence the viewers' emotions and views on the brand. Additionally, the colours' brightness can make the brand cooler and more visually appealing. So, the analysed pictures convey enjoyment through the presentation of well-saturated and vivid colours.

The intensity of the colourfulness changes how the item is focused on and how space is perceived (Buether, 2014, p. 7). The colourfulness of the Waterdrop products and the intended focus on different things, for instance people, are the centre of the attention. Buether (2014, p. 7) emphasizes that an abundance of colour, or more accurately, an excess of colour-coded information can be just as confusing as an insufficient amount of colour. Waterdrop has used

colours properly as not to disorient the viewers, as the brightness, warmth and colourfulness are exquisite.

Waterdrop's brand identity has a playful side where appropriate, but professional in most of the times. The word plays and metaphors showcase the playfulness, but consistent and factual information showcases the professionalism. The professionalism is also reflected in the fact that the text parts are concise, ranging from one to four sentences. Figures' pictures are taken in outdoor and indoor environments, with attention paid to the visual presentation of the brand's own bottles and drinking glasses. Businesses that are genuine in their brand desires and truthful in their company positioning do not oversell or undersell the products they provide (Budelmann et al., 2010, p. 170). The pictures each show one to three representations of the brand's products in which Waterdrop appears to do well without doing too much or too little. The brand's sustainability and eco-friendliness are displayed in the use of its own products in the promotion of microdrinks and in the clean environment of the screenshot pictures.

All in all, Waterdrop's brand identity is therefore constructed multimodally through colour choices, from positive associations of colour harmony and cohesion between text and visual sides, professionalism, credibility, reliability, eco-friendliness and a simple mindset, when describing the usability of Waterdrop and the elements of the website and its design overall.

6. CONCLUSION

Waterdrop is a brand that sells microdrinks and other merchandise related items. Waterdrop has gained popularity in recent years. People have a wide range of opinions about Waterdrop, some love it and see it beneficial, but others do not like it at all. However, I have found the Waterdrop brand remarkably interesting and the products useful. To the best of my knowledge, the brand itself has not been researched and the present thesis aimed to fill this gap.

The aim of the study was to find out what kind of brand identity Waterdrop builds on its official European website, and to try to discover how Waterdrop uses colours in relation to its brand identity. The methods of analysis were multimodal discourse analysis and colour theory. In addition, the data consisted of ten (10) screenshots taken from the Waterdrop's website. There were no videos or whole page shots in the data, as I was not interested in such material. However, such data would have been relevant for a study of this nature. The screenshots included specific elements that were chosen from three different category pages, which were the main page, chosen product pages and ingredients page.

The research questions of the study were as follows: "How is brand identity constructed multimodally on Waterdrop's website?" and "How does the Waterdrop website apply colours when establishing its brand identity?". The limitations of the study are due to the data collection. I had to selectively choose the screenshots to avoid making the study extremely long, and as the website changes from time to time, some of the material no longer exists. I considered the ethical research guidelines when I asked Waterdrop for its permission to use the website as data and I was granted the permission.

The brand has been discussed and analysed thoroughly from the perspective of Waterdrop's multimodal website. The findings of the study are that Waterdrop uses descriptive language, often emphasizes the word "simple", the pictures serve as offers to the viewer in which the viewer has either involvement or detachment, the pictures display equality or viewer power according to the angles, the superlative form of the adjective is occasionally used to demonstrate Waterdrop's high quality, and the colours are mainly associated with positive emotions such as power, happiness, stability and reliability. In addition, Waterdrop utilizes marketing strategies such as metaphors, word plays for instance alliteration, communication tactics, visualization, the personal pronoun "you", and quotes on Waterdrop from reliable sources that enhance Waterdrop's credibility.

The answer to the first research question is that the brand identity is constructed multimodally through positive colour choices based on colour harmony and cohesion between texts and visuals, people smiling, the use of environmental settings with Waterdrop's own different products, simplicity of icons and language, choices of descriptive tone, metaphors, marketing strategies and conciseness, all of which contribute to Waterdrop's brand identity in terms of professionalism, credibility, reliability eco-friendliness and simple mindset. The answer to the second research question already emerged in the first answer: the website exploits bright, warm, saturated and subtle colours when setting up the brand identity. The chosen colours are mostly associated with positive moods and feelings, which are used to demonstrate a positive and reliable brand identity.

This research study has contributed to the field of linguistic and social science studies by expanding our knowledge of modern brands and their brand identity construction through the medium of website platforms. For future applications, it would be interesting to study the videos on the website and how those bring out or diminish or enhance the brand identity of Waterdrop. Future applications of the research topic could also include something about how Waterdrop's brand identity helps to build connections with different people, for example sponsorship deals with Twitch streamers, as the brand does not directly convey that side of the brand to the viewers and customers. The next step in the research on the brand itself could be the social media perspective, or if staying to the medium of website, then the accessibility of the website, for example fonts, the navigation system and consideration of users with special needs such as partially sighted people or colour deficient users. Lastly, because of Waterdrop's innovative branding and values, I wish that other brands would take inspiration from Waterdrop.

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