

“FROM SKIN TO SOUL”

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A Case Study

of a Beauty Brand Website

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Tiivistelmä - Abstract <p>Tatcha on amerikkalainen kauneusbrändi, joka on saanut inspiraationsa japanilaisesta kulttuurista. Heidän lähestymistapansa kauneuteen ja ihonhoitoon on holistinen ja kokonaisvaltainen: itsestä huolehtiminen on välittämistä henkisestä ja fyysisestä hyvinvoinnista. Tatchan brändifilosofian mukaan on olennaista olla tietoisesti läsnä ja harmoniassa itsensä kanssa sekä kunnioittaa ja suojella luontoa. Brändin vahvat arvot ja ideologiat tekevät heistä mielenkiintoisen tutkimuskohteen diskurssintutkimuksen näkökulmasta.</p> <p>Tutkielma vastaa kysymyksiin 1) Mitä eri diskursseja voidaan tunnistaa Tatchan nettisivulta? ja 2) Miten Tatcha rakentaa multimodaalisesti brändi-identiteettinsä nettisivullaan? Kiinnostuksenkohteena on myös se, miten brändi käsittelee, esittelee ja hyödyntää suhdettaan japanilaiseen kulttuuriin ja tietotaitoon. Materiaali koostuu Tatchan englanninkielisistä nettisivuista. Aineistoa analysoitiin erityisesti multimodaalisen diskurssianalyysin näkökulmasta, mutta sitä pohjustettiin myös nettisivujen analyysin viitekehysellä sekä korpusanalyysillä.</p> <p>Tatchan nettisivuilta tunnistettiin neljä päädiskurssia multimodaalisen analyysin avulla: "Geishan salaisuudet", "Hyvinvointi", "Kestävä kehitys" sekä "Hyväntekeväisyys", joiden varaan Tatchan brändi-identiteetti rakentuu. Tutkimustuloksista käy myös ilmi, että Tatchan on minimalistinen ja holistinen luksusbrändi, jolla on vahva arvopohja. Sen brändi-identiteetti rakentuu yllä mainittujen diskurssien varaan, joiden lisäksi Tatcha esittää itsensä välittävänä ja vastuullisena brändinä, jolle tietoinen läsnäolo, vastuullisuus, välittäminen ja ympäristöystävällisyys ovat tärkeitä. Tutkielma on tapaustutkimus, joka toimii esimerkkinä bränditutkimuksesta diskurssintutkimuksen näkökulmasta.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, beauty brands are more ubiquitous than ever. The growth of the beauty industry is nothing short of astounding, as it has become a “a global brand-driven powerhouse” that supplies customers with their daily products (Jones, 2010: 1). Health and beauty were intertwined for thousands of years until the dawn of industrialization separated the two – but not every brand went down that avenue (Jones, 2010: 243-244).

Tatcha is an example of one such brand, as they combine beauty and well-being in their holistic approach to skincare. The Japanese-inspired brand was created in 2009 by Victoria Tsai, a Taiwanese American woman. It was born out of her own skin woes which led her on a journey to Japan, where she discovered harmony for both her skin and soul. Presently, the brand is a multimillion-dollar luxury beauty company with staunch ethos that has made its way into the hearts and minds of customers worldwide.

In the interest of the present study, it is worth noting that the internet has changed the landscape of marketing forever. Exploring and comparing brands has never been easier and it has made it possible for customers to engage with brands in a myriad of ways, essentially giving the customer more power and forcing the brands to change how they attempt to influence the customer (Edelman, 2010: 2). For example, the customers can also compare prices, products, and services in a rapid fashion by simply clicking or swiping (Hirt & Willmott, 2014). Digital retail has its benefits as well: s Tatcha operates mainly through e-commerce, digitization enables the brand to have the benefit of providing an efficient flow of products to their established customers across borders whilst also continuously reaching new potential audiences on a global scale (Bughin et al., 2005, as cited in Hirt & Willmott, 2014). As such, having a strong online foothold in the form of a company website is invaluable, which makes a brand’s website an alluring source of research.

I chose to focus my analysis solely on the brand’s website, because it is multifaceted enough and rich in data in its own right. Narrowing the analysis down to the website is also made reasonable due to there being no previous academic research on Tatcha as a brand. At the core of the present study are also brands and brand identities,

which are introduced and discussed in great detail in the theoretical background chapter of the study.

According to Aichner (2017), academic research regarding foreign branding is lacking. The current study hopes to breach some of that gap in research by analysing a brand that combines both foreign branding and country-of-origin in their marketing. Further, there are no academic studies on Tatcha from a discursive point of view, which makes the current study a meaningful addition to the research field of beauty brand and brand identity studies.

The central aim of the present study is to identify the types of discourses found on Tatcha's website and the brand uses those discourses to construct its brand identity multimodally. Moreover, the ways in which Tatcha is 'Japanese-inspired' are also explored and noted. First, I used Pauwels' 2012 multimodal framework for analysing websites, which was modified for the purposes of the present study to only contain the three most essential steps: preservation of first impressions and reactions, inventory of salient features and topics and in-depth analysis of content. Second, a corpus analysis tool was used to compile two corpora, from which the most frequent single-words and keywords were then extracted to inform an otherwise qualitative study. Next, I identified and subsequently discussed the types of discourses that could be found on Tatcha's website using the results of the corpus analysis as well as multimodal discourse analysis. Lastly, I presented a modified version of Kapferer's 2012 brand identity prism, containing the five facets of Tatcha's brand based on their brand website, which were further explained through numerous examples.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As an introduction to the theoretic section of the present study, the many facets of brands and brand identity are discussed. In continuation, Kapferer's brand identity prism model is also introduced and its uses and significance to the present study are explained. Next, digital marketing, websites, hypermodality and electronic commerce are discussed to lay the groundwork for the data being in the form of a website and Tatcha mainly operating through electronic commerce. Further, foreign branding is explained as 'Japaneseness' is

central to Tatcha's brand. In a similar vein, county-of-origin discourse and linguistic fetish are also explored. Discourse and discourse analysis as well as multimodal discourse analysis and Pauwels' multimodal framework for analysing websites are also defined and discussed. As an addition to the multimodal discourse analysis, the grammar of visual design is briefly explained. Lastly, previous research done on beauty brands is presented to contextualize the present study.

2.1 Brands and brand identities

There are many definitions for the word 'brand', both ancient and modern. For the purposes of the current study, it can be defined as *'a public identity conceived of as something to be marketer or promoted, a tool used to produce a brand, a class of goods identified by name as the product of a single firm or manufacturer, or a characteristic of distinctive kind'* (Merriam-Webster, accessed on 10.10.2021). Another definition for the word 'brand' is a term, sign, symbol, design or a name, or a combination of any one of these, which is used to denote and identify a specific company and its products (Hansen & Christensen, 2003: 12).

Blackett (2003: 15) explains how the widescale use of brands is also quite modern. It emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries because of the industrial revolution and all the manufacturing and mass-marketing possibilities that came with it. In other words, the industrial revolution made it possible to mass-market brands to a larger audience due to the improvements happening not only in communication but also manufacturing, which helped forge brands that the customer would learn to recognize. This led to the rise of famous brands, such as Coca-Cola, Heinz, and Kodak film together with early trademark legislation, which made it possible to legally protect any given brand and its property (Blackett, 2003: 15). Moreover, the time after the second world war proved fruitful for brands and branding with more people having access to internet and communication systems. However, for a long time the value of a company was tied to its physical infrastructure and concrete assets whereas now it is understood that the real value of a company resides in the mind of a customer (Kapferer, 2012: 2).

In addition, Blackett (2003: 20) points out that the modern world has seen a change in branding itself, as it has transformed from being consumer goods and service oriented to now encompassing many other sectors, such as industrial and non-

governmental organizations. In fact, brands can now virtually be anything from gadgets to political parties, to individual people and even churches. In addition, the role of social media cannot verily be understated in the marketing world because social media and its tools such as retweeting reach people faster than traditional global marketing campaigns. It would therefore make sense to analyse a brand's online presence, be it the company website or their social media outlets. Additionally, Wheeler (2013: 70) highlights the fact that in the era of social media, everyone has become "a player, producer, director and distributor".

Moreover, brands can profit because they have built up their brand equity, i.e., there is a bond between the brand and the customers as the customers have an emotional attachment with a given brand thanks to "brand awareness, beliefs of exclusivity and superiority" (Kapferer, 2012: 7). In other words, the mental image that a customer has of a specific brand adds more value to the brand and its products and services and these associations are ideally strong, positive, and unique (Kapferer, 2012: 7). Therefore, a brand is a name that has influenced emotional attachments and mental associations and is thus able to create lasting relationships between a customer and a brand (Kapferer, 2012: 15).

One of the functions of a brand is also to inform, and not only of what a product is and what it can do (Hansen & Christensen, 2003: 13). In addition to this, the aspect of 'brand attitude' exists, which means the brand's popularity and likability amidst its customers. Brand equity, on the other hand, is the value attached to a given brand and that value is generated by people's attitudes and therefore inherently dynamic (Hansen & Christensen, 2003: 13). Further, Hansen and Christensen (2003: 14) also argue that brands have power, because despite a product often having many of the same ingredients, the customers and consumers prefer a specific one.

According to Oswald (2015: 115), brands consist of sign systems, and they are shaped by their environments and they also supply their own part to the surrounding cultural system because there is a connection between the two, called a dialectical relationship. Cultural branding, then, is used to manage said dialect in regard to building brand equity. It effectively means that the customers interact with repeated marketing

messages and by doing so they begin to associate symbols with certain product categories, which in turn become a part of their collection of cultural codes (Oswald, 2015: 115). Further, the customers learn to read and interpret specific design cues seen on a product, such as those denoting organic and natural ingredients without having to observe the ingredient list in detail (Oswald, 2015: 115). The cultural aspect of branding is important because the marketing strategies are transcultural, i.e., they can cross across cultures and borders to reach customers. Therefore, it is crucial that every aspect of the brand, such as key messages and logo design, will be well received in different countries and that the brand is sensitive to cultural differences and connotations (Wheeler, 2013: 14).

Branding is described as a rigorous process that enhances customer loyalty and brand awareness and every moment is an opportunity for the brand to stand out by looking to the future and being willing to lead (Wheeler, 2013: 6). In this instance, branding denotes a five-step process: conducting research, clarifying strategy, designing identity, creating touchpoints, and managing assets. It is a process that is utilised to extend customer loyalty. Branding is essentially done in order to convince the customer to choose a specific brand over another (Wheeler, 2013: 6-7). In addition, Wheeler (2013: 7) suggests that branding is essential when there is a new company, a new product, a name change, a brand revitalization, a brand identity revitalization, a company merge, or the need to create an integrated system. It is also paramount that brands find a way to emotionally connect with customers because it is an effective way to stand out amongst competition as the relationships formed can make a brand unique, trustworthy, and superior in the minds and hearts of customers (Wheeler (2013: 2).

One issue that the brands have nowadays is that there is not much differentiating them from each other. According to Blackett (2003: 17-18), now is the moment when 'brand equity' is extremely important, as for a brand to be truly successful, it has to have appeal and strength in the mind of a customer. Therefore, a brand should have a distinct name, logo and colours that go with it so that not only are they recognizable anywhere, these brands and their logos symbolise a promise made to the customers that their expectations and needs will be met (Blackett, 2003: 18). Additionally, known brands afford the customer the luxury of feeling safe and content with their choice

because they are familiar with the brand and its promise of quality in a sea of choices; a brand with a strong equity has a place in the minds of the customers with their appealing nature (Blackett, 2003: 18).

Moreover, Oswald (2015: 128) suggest that the “cultural dimensions of product categories” and with it the category codes surrounding brands are an important aspect to note, because those codes and conventions affect the customers’ associations and expectations of a brand and its products. In addition, these category codes further affect brand strategy because to be consistent with brand representation they must adhere to those parameters even when innovating so that the consumer does not get confused. Further, the specific design and color schemes that might work for a hardware brand might not be the best fit for a beauty brand.

Brand identity is supremely important. A successful brand must have deep substance and strong character to elicit passionate engagement from customers, so that a brand is able to aid said consumers to form their own identities hand in hand with a trusty brand. According to Wheeler (2013: 2), brand identity is not the same as brand, rather, a brand identity is something tangible that can be perceived by using different senses. A brand identity can be held, touched, seen, and heard. What is more, brand identity helps to build recognition, makes the brand different from its competitors and gives the customers something accessible. In other words, there is a dynamic line of communication between brands and customers and this is what makes communication theories relevant (Kapferer, 2012: 158).

Kapferer (2012: 158) proposes there to be six aspects to brand identity, which together form a ‘brand identity prism’: physique, personality, culture, relationship, customer reflection and self-image. The prism is a conceptual tool for analysing brands more specifically, their identities.

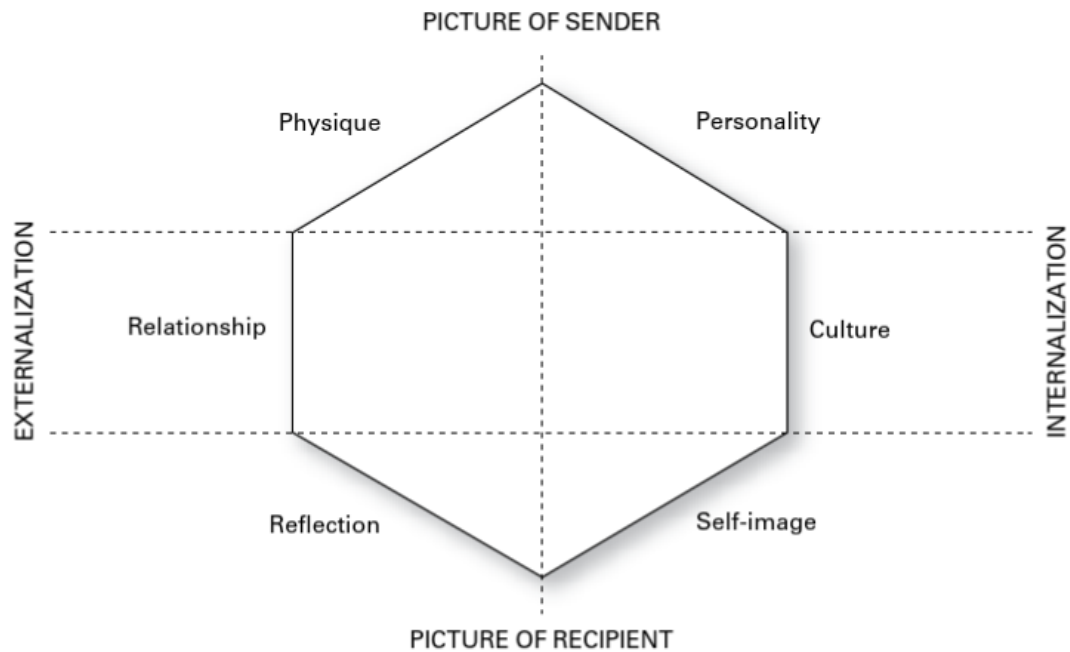


Figure 1. Brand identity prism. Kapferer (2012: 158).

According to Kapferer (2012: 158, 159) the first aspect of a brand identity prism is 'physique', which encompasses the 'physical specificities and qualities' of a brand. It denotes the qualities and features that the consumer recalls when they think of a brand. A brand's value is tied to the physique, as it makes the brand tangible. In regard to 'physique', it is important to ask what the brand is in concrete form, what it can do and what it looks like. Things such as the shape and color of the product and packaging are significant because they too contribute to the brand's identity.

Secondly, a brand must have a 'personality' which is expressed in how the brand discusses its products and services as if it were human (Kapferer, 2012: 159). The personality aspect is an important part of brand advertising and many advertising agencies specifically focus on it. One way to give a brand instant recognizable personality is to hire a spokesperson, who can be real or symbolic. Another important notion is that brand personality has a psychological function as it helps a consumer to identify with the brand or to even project themselves into it. Brand personality is also reflected in the overall 'tone' of the brand advertisements.

In addition, Kapferer (2012: 159) suggests that a brand is also a culture with a curated vision of the surrounding world and a brand is also an ideology. What makes this the most important aspect of brand identity is the cultural facet because brands convey cultures and brands such as Nike and Adidas engage in the cultural competition that comes with it. People are attracted to and are persuaded by strong causes, values, and ideals which, in short, is what the cultural facet of a brand is mostly concerned with.

The fourth aspect of Kapferer's identity prism is a relationship, as brands are 'at the crux of transactions and exchanges', which can especially be observed with brands that are retailers or in the service industry. Kapferer (2012: 161) mentions how the Greek brand name of Nike echoes glorification of human effort, the Olympic games, and specific cultural values. In regard to service brands, such as banks, they are by their nature dedicated to relationships and customer interaction becomes of great importance.

The fifth aspect of the prism is customer reflection. Kapferer (2012: 162) underscores how when people are asked what they think of a brand, they often answer with their idea of the perceived client type. This is due to the brand's communication and products that are built up over a period of time. Reflection, then, essentially means that the "customer should be reflected as they wish to be seen as a result of using a brand" (Kapferer, 2012: 162). In other words, a customer can identify with a brand model. One example is Coca-Cola and their adverts. They have succeeded in appealing to multiple age groups through creating protagonists that the customers can see themselves in, be it the main characters going after their dreams and living fun sporty lives or simply the portrayal of a desirable way of life. If the advertisements and branding are done well, it can be argued that consumers can effectively end up using such brands to build their own identities.

Lastly, the sixth brand identity aspect is self-image. Whereas the previous aspect was an 'outward mirror', self-image is naturally an 'internal mirror'. Kapferer (2012) goes as far as to argue that attitudes towards brands can lead to consumers developing inner relationships with themselves. For example, when buying an expensive car, a customer might actually be wanting to prove to themselves that they have the ability to do so even if the purchase might sometimes not be fully justifiable. In another example,

Lacoste clients can inwardly envision themselves belonging to an open sports club that does not discriminate based on race, sex, or age – this can be so even if in reality they do not practise sports (Kapferer, 2012: 162).

Further, Kapferer (2012: 163) explains how the notion behind the brand identity prism is that brands ‘have the gift of speech’, i.e., their existence is tied to communication and they can lose their relevancy if they are silent. In fact, Kapferer views a brand as ‘a speech in itself’, and thus argues that brands can be analysed as forms of communication. Therefore, if both discourse and brands can be viewed as communicative processes, it would make sense to view brand identities through such lens.

A brand identity prism can be constructed by paying attention to certain aspects of the brand. Kapferer (2012: 164) explains how identity can be inferred from the traces that the brand leaves, such as the endorsed products and symbols used. Research should, then, begin from looking at the typical endorsed products, the brand name, the logo, the brand symbol, the advertisements, the packaging, and the country of origin, all of which is done to further understand the plan behind the brand. Admittedly, sometimes there might be multiple underlying plans which might all be unconscious or there might be no consistent plan at all to be discovered if the brand is weak (Kapferer, 2016: 165). Therefore, to put Kapferer’s prism to the test, I created one such prism based on Tatcha’s website in the analysis section of the current study. The aim was to use it to study Tatcha and to critically analyse the branding of a beauty brand. For the purposes of this study, I omitted the ‘self-image’ aspect of the brand identity prism, as it would require me to contact and interview customers to find out how they feel, which is beyond the scope of the current study.

2.2 Digital marketing

Digital media has been a transformative force in marketing which has led to both company and customer behaviour changing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012: 6). Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012: 10) define digital marketing as “achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies”. Further, there is the ‘online company’ presence, which means the various websites and social media accounts that a company has and the online communication techniques they utilise, such as social media marketing

and online advertising in the case of Tatcha. Essentially, using digital marketing can help a brand to sell products into existing markets, to reach new geographical markets and to benefit from low-cost advertising (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012: 15-16).

In addition, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012: 21-22) propose five categories of company websites: transactional e-commerce site, services-oriented relationship-building website, brand-building website and portal or media site. Interestingly, Tatcha's US website has some flavours from all five categories. It is a part of category one, as their products can be directly purchased from their website. It is also a website that offers services, such as 'Skincare Consultation' and builds rapport with customers through information. Tatcha's website is also used for brand-building as it provides the customer "an online experience of the brand", even though Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012: 22) state that brand-building sites often do not allow for purchases. Next, it is also a media site, as there is information available on a variety of topics such as forest bathing and healthy aging. Lastly, it is a social network and community site, as the users are able to tag the company and be featured on the website and they can also leave reviews under products on the website.

2.2.1 Website as a marketing tool

Website is a vital tool in the world of digital marketing. In the case of Tatcha, it is the bedrock of their brand's online presence and the place where most of their transactions are conducted. A website must leave a positive and powerful first impression on the customer, which can be done by providing information with salient images, with a focus on the homepage (Mourya & Gupta, 2014: 29-28). Next, the website should be fast and easy to use, as customers can easily get irritated and leave the website. Further, interactivity is also key, as it enables the customer to engage with the brand by leaving comments or contacting the brand to give feedback. Finally, Mourya and Gupta (2014) suggest that the website should provide payment process that is easy to use and quick at the same time, with various payment options available.

2.2.2 Hypermodality

Just as hypertext is more complex than text, hypermodality is also more than multimodality (Lemke, 2002: 300). It is not just about combining and juxtaposing image,

sound, and text, but rather about the interconnective nature of these semiotic resources, explicit or otherwise. Hypermodality, then, can be understood as the “interactions of word-, image-, and sound-based meanings in hypermedia” (Lemke, 2002: 300). According to Lemke (2002: 300), websites are a good example of hypermodality and hypertext, as they have paragraphs, sentences and other features which are then linked to other parts in the same page or a different one. In fact, Lemke argues that such links make websites and other hypertexts multisequential, i.e., there is not just one possible way to browse or ‘traverse’ a website, which gives more agency to the user. While the design of Tatcha’s website is rather easy and logical to navigate, there are still multiple possible avenues for the user to take based on their own interests.

Therefore, even though a website might have clear features such as headers, sidebars, paragraphs, and sections that can guide the user, the human eye can wander and focus on more salient features elsewhere on the website (Arnheim, 1956, as cited in Lemke, 2002: 300). Such features can consist of, but are not limited to, typeface, recognizability or otherwise saliently situated features such as words at the end of a section; as the eye wanders, so do the interests of the user. The salient aspects of Tatcha’s website are discussed for example in section 4.1, where an analysis of the homepage is conducted.

Further, Lemke (2002: 299) argues that there is power in combining language and visual communication. Websites are examples of hypertext, where the interplay of these two semiotic resources creates “new forms of informational and design complexity”. Lemke (2002: 301) argues that even though books, too, can be read in different ways and orders, that such ‘traversal’ and ‘wandering’ are different in regard to websites simply because the presence of a hypertext creates expectations about possible links leading us elsewhere on the site. Tatcha’s T-House blog is an example where a hyperlink leads elsewhere on the website, often providing access to a product that was discussed in the blog text.

2.2.3 Electronic commerce

Electronic commerce, or e-commerce, is a concept used to denote “the process of buying, selling, or exchanging products, services and information online” (Mourya & Gupta, 2014: 23). Sometimes e-commerce is used to denote digital marketing, but the word commerce

refers more to transactions, while marketing goes beyond that (Hofacker, 2018: 2). In internet retailing, every website is created equal, as there is no physical location that could boost sales compared to some other location. In other words, all sites are on equal footing when it comes to offering goods and services, which is why businesses find other ways to entice and retain customers (Mourya & Gupta, 2014: 27-28). In this case, Tatcha is a good example of a modern beauty brand because they are mostly focused on e-commerce, as opposed to brick-and-mortar stores. Tatcha's e-commerce model is B2C, or business-to-consumer, where the business is the seller and the buyer is the consumer, which makes it electronic retailing (Mourya & Gupta, 2014: 44).

E-commerce is driven by globality. Mourya and Gupta (2014: 29) argue that with a global market come with global customers and products. People can access websites, brands and products with a few clicks from around the world and they often read reviews online before committing to a purchase. The benefits of e-commerce include availability around the clock, being an international marketplace as well as the convenience of buying and selling online. Mourya and Gupta (2014: 30) suggest that e-commerce has enabled brands to use newsletters, websites, blogs and search engine ads, all of which can positively affect sales.

A brand engaging in e-commerce should have attractive product selection with good prices, salient layout and easy usability, personalized content, virtual communities, satisfaction guarantees and other customer support, as well as security and reliability. The present study introduces and analyses Tatcha's website, which is an illustrative example of a beauty brand website. In the analysis section, I will give examples from said website and its contents and features. However, e-commerce might suffer from a lack of personal touch, because clicking around on a website and adding products to a virtual shopping cart can be vastly different to an in-store experience (Mourya & Gupta, 2014: 35). In Tatcha's case, the brand has remedied this by heavily featuring the founder of Tatcha, Victoria Tsai, on the website. Tatcha also uses videos to add human voices and music to enhance overall ambience. As a result, the customer might feel that there is a 'face' to the brand still. In addition, Tatcha encourages their customers to contact the brand

and to share their skincare journey with the brand and to engage in their shared online community.

2.3 Foreign branding and country-of-origin discourse

The brand name 'Tatcha' does not allude to it being American. Spelling or pronouncing a brand name in a given foreign language in COO research is called foreign branding (Leclerc et al., as cited in Aichner et al., 2017). For example, an American company created a brand called Doritos to sell tortilla chips and a German company utilizes the brand name Puschkin to sell vodka, because they want to make it appear as though the products originate from a more favorable country in relation to such products. In fact, foreign brand names can elicit positive associations and in turn affect customers perception of the products as the name can conjure favorable stereotypes of a culture or a country, leading to increased revenue (Leclerc et al., 1994, as cited in Aichner et al., 2017). In addition to a foreign-sounding brand name, companies can extend the COO strategy to be used in flags, symbols, landscapes and people in relation to the brand (Aichner et al., 2017).

Mentioning the country-of-origin, or COO, can be a way for a company and its products to stand out amidst competition and benefit from the positive associations that come with the COO (Melnik et al., 2012, as cited in Aichner et al., 2017). Foreign branding strategy can be utilized for more favorable associations, replacing the real COO. For example, on the global stage two out of three products that seemingly have Italy as their country-of-origin are not Italian at all (Caselli et al., 2015, as cited in Aichner et al., 2017).

According to Aichner et al. (2017), when a product is linked to a country with a positive image in a given product category, it elicits a positive reaction from the customer, which is called the COO effect. In terms of the current study, Japan can be said to have a positive image in the skincare category, which essentially makes Tatcha the beneficiary of said reputation. Therefore, Tatcha's brand and products have the possibility to be perceived to be of excellent quality through the COO effect and they might be more appealing to customers through the positive association with Japan. Moreover, the customers might even be persuaded to pay a higher price and Tatcha is, after all, a luxury beauty brand.

Tatcha is a rather complex brand in terms their country-of-origin. Admittedly, their formulas are crafted at the Tatcha Institute in Tokyo but it is not clear whether all of their products are produced and manufactured in Japan from beginning to end. However, to an untrained eye, their website explicitly references Japan and its customs, ingredients, traditions, wisdom, beauty, and skincare, possibly leading the customer to first experience them as a fully Japanese beauty brand.

The research on the country-of-origin effect started decades ago, as Schooler (1965, as cited in Hornikx et al., 2020) did an empirical study on identical products and their evaluations that originated from Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala. Afterwards country-of-origin, or COO, became a popular topic of research in areas such as marketing and business, spawning over 500 journal articles, many critical debates as well as reviews (Hornikx et al., 2020).

The attribute that COO gives to a product is its pricing and brand which are then used by customers to gauge the possible quality of a product (Hornikx et al., 2020). Countries with positive images are more likely to be positively viewed. COO can be implied or stated in different ways: it can be clearly stated or it can be otherwise made clear by using popular and well-known landmarks and landscapes or by using the country-of-origin's language (Aichner, 2014; Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013; Thakor & Kohli, 1996 as cited in Hornikx et al., 2020). For example, Tatcha states that their formulas are crafted in Tokyo and they use images from Japan, especially in their blog posts.

Hornikx et al. (2020) state that when a brand wishes to use COO markers, they use them to refer to the customers' home country or alternatively to some foreign country. If the latter is chosen and a positive COO effect is in place, consumers are thought to value and appreciate products because of their country-of-origin is foreign to them in general or the products themselves are foreign to the consumer.

Unregulated markers are used to connect customers' perception to a COO that the brand wishes to emphasize and as unregulated markers are not subject to law, they can be used to suggest a specific country as the country-of-origin without having to be as explicit as with regulated COO markers (Hornikx et al. (2020). There are plenty of

unregulated markers in use in country-of-origin advertising, such as celebrities, flags, cultural symbols, referencing the COO in the brand name and the use of foreign languages (Hornikx et al., 2020).

In general, linguistic fetish can be regarded as symbolic, i.e., it can be used to construct the identity of a product, brand, or the producer; the foreign words used in advertising become more than what they actually denote (Kelly-Holmes, 2005: 65). In other words, when language is used as a linguistic fetish, it is not necessarily about communicating in that language as the language is used for more symbolic purposes, such as is the case with Tatcha's website and their occasional and curated usage of Japanese words on a version of their website that is otherwise completely in English.

Kelly-Holmes (2005) argues that products, brands, and countries alike have images in marketing. For the purposes of this study, countries are of particular interest in terms of marketing. If a country-of-origin (COO) approach is chosen, the linguistic fetish can be seen in the name of the company itself, such as Tatcha, which is a combination of two Japanese words: '*tatehana*', meaning standing flower and '*chabana*', meaning the arrangements that are a part of the Japanese tea ceremony. Although Tatcha is a combination of two words, it still looks and sounds foreign, namely Japanese, which means it can become fetishized with the cultural competence of the Japanese. It becomes a brand name that is different from its competitors because it has a different cultural credibility (Kelly-Holmes, 2000a, as cited in Kelly-Holmes, 2005: 38).

In other words, linguistic fetish can take on many forms in advertising discourse: sometimes foreign language is used in the brand name or product names only, but it can also be used in entire texts or whole phrases (Kelly-Holmes, 2005: 65). Further, Kelly-Holmes (2005: 65, 66) describes the world of advertising texts as often consisting of "perfect, domestic syntax, grammar and vocabulary", in which multilingualism is merely an accent – this, in turn, makes a well-placed linguistic fetish theoretically even more effective.

Tatcha's brand is deeply rooted in Japan and Japanese knowledge: their brand name is a combination of Japanese words, the ingredients they use are Japanese, the rituals

they allude to are Japanese despite the brand being founded in The United States. Closer analysis of Tatcha's website reveals why, how and when the brand uses Japanese. The examples of the Japanese language being used are discussed in greater and more illustrative detail from section 4.3. onwards, where I analyse the types of discourses found on Tatcha's website.

2.4 Discourse and discourse analysis

According to Johnstone (2018: 17), 'discourse' denotes events where communicative action is performed in the medium of language and it is usually understood as a mass noun. Fairclough (1992a: 64, as cited in Locke, 2004: 5) defines discourse as a practice that represents, signifies, constitutes and constructs the world.

'Discourse' is not limited to language but it can also encompass other media such as photography or architecture and the connections between language and other modes. Johnstone (2018: 17) also argues that the focus need not be on language as some abstract entity, but rather it would be more beneficial to focus on what people feel, think, remember, hear, or see in relation to language, which is something the present study resonates with as I aim to uncover the aspects of Tatcha's brand that uses language to make people feel and think differently. Moreover, discourse analysis has to do with language use in different sociocultural contexts and how people both make meaning and make out meaning. It is also one way to approach the analysis of language because it considers different patterns of language across various texts and the contexts surrounding those texts (Paltridge, 2010: 1, as cited in Kirkpatrick & McLellan, 2013: 654). This is exemplified by my analysis in section 4.3, where I identify and consequently analyse the types of discourses on Tatcha's website.

Johnstone (2018: 17-18) states how discourse analysis uses a set of methods to answer questions, such as research questions. Therefore, it is a process of taking apart discourse into smaller parts to better analyse them and their characteristics. Moreover, sometimes discourse analysis can mean looking at the parts in terms of their function, their participants, settings, or processes (Johnstone, 2018: 18). Although I will consider the parts together, sometimes it is easier to pinpoint something by analysing them separately. It can also be used to answer questions regarding communication, meaning making,

interaction between speakers and hearers, utterances, variation, patterns of language use, power relations among other things (Johnstone, 2018: 20).

2.5 Multimodal discourse analysis

Due to the inherent multimodal nature of websites, a discursive approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches is a suitable (Michelson & Álvarez Valencia, 2016). Vaughan and O’Keeffe (2015) state that corpus analysis is useful in detecting and analysing patterns of language use and can be used to generate word lists to identify frequency patterns, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. It would, then, make sense that a combination of corpus analysis and multimodal discourse analysis be used for the study of Tatcha’s website, because corpus analysis can be used to inform a qualitative study and multimodal discourse analysis can be used to consider various elements that are specifically chosen and placed on the website. According to Kress (2010: 1), using different modes in one sign, for example can be beneficial because even though all the modes do something on their own, they also form a strong entity together; combining image, colour and text for instance can be effective. In other words, multimodal analysis as an approach considers not only different modes but also their sum.

According to Kress (2010: 79), ‘mode’ is “a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning”; a ‘mode’ used in communication and representation can be speech, layout, music, image, gesture, moving image, writing, 3D objects or soundtrack. Some modes gain meaning from their surroundings and their purpose, such as clothing and furniture but they are not primarily means of communication, meaning that there can be debate as to whether or not they are truly modes (Kress, 2010: 79). As the modes are different, they do offer various things in terms of meaning making, which means that choices have their own effects. In terms of websites, it is meaningful to consider the layout. Design choices such as font, frames and colour and writing choices such as grammar and syntax affect the outcome and meaning making of these modes (Kress, 2010: 79). As Tatcha’s website relies largely on image and writing, those are the two modes that are of importance in terms of the current study. Since the majority of the website uses text, the semiotic effects conveyed by speech cannot be used,

which means that the design has to consider things such as bolding, size and spacing to achieve similar outcomes (Kress, 2010: 80).

In a similar vein, Pauwels (2012) states that a meticulous and versatile method that is needed for analysing contemporary websites could be called multimodal analysis, even though the internet, and therefore websites, is limited to two modes for now: the auditory and the visual. Even though there are really only two modes when the internet is experienced as it is now, there is still a need for a multimodal approach. According to Pauwels (2012), these two modes are so extensive and full of subcategories that there are many things to consider even now. The visual can include such aspects as the text itself, layout, design, typography, links and moving image. The auditory on the other hand can include spoken and sung texts and other noise. It seems, then, that these two modes offer plenty of avenues and make multimodal analysis a suitable option for the study of websites. Further, as more than one mode is analysed, it becomes multimodal analysis; the approach is not only used to identify and analyse these modes separately and as they appear, but the way they interact is of key interest (Pauwels, 2012). Even though I consider the multimodal nature of the website where applicable, I also discuss the texts and images separately. For example, the images might not always be analysed in the context of their immediate surroundings but I nevertheless attempt to tie them to the identified discourse as a whole.

Pauwels (2012) presents a multimodal framework for analysing websites, which has six different layers of analysis:

1. Preservation of first impressions and reactions
2. Inventory of salient features and topics
3. In-depth analysis of content and formal choices
4. Embedded point(s) of view or 'voice' and implied audience(s) and purposes
5. Analysis of information organization and spatial priming strategies

6. Contextual analysis, provenance, and interference

Now, it could be argued that not all of the steps are applicable in every case as websites, and the contents of said websites, can vary greatly. Pauwels (2012) explains that in order to tailor the framework for a given study, the most fitting steps could be chosen, as not every website checks every point listed above and not every study has the same scope and focus. For example, Pauwels (2012) mentions how some of the steps and their assessments can be guided by such things as research interest and the scope of the study. In its unmodified form, the framework is rather extensive. Therefore, for the purposes and scope of the current study, I will only focus on steps one to three which are discussed further in section 3.4.

2.6 The grammar of visual design

Visual grammar is concerned with metafunctions and meaning potentials. There are three main metafunctions: representational, interactive, and compositional (Harrison, 2003: 50). Representational meaning means that there are narrative representations happening in images, which have Actors and Goals; images can be transactional, non-transactional or bi-directional. Interactive meaning on the other hand has to do with the interaction happening in the image, such as eye contact, attitudes, and social distance; there can be a visual demand when there is a gaze at the viewer or a visual offer meaning the absence of a gaze (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006: 148).

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 148), there are also three different kinds of shots: close, medium, and long. Close shot means intimate or personal, medium is for social and long shot is an impersonal shot. The angles matter as well: frontal angle denotes involvement, oblique angle depicts detachment and high angle gives the viewer the power, whereas eye-level angle invites equality and low angle denotes represented participant power.

The Goal is a recipient of a vector, or to whom the action is “done to or aimed at” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006: 64-66). The other participant in a visual proposition is the Actor, which is the participant “which instigates the movement”. Additionally, a transactional process means the Actor is interacting with the Goal. Bidirectional

transaction on the other hand means that the participants, or interactors, are simultaneously the Goal and the Actor.

Understanding and utilizing visual grammar can be a useful tool. For example, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 1-2) suggest that visual grammar can be used to explore how different elements, such as places, people, and things, can be combined in various visual 'statements'. For example, what can be expressed in written language by word choices, can be demonstrated in visual communication through the use of different colors and compositional structures.

However, not everyone is at the same level of visual literacy and different cultures also interpret visual elements in their own way. In other words, where 'grammar' is concerned, there are rules which in turn can lead to some people being more visually literate than others (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006: 2). Lacking in such literacy, which means effectively lacking in communication, can be detrimental in public social settings (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006: 3). Further, visual grammar is not universal because visual language is culture specific - elements such as 'center' or 'top' might not always occupy the same role in a visual space. The visual grammar discussed in this section will therefore be from a Western point of view as guided by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) and tied to my own interpretation.

2.7 Previous research on beauty brands

Beauty brands vary greatly in their identity, products and values, which makes them a 'renewable' source of research. They often reflect the trends of the current moment, such as being environmentally conscious or engaging in social media phenomena such as social justice. As such, it is not easy to narrow down the focus on previous research on beauty brands, but the present study highlights some aspects of the previous studies to showcase the different dimensions of beauty brand research.

Ringrow (2016: 82) mentions how there is a rising trend of 'cosmeceuticals', which are a combination of 'cosmetic' and 'pharmaceutical' and beauty brands have begun using scientific-sounding language to present 'solutions' in form of beauty and skincare products. Tatcha does this too, as they reference many scientific studies and

special ingredients on their website. Further, World Advertising Research Center (2015: 45, as cited in Hermans, 2021, 92) suggest that 'scientific overtones' can be useful as an advertising strategy for skincare. Many beauty brands are connected to pharmaceuticals or healthcare, such as Vichy Laboratoires, Eucerin and La Roche-Posay (Hermans, 2021: 129). Sometimes such a continuum can also be problematic, such as retailers selling beauty and medical products: it promotes the notion that psychological well-being and self-love are tied to beauty work (Gill, 2006; Lazar, 2006; Orbach, 2009, as cited in Hermans, 2021: 129).

Moreover, Lazar (2006: 506, 510, as cited in Hermans, 2021: 91) mentions how beauty brands often market themselves and their products as "empowering agents" that help with self-determination and agency to women. Further, Lazar (2006: 509, as cited in Hermans, 2021: 91) discusses "power femininity", which is realized through adverts that promote becoming "self-reliant and experts in one's own right". However, Ringrow (2016: 155) addresses the fact that beauty brands find it difficult to find the correct tone to address and reach men because the market is saturated by feminine connotations. As a result, brands often opt for sports, fighting and practicality in their marketing strategies when addressing men.

Tungate (2011: 204) mentions how beauty brands benefit from using social media, but at the same time are worried about consumers having too much power in the conversation. As a result, they recruit social media specialists to carefully craft social media posts that reflect the brand's marketing strategy and they can also monitor comments. In a similar vein, Ringrow (2016: 108) points out how social media has enabled the customers to discuss beauty brands and their advertisement campaigns. For example, Dove's campaigns have garnered much attention and topics such as eating disorder, self-worth and Dove's brand ethos have been widely discussed across social media.

On the other hand, being inspired by and referencing a country in the context of advertising is also interesting from a discursive point of view. For example, Nurmi (2021) analyses the brand identity of a Finnish beauty brand, Lumene, using multimodal discourse analysis and brand identity theories to ascertain how Lumene constructs their brand identity and what the role of 'Finnishness' is to the brand. The results show that Nurmi (2021) was able to identify three distinct discourses which were constructed

through various semiotic modes: “Nordic beauty”, “Finnish exoticism” and “Sustainable and natural”, which denotes the importance of a country-of-origin and the notion of promoting uniqueness through such strategies.

In addition, Kääriäinen (2021) analyses the ‘cult beauty brand’ Glossier and how the brand constructs femininity, authenticity and brand identity in and through a social media platform. According to the study, five discourses were identified: “Cool girl”, “Social justice”, “Internet culture”, “Community creating” and “Traditional advertising”. The results show the importance of a visual brand identity, a brand’s online presence and how invaluable communication between a brand and their audience can be.

Like the present study, the last two studies discussed in this section identified and discussed the types of discourses that could be identified through the brand’s website or social media. Moreover, these studies also constructed a brand identity prism based on Kapferer’s (2012) model to visualize the main facets of their chosen brands. Based on the present study and the previous studies discussed here, identifying the types of discourses and constructing a brand identity prism seem like a fruitful approach to beauty brand studies. Even though the methods might be similar, the results are naturally different due to the researchers’ own interests and the unique nature and aspects of each researched brand.

3 DATA

3.1 Aims and research questions

The aim of the current study is to identify the main types of discourse that can be found on Tatcha’s website. As websites are inherently multimodal, the aim is also to uncover the means of multimodality that are used and how said multimodality is utilised to construct Tatcha’s brand identity. Moreover, as ‘Japaneseness’ is central to the brand, I am also interested in seeing its role on the website.

Therefore, the research questions are:

1. What discourses can be identified on Tatcha’s company website?
2. How is multimodality used to construct Tatcha’s brand identity?

3. How does Tatcha being 'Japanese-inspired' manifest on their website?

Further, Question 1 has to do with Foucault's second definition of discourse, where a group of utterances or texts can be identified through what they have in common, such as country-of-origin discourse, beauty discourse and environmental discourse. Question 2 on the other hand deals with the ways multimodality are used to construct Tatcha's brand identity, such as the placement and interaction between different modes on their website such as images, texts, and links. Lastly, the purpose of Question 3 is to explore the ways how, why and when Japan and the Japanese language, culture and traditions are referenced and utilised on Tatcha's website.

3.2 Data

The data was collected solely from the US version of Tatcha's company website between October of 2021 and April of 2022. In addition to the homepage and other relevant pages of the website, I went through 250 T-House blog entries – also located on the website – and saved the most salient text and image examples for further analysis. I then collected a large selection of text from Tatcha's homepage and the blog to be used for corpus analysis, consisting of 133,502 words in total, compiled together in a corpus analysis tool.

Besides the products, the website holds Tatcha's history, values, brand philosophy and ideals. The main purpose of Tatcha's website is to introduce and market their brand and their products. Naturally, a website is meant to attract potential customers, which means it has to stand out and it has to be interesting, fluid and relatively intuitive to use. Moreover, websites like these are designed to be interacted with, which means that every detail is likely to be carefully designed and thought out to appeal to customers.

Tatcha as a brand is specifically focused on e-commerce, which makes this medium their main way of reaching the customers and portraying their brand. Therefore, such a website is the ideal medium and source as I am interested in beauty brands, skincare, advertising, and multimodality; by using this form of data I am essentially analysing a digital medium that is made for the public and meant to be looked at while

being interesting from a discursive point of view. The data I am interested in is mainly in the form of text, images, colors, design, and hyperlinks on the website.

3.3 Research ethics

As for the research ethics, it is my understanding that as this website is available for everyone and it is made to be looked at and made to be used, there is no ethical conflict. Moreover, I will clearly reference their website and in case of image analysis I will credit the images to their website. Interviews to get customers' ideas about the general feel and functionality of the website are not conducted as that would be beyond the scope of the current study.

3.4 Methods of analysis

As a first step towards the analysis, Tatcha's homepage was analysed in accordance with Pauwels' modified framework for analysing websites. The first step of the framework is to preserve the first impressions and reactions of the researcher, which I did whilst also visiting the homepage over the course of multiple months to observe its changing looks. At its core, the purpose of the first step was to discuss anything that was salient to me and what attracted me as a researcher. As such, practical observations such as how to navigate the website, where to find information and how to navigate hyperlinks and dropdown menus were made as they relate to the website as a medium. Some of the most salient images were briefly analysed in terms of their composition, color and purpose as they are instrumental to setting the tone of the homepage.

Step two of the framework is the inventory of salient features and topics. In accordance with the framework, I reviewed the features of the homepage and discussed the function and form of the page, such as the certain sections ('Bestsellers') staying the same but changing in content. I also noted the salient interactive and social aspect of the homepage, as it is something that can be used to enhance the interaction between a brand and its customer.

Step three, then, is the in-depth analysis of content and formal choices, which in the context of the present study meant looking at linguistic choices and devices, such as verbs, pronouns, adjectives, narrative strategies and other language variation and what

they could possibly reveal about the brand and its audience, with an emphasis on how these choices are used to construct Tatcha's brand multimodally. Moreover, I considered representation, auditory aspects and layout where applicable. In addition, I explored the relation between written, visual and sound when analysing blog posts and the videos found on Tatcha's website.

Further, the present study processed and analysed the data using corpus analysis to inform an otherwise qualitative study. One of the uses of a corpus is that it can be used to show how frequently certain linguistic features occur and it is particularly useful for analysing large bodies of text (Kennedy, 2014: 4). As such, corpus analysis supports and strengthens the analysis of Tatcha's website. For the present study, I used Sketch Engine, which is an online text analysis tool utilized to analyse large language samples. First, I cleaned and collected the desired texts from the homepage and then moved on to the blog entries, after which I compiled them separately using Sketch Engine to create two different corpora for the purposes of this study. I wanted to find frequency patterns from the data, namely keywords (single-word items) and terms (multi-word items) that effectively reveal the contents of the data. As a reference corpus, I used The English Web Corpus (enTenTen), which consists of 38 billion words, making it one of the biggest English corpus. I excluded sections that were not relevant to the current study or otherwise had little to no text, such as the 'Shop' category and other sections such as 'Help' and 'Account', which merely contain generic information for the customers.

The first sample of data for this section consists of the text found on Tatcha's homepage. The sample consists of the homepage itself as well as two of the main topics found in the top banner of the homepage: 'Our Story' and its subsections as well as the 'Try Tatcha' category and its subsections, excluding the T-House blog. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the homepage texts together as Sample 1. These sections were chosen due to their importance, saliency and contents, as together with the homepage these categories serve as an introduction to the website. The chosen texts for Sample 1, which are found on and through the homepage, can be expected to depict the more commercialized part of Tatcha's brand, such as their products, values, ingredients used and their background story. In other words, the homepage is more explicitly and

immediately used to promote and market Tatcha's brand and their products. In addition, I also chose to create a second separate corpus because the purpose and the genre of the blog is different to the homepage. Sample 2 consists of the blog texts collected from Tatcha's T-House blog, which contains 250 blog entries and can be found in the 'Try Tatcha' section on Tatcha's website. The blog was included in the study, as it is integral to the website and therefore the brand. The corpus-assisted approach was chosen for the sake of efficiency and to add a slightly quantitative flavor to an otherwise qualitative study.

To identify and analyse the discourses found on Tatcha's website, I used multimodal discourse analysis, which was chosen due websites being inherently multimodal and the data specifically consisting of one. Moreover, I combine both corpus linguistics and multimodal discourse analysis because it can result in an effective "methodological cross-pollination" (Baker et al., 2008: 274, as cited in Vaughan & O'Keeffe, 2015). Section 4.3 falls under Pauwels' steps two and three, which are 'inventory of salient features and topics' and 'in-depth analysis of content and formal choices'. To that end, I read through Tatcha's website to identify the main discourses that were present and then collected subjectively the most salient examples of said discourses to better illustrate how the brand's identity is constructed multimodally on their website. I examined linguistic choices and devices, analysed images through the theory of visual grammar and noted everything else that was relevant and contributed to construction of Tatcha's brand identity through multimodal means.

Next, I constructed a brand identity prism based on Tatcha's US website. The prism itself was modified from Kapferer's 2012 model to suit the focus of the study. The final prism has five brand identity facets: physique, personality, relationship, culture and customer reflection, and under each of them I selected few words that best reflected the results of the analysis conducted so far. After the prism, I explained what each facet of Tatcha's brand identity prism means in practice. I analysed the five aspects of Tatcha's brand and gave examples of their packaging, the personality that the brand projects, what type of culture(s) surround them and why, how Tatcha conducts itself as a brand and how that affects relationship, and finally, how the customer wishes to be seen when they use

Tatcha's brand and products. I gave ample examples of each facet and thus justified the words I chose for the brand identity prism.

4 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

First and as an introduction to the data, I will briefly discuss and analyse Tatcha's homepage in section 4.1, from which I will then move on to corpus analysis of both the homepage and the blog in section 4.2, where the data is then discussed in light of tables one to four, which offer an insight into the two corpora samples and what they reveal about Tatcha's website. Based on the discussion and findings, I will then identify and subsequently conduct multimodal analysis on the discourses found on Tatcha's website in section 4.3 by giving examples and discussing them to support my findings. Lastly, in section 4.4, a brand identity prism modified from Kapferer's 2012 model will be presented based on the findings in the previous sections to further explore and illustrate the brand identity aspect of the current study.

4.1 Overview of the homepage

The main function of a homepage is to serve as an introduction to the website in question. When viewing a homepage, Askehave and Nielsen (2005: 123-124) note that the user is first presented with an overall view of the website's contents, which is done by providing informative tables of content and salient text. Second, the homepage functions as a 'gateway' to the website by giving the user access to navigating tools and links that lead to other pages on the website. In addition, the homepage features promotional features as well as content information, which can consist of pictures, sound and video – all of which is presented to entice the user and convince them to explore the website further. In fact, the homepage is similar to the front page of a newspaper, as both feature key words, catchy headlines, summaries, tables, and salient images to name a few elements.

These features can be seen in use on Tatcha's homepage. As seen in Image 1, the top banner of the website shows the main topics: Shop, Our Story, Try Tatcha and Ritual Finder Quiz, as well as the brand's name and logo, login options, a search tool and a

shopping cart. When moused over, the main topics display dropdown menus which lead to other pages on the website via hyperlinks.

The main category 'Shop' expands into four subcategories based on products, categories, skintypes or benefits. The second category, Our Story, leads to learning about the story behind Tatcha as well as their philosophy and the ingredients they use, how they give back and what they do in terms of sustainability. In addition, this dropdown menu also features an image of Tatcha's founder, Victoria Tsai, with her eyes closed and wearing a pastel color that is also present elsewhere on the homepage, which makes it cohesive. Under the image is a link to Our Philosophy, which makes that subcategory more salient to the viewer as it is not just text compared to the other subcategories. The third category, Try Tatcha, expands into the subcategory of discovering new rituals, which then leads to skincare consultation, the ritual finder quiz and the blog. The Ritual Finder Quiz, also located at the top of the page, leads the customer to a questionnaire which will deduce the optimal 'ritual' and skincare for them based on their answers. Based on these hyperlinks alone, the customer can infer some general aspects of Tatcha's brand and products and from there they can browse the website in a way that caters to their own interests.



Image 1. Homepage. www.tatcha.com. Saved on 04.02.2022.

At the time of this analysis in February of 2022, the prominent image on the homepage features a product accompanied by light cool tones of mainly purple, blue and green and the product, 'The texture tonic', is placed in water with a cloudy sky behind it. The cool light purple is also featured in other banners on the homepage, such as at the very top. The cool and light tones along with the other elements, such as water, create a calming and serene effect. The product appears to be hit by sunlight, setting it aglow and thus making it salient to the eye. In addition to the image, the biggest font on the homepage is used when introducing said tonic, a new product, which makes it stand out even more.

Below the main image, there are pictures of various products, dubbed 'Bestsellers', with an option to scroll for more. Based on the homepage, the viewer can deduce that the brand is about skincare, as the most prominently featured products right at the beginning include a skin cream, a cleansing oil and a tonic for the skin. The

homepage is subject to change as new products and offers are introduced and as the seasons change.

The main color of the homepage is white. Tsotra et al. (2004: 2414) suggest that the color white can function well as background, as one of its characteristics is that it is not necessarily always discerned as a color, therefore making other elements more salient. In any case, the white background can be perceived as cold or warm but it does, in my opinion, offer a neutral backdrop to Tatcha's products.

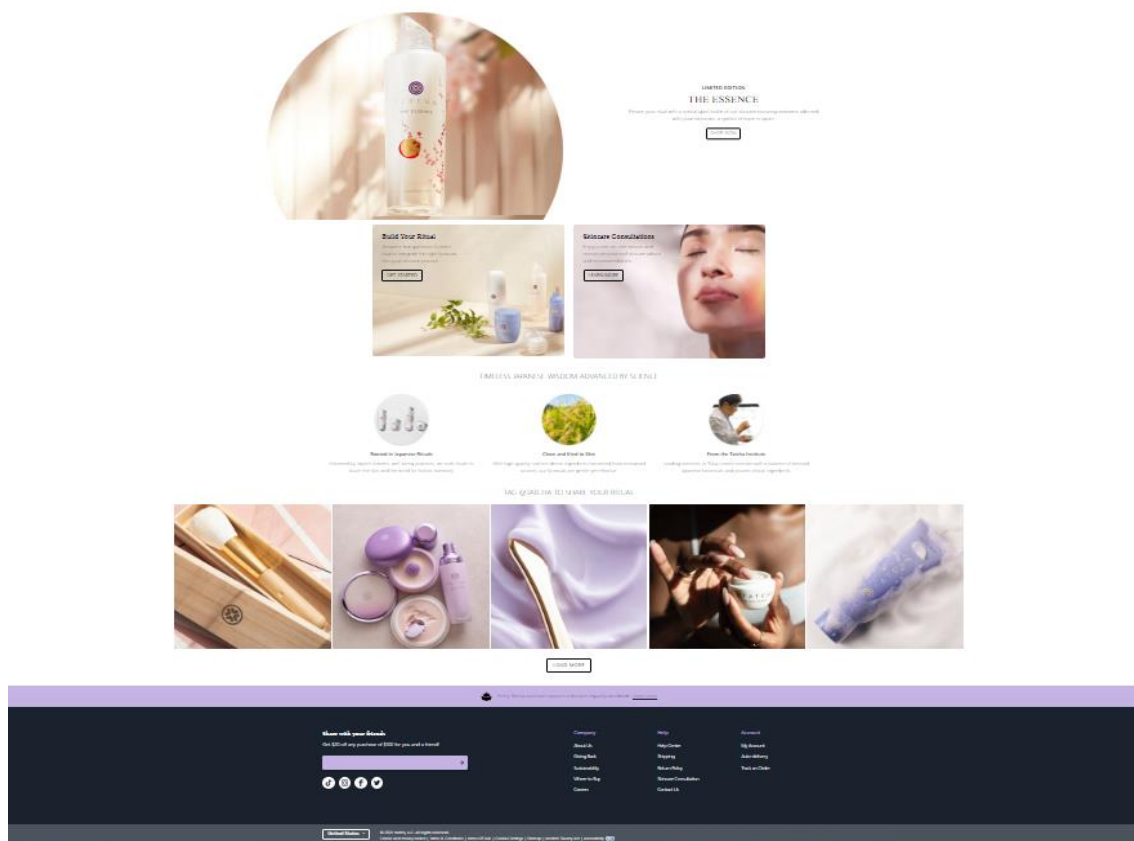


Image 2. Homepage. www.tatcha.com. Saved on 04.02.2022.

More images can be found on the bottom half of the homepage as can be seen in Image 2. Firstly, there is an image featuring a limited-edition product, which is worded as to give the customer more incentive to profit from the deal while there is still time. This is a section that changes every now and then when there is a new limited time value product available, which is often also a bestseller, making it more attractive. Right below are images and links that have to do with building a personal ritual, featuring some of Tatcha's products in warm natural light on a white surface and background. Next to it is

an image of a woman with her eyes closed and sunlight on her face with a text that invites the customer to enjoy a one-on-one sessions of personalized skincare advice. Both instances offer interactive experiences for the customer, which can later lead to a bond with the brand.

Next, there is a section entitled 'Timeless Japanese wisdom advanced by science', accompanied by three images explaining Tatcha's connection to Japanese rituals, how clean and kind the formulas are and how 'leading scientists in Tokyo' create skincare that combines Japanese botanicals and clinical ingredients. This is an example of Tatcha using Japan and Japanese knowledge to promote uniqueness and brand identity.

As shown in Image 2, the homepage prompts the user to tag @tatcha to 'share your ritual'. This, again, is a way to approach the client and to prompt some interaction on their part. There is also a link to explore how Tatcha purchases support education equality, which showcases the charity initiative and therefore some of the values of Tatcha's brand. The homepage also features links to Tatcha's social media accounts on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter such as sections on the company, help and website account. Features such as these make the homepage interactive and it plays on the assumption that people want to share their activities, experiences and thoughts on social media, thus possibly giving Tatcha and their products more visibility. The internet, and therefore websites, can also be used to enhance interactions with the customer by providing access to social connectivity, and the brand can facilitate the construction of communities that gather around themes and needs (Hirt & Willmott, 2014). Such themes and needs for Tatcha are skincare and well-being, for example, and the brand has provided social connectivity for their customers by including hyperlinks to their social media.

In conclusion, Tatcha's homepage is an introduction to their brand, products, values, identity and aesthetic. Just by looking at the homepage the consumer becomes aware that the brand focuses on skincare and draws its inspiration from Japanese traditions. In fact, the word 'Japanese' is mentioned three times on the homepage and the word 'ritual' is used five times. The colors and the aesthetic overall are calming, pastel-toned and simplistic. In addition, the homepage invites the customer to discover these

rituals and to receive personalized skincare, making the experience feel more personal. In short, the customer gets a sense of who and what the brand is and what they have to offer based on the homepage alone.

4.2 Corpora findings

The data from Sample 1 is realized in Tables 1 and 2, as they depict single-words and multi-word terms that were found on Tatcha's homepage using the corpus analysis tool. Both tables contain the twenty most frequently used words and terms. These single-words and multi-word terms were extracted from a sample size of 3,198 words. Tables 1 and 2 show the results of collecting the words from Tatcha's homepage, compiling them and then referencing them against the English Web 2020 (enTenTen) corpus. Both tables reveal which twenty single-words or multi-words were most frequently used on Tatcha's homepage. For the sake of the study, I kept both tables limited to 20 keywords as to sharpen the focus of this section.

Below, Table 1 showcases the most used single-words on Tatcha's homepage. The table illustrates that these frequently used single-words on Tatcha's homepage are words relating most of all to the brand, skincare and sustainability (fsc), after which the most frequently used single-words are about ingredients, well-being, timetables and the Japanese culture.

Table 1. Single words on Tatcha's homepage.

1 tatcha	11 mon-fri
2 skincare	12 camellia
3 fsc	13 velvety
4 calming	14 licorice
5 mind-skin	15 ritual
6 aburatorigami	16 recyclable
7 five-sense	17 bodymindx
8 nutrient-dense	18 formulkas
9 indigo	19 hadasei-3tm
10 geisha	20 hinou

As shown below, Table 2 consists of the twenty most frequently used multi-words on Tatcha's homepage. These multi-words reference Tatcha's education and literacy initiative, different rituals, product ingredients and quality as well as Japanese knowledge and traditions. Further, Table 2 especially shows emphasis on the literacy initiative as well as the different rituals discussed on Tatcha's homepage as they are at the top of the multi-words frequency list.

Table 2. Multi-words on Tatcha's homepage.

1 beautiful future	11 well-being ritual
2 diverse book	12 Japanese botanical
3 literacy initiative	13 clinical ingredient
4 beautiful face	14 Japanese wisdom
5 five-sense ritual	15 making quality education
6 proven clinical ingredient	16 calming ritual
7 ritual finder	17 scent receptor
8 indigo calming ritual	18 Japanese ritual
9 beautiful futures fund	19 futures fund
10 texture tonic	20 making quality

Table 1 shows that the brand name is being repeated as well as skincare and the ingredients Tatcha uses for their products. Notably ‘fsc’ is third on the single words list, which has to do with responsible forest management and which denotes emphasis on sustainability. Aspects of Tatcha’s philosophy can also be seen in Tables 1 and 2, as words such as ‘mind-skin’ and ‘calming’ ritual are frequently used. Moreover, references to the Japanese culture are also frequent not only in the ingredients but also in the words aburatorigami, geisha and hinou as seen in Table 1.

On the other hand, Table 2 shows that the homepage is also focused on introducing and discussing Tatcha’s education and literacy initiative as well as their clinical approach to different ingredients. There are also three different multi-words regarding rituals that can be seen in Table 2, which is a recurring theme throughout Tatcha’s brand and it was something that I initially found salient about the brand.

Similar to Table 1, the Japanese inspiration is also clearly visible in Table 2, as multi-words ‘Japanese botanical’, ‘Japanese wisdom’ and ‘Japanese ritual’ are in the top twenty of multi-words used in Sample 1, the homepage. This is not surprising, as Tatcha is inspired by Japanese traditions and this result is to be expected. The presence of Japanese wisdom and traditions is frequently featured on their homepage and based on the corpus analysis it seems to be something that the brand wishes to highlight.

As for Sample 2, Tables 3 and 4 both show the twenty most frequently used single-words and multi-words, which were extracted from Tatcha's T-House blog, which contains 250 entries and 130,304 words in total. Similar to the previous tables, Tables 3 and 4 were also compiled using Sketch Engine and then referenced against the English Web 2020 (enTenTen) corpus to find the most frequent keywords in the form of single-words and multi-words.

Table 3 shows that the three most frequently used words in Tatcha's T-House Blog are 'tatcha', 'geisha' and 'skincare', followed by mentions of Tatcha's products, the products' purposes and ingredients as well as the Japanese city, Kyoto.

Table 3. Single-words on Tatcha's T-house blog.

1 tatcha	11 hyaluronic
2 geisha	12 kyoto
3 skincare	13 violet-c
4 moisturizer	14 sunscreen
5 alea	15 squalane
6 dewy	16 exfoliation
7 camellia	17 plump
8 indigo	18 exfoliant
9 hydration	19 exfoliator
10 exfoliate	20 hydrate

As mentioned previously, the data for Sample 2 was gathered from Tatcha's T-house Blog, found in the 'Try Tatcha' section of their website. This sample is notably larger and it is also a different genre and serves a different purpose as it is conversational and educative in nature. Similar to Table 1, table 3 also shows that Tatcha is the number one single-word found in the corpus analysis, but the word 'geisha' is second on the list, which speaks to the contents of the blog. There are multiple entries about geishas, their wisdom, traditions and makeup as the blog goes deeper than the homepage. The twelfth

word on the list in Table 3 is 'Kyoto', which is discussed in the blog multiple times as the founder travels there often and finds inspiration from that Japanese city.

Table 4 contains the twenty most frequently used multi-words as extracted from Tatcha's T-House blog. At the top of the list are references to skin types, rituals, and products. Table 4 also shows that multi-words relating to products, skin problems, and different ingredients were also frequently mentioned in the corpus sample.

Table 4. Multi-words on Tatcha's T-House Blog.

1	oily skin	11	dry skin
2	beauty ritual	12	luminous deep hydration
3	cleansing oil	13	leaving skin
4	skin type	14	excess oil
5	dewy skin	15	combination skin
6	hyaluronic acid	16	skin cell
7	skin barrier	17	red alga
8	deep hydration	18	rice bran
9	eye cream	19	sensitive skin
10	uneven skin	20	dark spot

Based on Tables 3 and 4, there is a definite aspect of skincare in the blog. Different products such as moisturizer, sunscreen and exfoliator are mentioned along with skintypes, which speaks to the nature of the blog as a place of discussing products as well as giving various tips and advice. Like the homepage, the blog often features (skincare) rituals, as can be seen in Table 4, where 'beauty ritual' is the second one on the multi-word list. Based on the corpus analysis and Tables 3 and 4, the blog also highlights different Japanese ingredients and their effect on the skin and mind. All four tables discussed above show the results of a corpus analysis as the frequency of single-words and multi-words used both on Tatcha's homepage and their T-House Blog is made explicit.

4.3 Tatcha's discourses

This section discusses the most salient examples of the discourses found on Tatcha's website to illustrate how Tatcha constructs their brand identity through different discourses. Based on both on the corpus analysis and multimodal discourse analysis, I identified four partly overlapping discourses from the data: "Secrets of the Geisha", "Well-being", "Sustainability" and "Philanthropy" discourses. The following sections focus on analysing the way these discourses are constructed multimodally.

4.3.1 "Secrets of the Geisha" discourse

The aim of this section is to analyse and discuss salient examples of the 'Secrets of the Geisha' discourse. As Tatcha is deeply inspired by Japan, there could be multiple approaches to the discourse surrounding it, such as discussing the ingredients, local customs or the Japanese words used. However, the aspect that first drew me to analyse Tatcha's website was their emphasis on rituals. After conducting a closer analysis of the data, I realized that the rituals were often discussed in relation to geishas. Therefore, it made sense to view the discourse around geishas because their knowledge and traditions are a strong part of Tatcha's brand.

Geishas are first discussed in greater detail in a blog post titled "Geisha, myth and icon" (published on 11.6.2012). Tatcha's founder Victoria Tsai describes her trip to Kyoto in a search for gold-leaf blotting sheets where she then discovers that geishas were among those who first used the gold sheets to keep their makeup fresh - which would later serve as an inspiration for Tatcha's original Aburatorigami beauty papers. Such personalized stories are attractive because they are more than a general concept. By discussing her travels, Tsai also establishes the narrative of Tatcha being connected to Japan, as she explains how their product is tied to the beauty secrets of geisha - who were also personally visited by Tsai.

One main feature of the 'Secrets of the Geisha' discourse is describing the geishas in a positive and intriguing way, which is done by using positive superlatives and intensification as well as descriptive and evaluative language. In a post titled "Marie Claire meets Kyoka in Kyoto", (published on 20.9.2013), geishas are described as "*the most*

enduring symbol of Japanese beauty”, *“artists of the highest order”* while also mentioning how Tatcha is *“a beauty brand inspired by centuries-old geisha beauty secrets”*. Using such positive superlatives and evaluative language constructs an image of the geisha as knowledgeable beauty experts. In a similar vein, Tsai describes geishas as *“revered amongst artists in Japan”*, *“respected artists”* and *“beauty icons”*. Moreover, According to Tsai, the geishas’ appearance is *“otherworldly”*, and their makeup *“glows under the moonlight and has an almost transparent quality”*. These are examples of intensification being used as a linguistic device to make an impact. The descriptive language paints a picture of the geisha as beautiful and ethereal and almost supernatural, making them and their ‘secrets’ appear mysterious and alluring, which can be appealing to a customer. It also plays on the notion that some people view Japan and its culture as *“exotic”*, for lack of better word. Tsai also writes how the geishas’ beauty *“lies beneath her makeup”*, which is an allusion to Tatcha’s own brand philosophy where beauty beings in the mind. In addition, it is stated that Tatcha *“offers a glimpse into their world, a mysteriously alluring place so often misunderstood”*, which suggests that Tatcha is the doorway to these ancient beauty traditions and secrets in the eyes of the customer. Through the linguistic choices, Japanese geishas are constructed as revered people who participate in rituals, are knowledgeable and honored in Japanese society and who possess the secrets to the elusive beauty rituals, which is something Tatcha can benefit from by association.

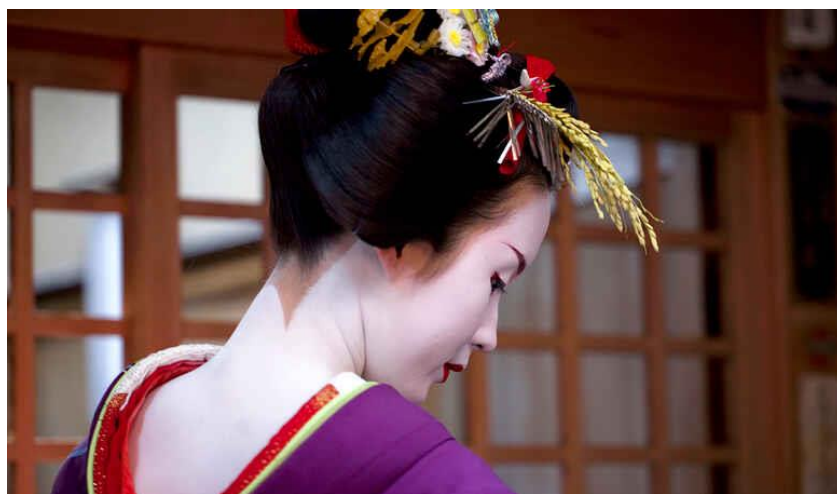


Image 3. T-House Blog; 'Geisha, myth and icon'. <https://www.tatcha.com/blog/geisha-myth-and-icon.html>. Saved on 3.4.2022.

In addition to text, the blog posts discussing geishas feature images such as the one above. In Image 3, a geisha is pictured with half of her face showing and with a downcast eye. The blurry background consists of wooden structures. The geisha is wearing traditional clothing, hair accessories and makeup. Her skin is covered in white makeup, except for the edges of her face and the nape of her neck. The colors of the geisha's clothes are that of vibrant red, purple, green and gold, which make her stand out in contrast with the neutral and blurry background. In one blog entry, ("A Brush with SPF", published on 24.8.2015), Tsai writes how seeing a geisha is " – a bit like looking at someone who just stepped out of a painting", further strengthening the view of geishas as living art. The blog features multiple similar images with geishas in their traditional wear and makeup, often with their gaze 'off-screen'. In this example image, there is an actor, but no eye contact, which makes the image non-transactional and less personal as well as a visual offer. The image can still be interpreted as intimate, as it is a close-up and the nape of her neck is prominently featured, which adds a sense of intimacy and vulnerability. However, there is an air of detachment as the angle is oblique. Using such an image allows the viewer to gaze upon the geisha and be intrigued by their looks.



Image 4. T-House Blog; 'A Golden Moment'. <https://www.tatcha.com/blog/a-golden-moment.html>. Saved on 3.4.2022.

Image 4 depicts a geisha demurely smiling and tilting her head. She is wearing traditional geisha makeup, hairstyle and clothing. In addition, she is touching her face with Aburatorigami paper (more commonly known as blotting paper) and doing it in such a way that alludes to the gentle feeling of skincare. The background is blurry, depicting wooden structures and trees. Whereas most images featuring geishas on Tatcha's T-House blog have the actor looking off-screen, in this particular one the actor is looking directly at the goal (the viewer), which creates a demand. The image can be said to be intimate or personal, as it is a close-up of the actor. It is also a frontal point of view, which denotes maximal involvement. In addition, her friendly facial expression makes her appear approachable. The actor is the center of the image, making her salient, further emphasized by the blurry background. The geisha in the image can be seen using if not the specific product, then a similar one, giving more credibility to Tatcha's products. Tsai writes how she was "*inspired to leave my old life behind to share these treasures with women everywhere*", which is an example of the geisha discourse and the 'Well-being discourse' overlapping. It is also an example of referencing personal emotions, appealing to the customer's feelings. Further, Tsai makes it appear as though through the secrets of the geisha she began a new life, which alludes to the transformative powers that geishas – and Tatcha's products – possess. Such statements can also be regarded as making Tatcha more appealing as a brand because they are portrayed to be knowledgeable about Japanese traditions and 'secrets', as exemplified by Tsai using evaluative language and stating how "*Each time I pull a package of those little papers from my bag – I am carrying a piece of that special place, and my geisha friends, with me.*"

The discourse at hand is formed in part by mentioning the connection that Tatcha has with Japan. According to Tsai, one of the main pillars of a geisha's appearance is '*mochi hada*', which refers to "*pure, gleaming soft quality of a baby's skin*". Describing beautiful skin in Japanese terms gives it an added appeal and it is also an example of foreign branding. In another blog post ("*Timeless Geisha Secrets for Exquisite Skin*", published on 18.6.2012), Tsai writes that "*unlike the intricate processes of many modern beauty regimens, the geisha's ritual teaches us that simplicity is indeed the ultimate form of sophistication*", contrasting Japanese knowledge and traditions with Western ones and old

with new, in favor of Japan. As Tatcha is deeply inspired by said customs and traditions, they can also be said to benefit from such positive associations in the mind of the customer, which is called the country-of-origin effect.

In another approach, the discourse is also formed in instances when Tatcha's own products are mentioned in relation to the secrets of the geisha. Tsai offers the reader a glimpse into the actual beauty rituals of a geisha, which are to purify, polish, brighten, nourish, blot and drink sake ("*geisha swear it works*"). While describing each step of the ritual, Tsai markets Tatcha's own products. For example, when mentioning step one of the geisha beauty ritual, purify, Tsai explains that the secret to the previously mentioned '*mochi hada*' skin is to remove makeup and environmental purities with '*tsubaki*' (camellia), followed by the words "*classical cleansing oil*", which act as a hyperlink to Tatcha's own product, The Camellia Cleansing Oil. In another blog title, "The Geisha's Secret: The Story of Tatcha's Camellia Cleansing Oil" (published 13.9.2012) Tsai creates another explicit link between Tatcha's own camellia oil product and the geisha's secret, not only in the title itself but also in the accompanying blog post by writing how she used the product and was left with "*pure, soft skin*" and was reminded of "*the timeless wisdom of the geisha*", constructing positive imagery around Tatcha's products through their association with Japanese knowledge.



Image 5. T-House Blog; '10 things I learned from a geisha'. <https://www.tatcha.com/blog/10-things-i-learned-from-a-geisha.html>. Saved on 3.4.2022.

In Image 5, a geisha and Tatcha's founder Victoria Tsai participate in a Japanese tea ceremony ("10 things I learned from a geisha", 8.4.2015). The geisha is on the left side, wearing the traditional clothes, makeup and hairstyle with her hands extended and holding a teacup. On the right side, there is Victoria Tsai with wavy hair and wearing a sleeveless black tank top. Tsai, with a bracelet on her left arm, also has her hands extended and holding a teacup, which is touching the teacup of the geisha. There is a contrast between the two participants, as one is wearing traditional clothes and the other in plain every-day wear. The background has trees and wooden structures, it seemingly being a Japanese teahouse setting. This image is bi-directional, as it has actors and goals as participants, thus both being reactors and recipients. The reactors and recipients are looking at each other, leaving the viewer of the image with a visual offer instead of a demand. The social distance of the image is medium, which makes it social but not personal. The angle is oblique, making it more detached and not fully involving the viewer. The image is an interesting choice, as in my mind it enforces the thought that Victoria Tsai, and therefore Tatcha, act as a bridge to the Japanese culture, and especially the secrets of the geisha. The image shows a literal connection between Tsai and a geisha, making Tatcha as a brand seem more authentic and knowledgeable in regard to Japanese traditions, such as the ones portrayed in the image.

With each post introducing and discussing the geishas of Japan, Victoria Tsai takes the opportunity to highlight Tatcha's brand and their products, as she discusses not only the Japanese culture but also the story and idea behind the products which have a connection to the secret rituals of the geisha. Many posts feature hyperlinks to Tatcha's products and oftentimes the existence of a given Tatcha product is introduced and then explicitly connected to Japanese knowledge and traditions. The blog posts make Tatcha as a brand seem authentic and curious in the eyes of the customer. The blog is also a way to showcase how Tatcha's formulas, ingredients and products are rooted in Japanese traditions. In short, the examples highlighted here illustrate how Tsai, and therefore Tatcha, are made to appear as trustworthy ambassadors of Japanese beauty secrets, which

are subsequently made available through the products of Tatcha. The accompanying images feature traditional geishas in various poses, but the most notable image was Image 5 with the geisha and Tsai, as it shown to explicitly bridge the gap between the American skincare brand Tatcha and Japan, connecting the two.

As a result of my analysis, I argue that not only is 'Secrets of the Geisha' discourse constructed, introduced and discussed mostly by Tsai in her blog posts, but there seems to be an underlying current of the geisha, and by extension Tatcha, as the fountain of beauty and knowledge. By detailing her travels in Japan, Tsai makes herself and her brand appear knowledgeable and culturally sensitive as she has personally visited Japan and the geishas and learned their secrets, which she is now glad to share with Tatcha's customers. Through the discursive practices, Tsai manages to construct an otherworldly aura around the geisha and their secrets, which can make the reader feel as though they too want to immerse themselves in these revered rituals. The posts and their content are, of course, carefully curated and part of Tatcha's brand strategy, as evidenced by the promotional hyperlinks embedded in the blog posts. In short, the customer is introduced to these "ancient Japanese beauty secrets", which are then subsequently realized and made concretely available in the form of Tatcha's products.

4.3.2 "Well-being" discourse

This section illustrates the main examples of the 'Well-being discourse' based on different semiotic resources. As well-being is one of the key facets of Tatcha's brand, it is continuously referenced throughout their website, thus making it a salient discourse to analyse. The discourse itself is a sum of many parts, such as mentioning scientific studies that connect well-being to activities such as '*shinri-yoku*' (forest bathing), writing blog posts that discuss well-being in its many forms and offer advice as well as the overarching notion that well-being can found in the small moments. Moreover, not only is well-being physical, mental and spiritual based on Tatcha's website, but in this case, it is also linked with skincare and therefore many of Tatcha's own products.

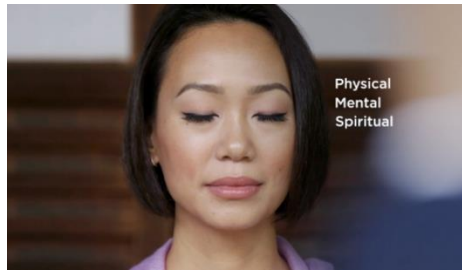


Image 6. Our Philosophy; Video. Saved on 10.4.2022.

Tatcha's well-being narrative is anchored in a video located in their 'Our philosophy' section. The video starts with Tatcha's purple logo imposed on rippling water that has white, purple and blue tones. Calm, instrumental music plays throughout the video. Music can be used to establish moods or to invoke emotions in advertising (Tellis, 2004: 162). In this case, it is soothing and emphasizes the serenity of the video. Next, Vicky Tsai starts speaking and says that skincare is self-care, and through years of research they have found out that skincare is care of all health, be it physical, mental or spiritual. This is a mantra that repeats through Tatcha's website, as it is this all-encompassing approach to skincare that is at the core of their brand. Further, Tsai explains how in Japan skin is a conduit to the world as it is the largest sensory organ and perceives light, sound and scent to name a few. Tsai also highlights how science has proved that skin is not only a conduit to the world but to the mind as well, as evidenced by goosebumps on your skin when you are nervous or the way a person's cheeks flush when receiving a compliment. The speech and the video together create an effective and multimodal experience for the user and it becomes easier for them to 'connect the dots' of Tatcha's philosophy. Whilst talking, Tsai is shown sitting cross-legged, eyes closed and meditating in Japan, facing Tatcha's well-being mentor, Toryo Ito, who also has his eyes closed and is in a meditative seated posture.



Image 7. Our Philosophy; Video. Saved on 21.4.2022.

In the next part of the video, Tatcha's well-being mentor, Toryo Ito speaks in Japanese. He explains how he practices five sense meditation, as he hopes to help others discover the importance of senses and how humans can regain their connection to nature and themselves. According to Ito, when the five senses are engaged, a person feels unity, harmony and inspiration; if a person is well attuned, they will notice the connection between mind and body each and every day.

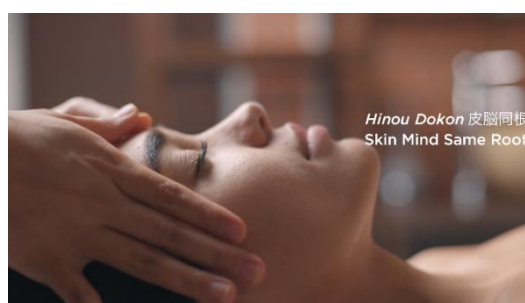


Image 8. Our Philosophy; Video. Saved on 21.4.2022.

Tatcha uses the Japanese phrase 'hinou dokon' (skin-mind same root) to describe their approach to well-being and skincare. According to their website, the mind-skin connection is well known and understood in Japan whereas it has "only recently been proven by western science". This is another example of Tatcha drawing from Japanese wisdom and experience and explaining it to their customers. In their 'Our philosophy' section, Tatcha explains how our skin perceives light, sound, scents, temperature, touch and time; it impacts our thinking and feelings and our emotions can show in our skin. According to Tatcha, their skincare formulas can "provide both physical and emotional benefits". By using such words, Tatcha elevates skincare to be something more, something all-encompassing that directly affects well-being, making it more desirable to partake in these 'skincare rituals'. Tsuneyuki (2002: 59) calls skincare a process of tuning spiritual 'antennae', which helps a person to care for themselves and to look inward for personal needs. In a similar vein, it is argued that skincare is 'a source of daily uplift', as it invigorates that private self-consciousness. Similar to Tatcha, Tsuneyuki (2002: 59) connects skincare with the body and the mind, calling it 'self-healing'.



Image 9. *Our Philosophy*. <https://www.tatcha.com/tatcha-3.html>. Saved on 6.4.2022.

Image 9 depicts Victoria Tsai with her eyes closed and wearing light purple clothing. The image is a close-up, making it appear more intimate and personal. There is no eye contact, which makes the image a visual offer. On her left, there is a figure showing the connection between the five senses (sound, sight, taste, smell and touch), with the word 'mind' in the middle, meaning that the five senses are all connected to and affect the mind. Similar to the 'secrets of the geisha' discourse, the well-being discourse is also connected to different rituals according to Tatcha's website. In the 'Our philosophy' section, a description of 'five-sense rituals' can be found, which is a list detailing different senses and their effect on humans. For example, Tatcha claims that listening to natural sounds soothes the nervous system, which in turn balances and encourages healing. Similarly, Tatcha refers to research that '*teate*', or Japanese ritual of hand healing, has been proven to activate slow nerve fibers which alleviates stress and elicits positive feelings. Referring to such research builds more credibility on Tatcha's part. Other senses such as taste, sight and smell are also discussed, which educates the user and promotes the idea of '*hinou dokon*' (skin-mind same root) and familiarizes the customer with Tatcha's distinct and holistic approach to skincare.

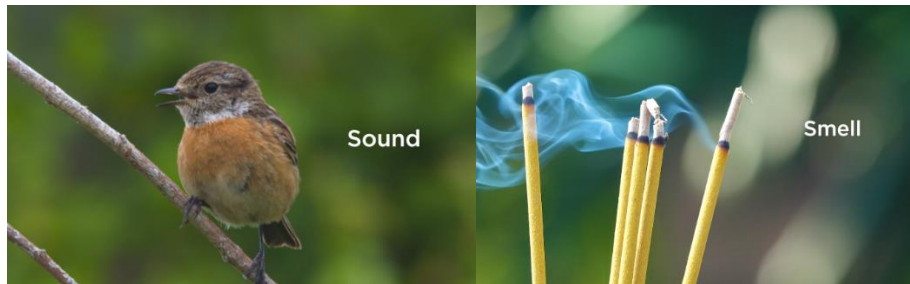


Image 10. *Our Philosophy*. <https://www.tatcha.com/tatcha-3.html>. Saved on 10.4.2022.

To take a step further, Tatcha introduces their research on the skin, brain and body connection. In 2021, Tatcha conducted a neurological study that included eye tracking and brain wave measuring using EEG instrumentation as the test subjects participated in Tatcha's Indigo Calming Ritual. In the above image, Victoria Tsai can be seen using the EEG instrumentation. The ritual in question includes the use of a skin barrier treatment, calming essential oil and camphor wood diffuser from Japan, a customized Japanese tea blend and a video guide that includes different sights and sounds as well as a guided facial massage. The study shows that after one 16-minute session the participants were demonstrably more relaxed and their mental stress levels were reduced. On the same page, Tatcha has included an introduction and a hyperlink to the Indigo Calming Ritual in question. An EEG study makes the results of using Tatcha's Indigo Calming Ritual more tangible, which might appeal to some customers and convince them to try it for themselves. By showcasing and discussing the research, Tatcha showcases their scientific approach to skincare, and therefore well-being.

As mentioned, Tatcha employs Toryo Ito, "a Zen monk from Kyoto and a longtime friend of Tatcha", who practices meditation with the five senses in mind. In a T-House blog post ("Meet our global well-being mentor, Toryo Ito, published on July 24,2021), Toryo Ito is introduced as "Global Well-Being Mentor", which is a "first of its kind role". On her travels, Tsai participated in Ito's meditation class after which the two discovered that Ito's philosophy was a match for Tsai's vision of Tatcha. According to the blog post, Tatcha and Ito will work together to share "the rituals of well-being". By employing and introducing a Japanese Zen monk, Tatcha is showing a person of authority

and knowledge, which adds authenticity to their website and brand. It also strengthens the idea that Tatcha is invested in well-being as they have experts that are dedicated to it. In terms of persuasion, people are more likely to accept claims from someone that they perceive to know more about a subject or an issue than they do (Tellis, 2004: 181). What the geishas are to the beauty aspect of Tatcha's brand and the secrets of the geisha discourse, the Zen monk is to the well-being aspect of the brand.



Images 11-12. Our philosophy; Video. Saved on 6.4.2022.

During the video, the five different senses are also discussed, along with an accompanying video shot, such as the two images above. Sound is a bird's song, smell is the smell of incense, taste is Tori Ito drinking from a cup, sight is seeing rain droplets on leaves and touch is a woman touching her face. By doing this, the image engages multiple senses – even though one cannot smell anything through video, the moving image of the incense sticks can make a person feel as though they do smell it. The video is an effective example of multimodality, as the images correspond to whatever is being talked about at the time and the peaceful nature and sounds add to the experience. The video is also a bit unexpected to new customers in the sense that Tatcha is a beauty and skincare brand and the video veers on the meditative side, instead of explicitly promoting different products, worn by models. These are the moments that can intrigue the customer and make them see Tatcha as something different and interesting, and using multimodal means of reaching out to the customer can be memorable.

According to Tatcha, well-being and skincare are connected on a deep level. Tatcha introduces a 2020 study published in *The International Journal of Psychology Research*, which links depression and anxiety with skin conditions and especially congested complexions. Another study discussed in the blog post shows that the way our

skin can affect whether or not we feel in control of our lives (“How congested skin affects emotions + what you can do about it”, published on 17.2.2022). In addition to their holistic approach, Tatcha uses these studies to add more credibility to their chosen brand strategy. In the same blog entry, Tatcha explains how their approach is to emphasize the ‘care’ in ‘skincare’, as they describe the skin as “*a wondrous, dynamic organ*” that “*protects us from the outer world*”. This is a way to elevate skincare to be something more than what many people would perceive it to be: it becomes care of something precious, our very own line of defense against the outer world. In a similar vein, Tsai writes how “*our skin is our immune system’s first line of defense – its strength is essential to our well-being*” (“How your skin repairs itself as you sleep”, published on 24.8.2021). She uses the metaphor of skin as armor, fighting outside pollutants and free radicals, protecting our insides; at night the armor falls needs repair, drifting off to “beauty sleep”.

Tatcha is diligent about maintaining the narrative that skincare is self-care and a part of well-being. In a blog post (“A message from our founder”, published on 1.10.2021), Tatcha’s founder Victoria Tsai writes that “*a brand is a promise*”, and Tatcha’s promise has been and will be to “*help bring you harmony from skin to soul*”. She, once again, reiterates that skincare is “*care of all health: physical, mental and even spiritual*”. Next, Tsai explains how all of Tatcha’s skincare is formulated to provide “*both physical and emotional benefits, such as a calmer spirit or a cleaner mind*” through these well-being rituals. Such word choices appeal to emotions and make skincare something to strive for to achieve many benefits. In a similar vein, Tatcha renames daily skincare as well-being rituals, which can be appealing to people who are interested in overall well-being and can thus possibly justify spending more money on skincare.

Similar to the “Secrets of the Geisha” discourse, the “Well-being discourse” is also partially built on using Japanese phrases. For example, Tsai lists her favorite philosophies for “multitasking at home” and uses various Japanese phrases to do so (“How to be a mindful multitasker”, published on 8.3.2017). The list is as follows: ‘*wabi sabi*’ (imperfections make things more unique), ‘*ichi-go, ichi-e*’ (just this moment, once in a lifetime), ‘*omakase*’ (entrust to others), ‘*kaizen*’ (make small, continuous improvements), ‘*shankankan*’ (the beauty of taking your time), ‘*nyunanshin*’ (have a flexible mind), ‘*chisoku*’

(know when enough is enough) and *'yataiki'* (find joy in small things), after which Tsai adds how she wishes that *"these beautiful philosophies are as transformative for you as they were for me"*. By using multiple Japanese phrases, Tsai shows her own interest and knowledge of the Japanese culture but it is also interesting for the viewer, who is supposedly from a Western country. By associating well-being with Japanese wisdom and phrases, Tsai manages to construct allure that perhaps would not be there if she were to simply use English terms to describe her *"favorite philosophies"*, thus benefiting from the country-of-origin effect.

Another aspect of Tatcha's *"Well-being discourse"* is the revered connection between human and nature. For example, the importance of nature is brought up in a blog post titled *"Reconnecting with nature through shinrin-yoku"* (published on 9.6.2021), the Japanese concept of *'shizen'* (the importance of nature to our well-being) is introduced to the reader along with *'shinrin-yoku'*, forest bathing. According to the post, *'shinrin-yoku'* is *"an ideal way to restore harmony in your mind, body and soul"*, which is reminiscent of the previous examples of well-being discourse constructed by Tatcha and by using these phrases, Tatcha uses the Japanese language as linguistic fetish, which is something they do often as they use the Japanese words in a context that could also be explained in English terms, making the use of Japanese mostly symbolic. However, as has become evident throughout my analysis, Tatcha is fully immersed in everything that has to do with Japan, as shown by the phrases used here. The blog post in question also encourages the reader to *"consider forest bathing as a form of healthcare"* as *"many studies have been conducted with positive results"*. By referring to such studies, Tatcha promotes the narrative of holistic care whilst also adding credibility to it. The blog post makes the *'Well-being discourse'* very evident, as they discuss examples on how to conduct forest bathing and its many benefits in the name of well-being, underscoring the importance of spending time in nature. Blog posts such as these show the side of Tatcha that is focused on promoting well-being by reminding the customer of different ways of attaining it.

According to Tatcha, another way to attain well-being is to take care of self and the environment. The blog posts discuss the importance of eating clean and healthy, meditating, keeping a clean environment, and being mindful. In one example entry, Tsai

lists eleven points that are “*inspired by Japanese wisdom and wellness practices*” (“11 ways to make mornings easy”, published on 26.12.2017). These tips range from eating superfoods to prepping the night before all the way to creating morning rituals and having a mantra for the day, as crystallized in the Japanese phrase ‘*ichi-go, ichi-e*’, meaning “just this moment, once in a lifetime”. According to Tsai, well-being can begin with simple tasks, such as washing your face, complimenting others, looking at trees and spending time with friends. In this sense, the well-being discourse is developed with a conversational and caring tone, which is interesting as it is not something that one necessarily thinks of when they think of a brand. This, of course, is also a branding decision and as such a part of Tatcha’s brand strategy. However, I still argue that the ‘Well-being discourse’ is not mere verbiage because Tatcha has devoted multiple blog posts to guiding their customer in the ways of well-being as well as building the same narrative elsewhere on the website. As such, well-being is seeped deep into their brand ideology and it is one of their brand’s key aspects.

Based on the analysis, Tatcha constructs the well-being discourse by referring to scientific studies, five sense and well-being rituals and by giving advice and suggestions for a more mindful lifestyle in various blog posts. At the core of the well-being discourse is the narrative that skin, brain and body are inextricably connected and each of these should be honored and treated with respect. Tatcha offers practical tips, such as forest bathing and encourages the reader to be mindful, to appreciate small things in life, to meditate and to be kind. In addition, Tatcha exclaims that skincare is self-care, which then links well-being to their products, but they do it in a way that promotes being kind to oneself and to approach things especially from a holistic point of view. This, of course, could be seen as an example of informative advertising, which is when a product’s features and benefits are shown to solve problems and lead to a better life. As they explain it in their ‘Our Philosophy’ section, Tatcha is “taking a holistic approach for health and harmony from skin to soul”, because “skin affects and reflects our well-being”. Instead of merely listing what their products do and the ingredients they contain, Tatcha connects their products to overall well-being and showcases the science and their philosophy behind the scenes to explain their approach to skincare as a brand. As a brand, Tatcha also draws on Japanese

culture and knowledge to teach mindfulness, respect for others and oneself and the power of the skin, body and brain connection, all of which are the building blocks of well-being according to the brand.

4.3.3 “Sustainability” discourse

The ‘Sustainability discourse’ is built on topic specific words, expertise, scientific testing, different semiotic modes as well as persuasive linguistic choices, which are illustrated in this section. Moreover, sustainability is a core part of Tatcha’s website and consequently their brand. Not only does sustainability get its own section under ‘Our story’ in the top banner of Tatcha’s website, named ‘Sustainability’, but there are also multiple blog entries dedicated to it. It is also an ideological part of the very formulas and packaging that Tatcha uses. In a sustainability themed video, Victoria Tsai exclaims that *“in the beauty industry, the sustainability has not been so beautiful”* – a thing can be either sustainable or beautiful, but not at the same time, which is something which Tatcha as a brand is adamant to change as illustrated by the following analysis.

The sustainability discourse is constructed by the detailed and illustrative video, as well as the informative texts that use topic specific vocabulary, both of which underscore Tatcha’s knowledge on the matter. Tatcha also explains the testing they do to ameliorate their sustainability practices which adds a scientific touch and thus credibility. In addition, by using loaded and persuasive language, Tatcha is able to describe the problem in an effective way and also their own role in bettering the world for everyone, for the collective ‘we’. Tatcha also gives concrete examples of how sustainability can be seen in their own products, such as using less plastic in their packaging, making themselves accountable.

Tatcha utilizes said video to introduce their approach to sustainability. At first, the user is greeted with the words *“Beauty in balance – Our journey to sustainability”* with green grass in the background. Calm instrumental music plays throughout the video. The video has a light grey background, with Tatcha’s logo and name embedded on the right side of the frame. In it, the images are in the form of spheres. The video depicts scenes of nature, such as fields and their crops, forests and grass.

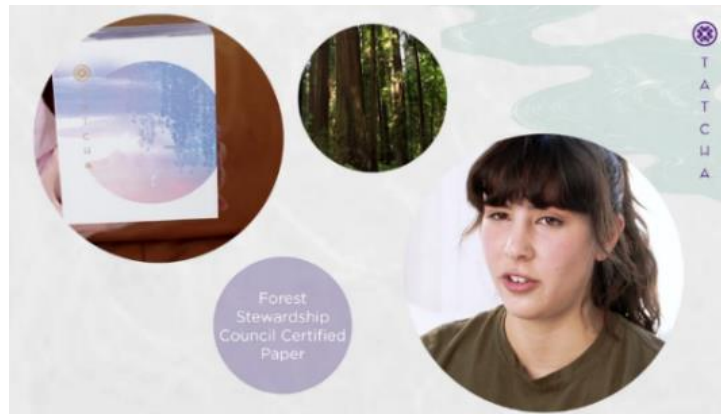


Image 13. Sustainability; Video. Saved on 23.3.2022.

Tatcha's founder, Victoria Tsai, can be heard talking in the video but the driving force is Lauren, Tatcha's Sustainability Lead, shown in Image 13. As Lauren talks, different spheres of images emerge with the instrumental music playing in the background. The spheres contain images that are the visual representation of what is being talked about at that time, such as formulas or pollution. Sometimes, one or two spheres become emphasized and grow larger, becoming the more salient as seen in the above image where Lauren is talking about the holiday items' packaging, which is made from paper made from responsibly managed forests. The video is a prime example of how Tatcha's website uses multiple semiotic modes together, such as music, color, video, talking, text and still images, making it a multimodal experience for the user and arguably more effective.



Image 14. Sustainability; Video. Saved on 23.3.2022.

At various points in the video texts appear with a big font in all capital letters with shots of nature as background. The texts are directives formed with imperative forms: *“Where do we start & how?”*, *“What does a sustainable collection look like?”* and *“Let’s move forward together”*. These questions engage the user and make them think, thus making the video more impactful. They are likely designed to divide the video into sections but they have a slight promotional feel at the same time. However, as the chosen backgrounds for these moments in the video depict peaceful nature scenes, the prompts might not feel confrontational even though the topic is rather serious – instead, they come across as almost motivational. At the end of the video, a purple text with a light grey background appears, first saying that *“We pledge to learn openly for the benefit of everyone on this journey.”*, followed by *“It takes a planet. Ask. Engage. Share.”* The first phrase alludes to Tatcha’s role and approach in regard to sustainability as they pledge to share their knowledge with others along the way, and verb choices such as *“pledge”* show dedication. The second part creates a sense of togetherness as the whole planet is mentioned, and the user is then urged to act and do their part. These are examples of pathos being used as a rhetoric tool, where the narrator is attempting to prime the audience to think and feel as they do in order to accomplish something. Tatcha creates a sense of responsibility not only in themselves but in the user as well and therefore strengthens their brand role as a messenger for sustainability in the beauty industry.



Images 16-18. <https://www.tatcha.com/sustainability.html>. Saved on 20.3.2022.

After the video and in the middle of the ‘Sustainability’ page, there are three images accompanied by short instances of text, explaining Tatcha’s approach to sustainability. Image 16 depicts a person holding plastic in their hand, together with a text

telling the story of how Tatcha pledges to reduce their waste by using FSC certified paper and by reducing their use of virgin plastic. Image 17 depicts wind turbines on a green field with a clear blue sky behind them, and the text below explains how Tatcha's approach is to reduce the greenhouse gas footprints of their products. Image 18 is that of a fisherman who is harvesting algae by hand, thus practicing sustainable farming. According to the text below the third image, Tatcha wants to map out their ingredients to make sure that they are being socially and environmentally responsible.

Together, these images and the text below them form a succinct message of Tatcha's approach to sustainability. By viewing this section, the user is made aware of three facets of Tatcha's approach and what they mean in practice. They form multimodal entities as image and text are pieced together to enhance the message as without the one or the other it would not be as effective. On the website itself, the images are large whereas the text is much smaller, thus making the images more salient. Below the images and in order of appearance, there are the words 'waste', 'climate' and 'sourcing', which are in capital letters and boldened along with a singular sentence following each one, whereas the two bullet points accompanying each image are not boldened. Therefore, the user is guided to view the prominent images and the main texts below them.

The sustainability discourse is built in part by word choices. Tatcha uses many topic specific words such as FSC, carbon footprint, recyclable, pollution, deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions, which are a way to build a narrative of knowledge and being in touch with current environmental vocabulary and issues. Sustainability is described as something beneficial for all and worth doing. Moreover, Tatcha explains what they do and why they do it in great detail and using multiple semiotic modes to build this discourse to do so, such as video, still images, text and sound, making the message more persuasive.

Through their linguistic choices, Tatcha also posits their brand as thoughtful, cognizant and actionable in regard to sustainability. According to Lauren, the Sustainability Lead, Tatcha views sustainability as "*the greatest challenge of our time*" which requires "*fast action*". Planet Earth is described as a "*beautiful planet*" and "*too precious to waste*", which are declarative statements that appeal to emotions. In addition, using superlatives and loaded language is also a way to be persuasive. Tatcha describe their

approach to sustainability as a quest, a journey and a mission. It is also mentioned that Tatcha does not want to do sustainability for the sake of doing so – they claim to really want to make a difference. In the video, there is repetitive use of the pronoun ‘we’ (“We all come to understand the impact...”, “we realize that this beautiful planet we have...”). Repetition can be used as a rhetoric tool and in this case the repetition of the pronoun is also a way to build a sense of togetherness and community with Tatcha and the customer being a part of the collective ‘we’. Another relevant example is Victoria Tsai saying that “*the fact is, we live in a beautiful world and we are going through it very quickly*”, which uses the pronoun ‘we’ as well as loaded language, creating a sense of urgency and the need to protect the planet that humankind shares together.



Image 19. Sustainability. Saved on 11.4.2022.

The sustainability discourse is also colored by the use of Japanese phrases, similar to the ‘Secrets of the Geisha’ and ‘Well-being’ discourses. At the core of Tatcha’s sustainability discourse is the Japanese word ‘*mottainai*’ meaning “too precious to waste”, which is repeated twice in the video and can also be seen in a still image used elsewhere on the same page (see Image 19 above). In their blog post discussing sustainability, Tatcha also use the Japanese word ‘*kaizen*’, loosely meaning “the philosophy of continuous improvement and learning” to describe the changes they strive to make in terms of

developing their sustainability efforts. It is worth mentioning that Tatcha could discuss sustainability in well-known English terms, but instead they choose to invoke their connection to Japan and the Japanese language once more even in the context of sustainability. However, based on my analysis, Tatcha uses the Japanese mostly to convey something that does not necessarily have a direct translation in English.

In their blog posts Tatcha tie sustainability to their products in a more concrete way as they name the individual products themselves, thus using the 'Sustainability discourse' as a way to not only show the responsible aspect of their brand but also to market their products. For example, in the blog post Lauren highlights various products that contain 'natural Japanese Indigo', which comes from a "*family-run farm*", thus appealing to emotions and making the story more personable. The blog also discusses 'Silk extracts', which come from a specific company that has "*specialized in silk extractions since 3500 B.C.E.*", establishing a long line of tradition. Tatcha's 23-karat gold on the other hand comes from "*a small gold-leafing workshop outside of Kyoto*", the camellia oil is "*harvested from the Goto Islands*" and their 'Okinawa Red Algae' is "*harvested by hand from a tranquil lagoon in Yayeama*". The ingredients being locally and carefully sourced from Japan strengthens Tatcha's brand image as sustainable and environmentally conscious. Moreover, not only does the blog post highlight Tatcha in relation to sustainability, but it also mentions Japan multiple times and underscores the wisdom and long-standing knowledge surrounding their products, all of which is now connected to Tatcha's brand.

Tatcha does not merely rely on salient images and alluring word choices to construct their brand identity and the sustainability discourse on their website. In the video, the Sustainability Lead refers to three different scientific tests that they use to attain their sustainability goals. First, they use 'Near Infrared Testing' to scan plastics to determine their type. Second, there is the 'Extrusion Test', which grounds the packaging into flakes, which are then used to remake a container without risking its integrity, ascertaining whether or not the container made from recycled material can be recreated and reused, thus avoiding the use of virgin material. Third, Tatcha does 'Migration Testing' using PCR (post-consumer recycled content) to see if there are any chemicals leaking out of the container. According to Tatcha, taking all of these steps as "adding

significant cost and time to their production”, making themselves come across as diligent and caring - even if it costs Tatcha a lot of time and money. By mentioning (and doing) all of these tests, the brand appears more trustworthy, credible and knowledgeable, creating an aura of expertise.

The sustainability discourse is constructed by the detailed and illustrative video, as well as the informative texts that use topic specific vocabulary, both of which underscore Tatcha’s knowledge on the matter. Tatcha also explains the testing they do to ameliorate their sustainability practices which adds a scientific touch and thus credibility. In addition, by using loaded and persuasive language, Tatcha is able to describe the problem in an effective way and also their own role in bettering the world for everyone, for the collective ‘we’. Tatcha also gives concrete examples of how sustainability can be seen in their own products, such as using less plastic in their packaging, making themselves accountable.

4.3.4 “Philanthropy” discourse

The fourth discourse that I identified on Tatcha’s website is the ‘Philanthropy discourse’. In 2014, Tatcha created their ‘Beautiful Faces, Beautiful Futures’, which is an initiative to *“help girls stay in school and reach their potential”*, and it is part of Room to Read’s mission of *“world change through education”*. The main goal of Tatcha’s initiative is to help girls through the Girl’s Education Program situated in Africa and Asia and they also work towards providing books to underserved communities across the United States. The charity discourse is prominently featured and constructed throughout Tatcha’s website. For example, and as evidenced by the corpus analysis, the ‘Beautiful Faces, Beautiful Futures’ initiative is part of the homepage and its main categories, as it has its own subsection in the ‘Our Story’ category, named ‘Giving back’.



Image 20. <https://www.tatcha.com/giving-back.html>. Saved on 10.4.2022.

The above image is prominently featured at the top of Tatcha’s ‘Giving back’ section on their website. At the center of the image, there are the words “Beautiful Faces, Beautiful Futures” and The Tatcha Education Fund, above which is the white logo for said fund. The background consists of a group of girls throwing their graduation caps in the air, which have the words “Room to Read” written on them. Behind them is a blue sky with white clouds and tree branches. The girls, who are standing on grey stairs and wearing their white and black colored school uniforms, are at the forefront of the image with smiles on their faces. The image depicts a concrete example of the girls graduating through the help of the Room to Read initiative and Tatcha.



Image 21. Giving Back. <https://www.tatcha.com/giving-back.html>. Saved on 10.4.2022.

The second image depicts three girls at the forefront and two other girls in the back, with four of the girls having their face visible. The three girls are the focus of the image as they are in the center, which is the nucleus of information. Moreover, the blurry background further emphasizes the salience of the three girls. The image is non-transactional, as there is no goal in the same image. The social distance of the image is medium, as the viewer can see the participants from the waist up, making the image social but not that personal. The attitude of the image is also maximal as it is a frontal point of view of the actors. There is strong eye contact from the three girls as they look straight at the viewer, creating visual demand. These girls are an example of the girls that the Room to Read's initiative wants to help to attain education and gender equality, and the image is prominently featured on Tatcha's 'Giving back' section at the bottom of the page, which is a hyperlink leading to Room to Read's own website.

According to the 'Giving Back' section, Tatcha is invested in supporting Room to Read's mission and are elated to share their progress with everyone. Similar to Tatcha's approach to skincare, the philanthropy discourse also draws on a study, this time a feasibility study conducted in 2020 through which Tatcha analysed and identified the areas in the United States which could benefit from their initiative the most. The section also features statistics about U.S. youth literacy and how some children do not learn to read, especially in low-income neighborhoods. In other words, the charity discourse is partly built up and explained through studies and statistics, adding more credibility.

The "Beautiful Faces, Beautiful Futures" initiative is tied to purchases from Tatcha's website and as such the customer is often reminded that their purchases can help to fund the education of girls, which establishes a clear pattern of action and positive consequence. A strong example of this facet of Tatcha's brand can be seen in a blog post called "Reaching a million days" (published on 15.3.2017), in which Tsai recounts how her time with the geisha made her understand that "beauty begins in the heart and the mind" and how it was that philosophy that inspired her to found Tatcha. That philosophy has also influenced Tatcha's philanthropic model as the full-size skincare purchases fund "a day of school", nurturing "beautiful minds". Tsai also thanks their customers for being a part of the initiative through their purchases, which is a way of strengthening the

relationship between the brand and the customer. Tsai calls the customer “a friend of Tatcha”, as she explains how together with the brand, they have helped fund over 1,500 years of education for girls worldwide. Referring to the customer in such a way to strengthens the relationship between them and the brand, as the word choice appeals to emotions.

Using emotional language is a way to appeal to an audience, and here it is also used to construct the ‘Philanthropy discourse’. Tsai begins a blog post with the words “*as a mother who wants to help create a better world for my child--*”, which is a direct appeal to emotions. She then discusses the philanthropy in even more detail in relation to her own motherhood and her daughter’s education, which is a way to make a story more personable and thus persuasive. Tsai continues using emotional language as a tool of persuasion as she describes how her heart swells and how everyone at Tatcha is touched by seeing the impact of education in the girls’ lives. Next, Tsai describes girlhood as “*a truly special time*”, which is an example of loaded language and intensification being used as linguistic device for more impact. The notion that advertising must use arguments and evidence to be effective is erroneous, as emotions can also be a powerful tool of persuasion (Tellis, 2004: 147). In fact, sometimes emotion prevails over logic. For example, emotions might not activate the customer’s defenses and they require less cognitive effort on their part as there is no logic or arguments to follow (Tellis, 2004: 150).

The thought of the beauty beginning in the mind is reiterated multiple times in various blog posts and because of that, it comes off as a mantra and it is something that Tsai intends to be seen as an integral part of Tatcha’s brand and their worldview. In fact, in another blog entry Tsai explicitly calls it a belief that is “one of the core tenets of the Tatcha philosophy” (“A generation of beautiful minds”, published on 10.8.2018). At the end of the blog post, Tsai reminds the reader of the connection between beauty and the mind (“*Beauty truly does begin from the heart and the mind*”), ending it with thanking the customer and assuring that together it is possible to change the world, creating a sense of community. From a marketing point of view, repetition makes the message familiar and thus more likely to be accepted (O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy, 2004: 163).

The 'Philanthropy' discourse is also connected to broader societal issues. Tsai addresses the hopeless feeling of looking around and seeing many things that need change and brings up the systematic nature of racism – all of which can partly be remedied by “equal access to a quality education” (“What Tatcha is doing about inclusivity now”, published on 6.6.2020). Moreover, Tsai created Tatcha “to care for you from skin to soul, and also to act as a conduit for giving back”, making philanthropy an integral part of Tatcha’s brand as “it is built into Tatcha’s DNA”. This example is reminiscent of a brand called The Body Shop helping impoverished indigenous peoples, which in turn led to the customers resonating with the brand on an emotional level, resulting in positive publicity for the brand: not only did they sell a product but they also “salvaged your conscience” (O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy, 2004: 64-65). One important but often overlooked thing to remember is that when something resonates with values, it is also more likely to elicit an emotional reaction (O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy, 2004: 64).

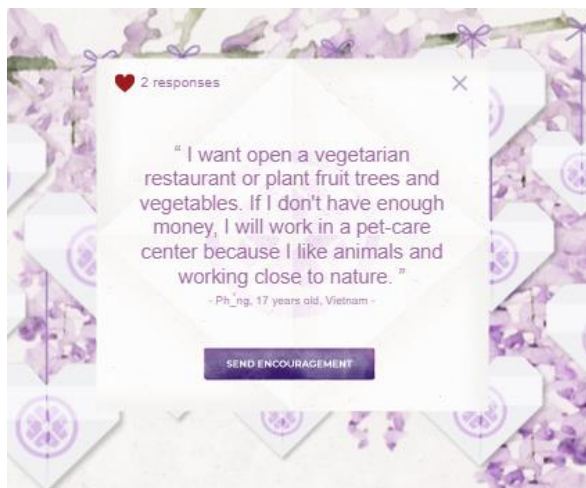


Image 22. Wishing Tree. <https://www.tatcha.com/wishingtree.html>. Saved on 10.4.2022.

Tatcha’s website has many features that encourage the user to interact with the website and the brand, such as Ritual Finder Quiz and Skincare Consultation. The ‘Giving back’ section also has one such feature, as the user is encouraged to “inspire dreams” and to “connect with room to read students”. When the user clicks the ‘get started’ button, they are greeted with the phrases “Did you know your Tatcha purchases help send girls around the world to school?” and “Now you can read the girls’ wishes and send them words of encouragement too.”, after which the background with Tatcha’s logo

transforms into a tree branch with purple hanging blossoms on a white background and the prompt to “Click the hearts to read wishes from real students all over the world and share your words of inspiration.” Once the user clicks one of the paper hearts, it opens up and shows a message from a girl where she explains her dream, as shown in the above image. By including this on their website, Tatcha gives the customer the opportunity to browse the stories of the girls that they are helping with their purchases and a positive way to interact with them, making the philanthropy initiative more concrete in the mind of the customer.

Therefore, the philanthropy discourse is constructed by Tsai’s own experiences, the studies and the statistics, salient images and linguistic choices such as emotional language. It is also built on broader issues such as gender inequality and racism. In addition, the discussion revolves around thanking the customers for doing their part by purchasing Tatcha’s products, which help to fund the philanthropical initiative. Tatcha also lists the concrete effects the Girls’ Education program has, such as girls delaying marriage until older age, positive changes in how the girls see themselves and going after higher education after graduating. According to Tsai, “*educated women can change the world*”, and it becomes evident that these initiatives are important to Tsai, and as she is the founder of Tatcha, they become important to the brand itself.

4.4 Tatcha’s brand identity

In this section, Tatcha’s brand identity will be analysed in greater detail utilising Kapferer’s brand identity prism, which I have created based on the data and the analysis as discussed in section 2.1. Therefore, the brand identity prism constructed here serves as a tool to illustrate aspects of Tatcha’s brand identity as they are at this point in time and based on my analysis of Tatcha’s international website.

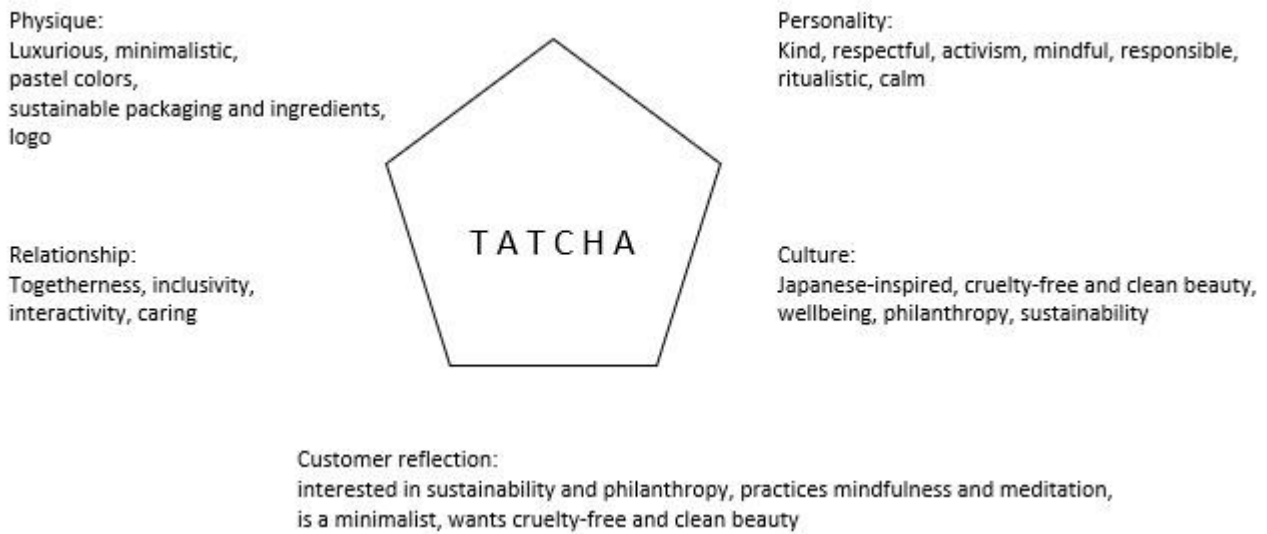


Figure 2. Tatcha's brand identity prism.

4.4.1 Physique

The physical aspect of a brand has to do with what the brand is visually and in action (Kapferer, 2012: 158). Tatcha is a luxury beauty brand which is Japanese-inspired and committed to being cruelty-free and clean as well as using sustainable formulas and packaging. The brand name, Tatcha, is a fusion of two Japanese words: 'tatehana', which can be translated as standing flower and 'chabana', meaning the arrangements created for a Japanese tea ceremony ("The meaning of Tatcha", T-House blog, published on 17.10.2013).

Moreover, the packaging is minimalistic and sleek, often using pastel colors and always featuring Tatcha's flower-like logo. Even though Tatcha's color story is not uniform, as it ranges from white to blue to purple to red, the colors are still usually pastel toned, which adds to the calm and serene feel that Tatcha exudes. Tatcha's values and commitments are also made apparent in the physical facet of their brand. For example, in a blog post published on 16.6.2021, Tatcha's Sustainability Lead explained how they wanted to make Tatcha more accessible by creating a universal design within their packaging. In addition, they have also made the switch to use FSC-certified paper, replacing paper-based packaging. As mentioned in section (?), Tatcha's website is built on a white background and there are no stark colors in the product section or otherwise.

4.4.2 Personality

Brands, too, have a personality. Kapferer (2021: 159) suggests that viewing the way a brand speaks of its products and services could suggest what kind of a person it would be in human form. Moreover, brand personality has a psychological aspect to it, as it is precisely that personality which the customers can identify with or even project themselves on.

Based on my analysis and with the idea of viewing a brand as a person, I would argue that Tatcha comes across as someone who is kind and respectful, as they often discuss being kind to oneself and to others and how skincare is self-care and care of all health. They are also conscious of the environment and are actively trying to make the world a better place, which is why Tatcha's personality is also that of someone who is devoted to promoting clean and cruelty-free beauty with natural and high-end ingredients. Further, Tatcha's personality is ritualistic and they are committed to staying mindful and having discipline, as they seemingly believe that beauty can be found in small moments and small acts of care for self and others. They promote having a tailored ritual and adhering to it to obtain best results.

In addition, Tatcha is vocal about philanthropy and their literacy initiative, Beautiful Faces, Beautiful Futures, donating proceeds from full-size skincare purchases. Their mantra would be that beauty begins in the mind, which can be reflected in not only their philanthropical endeavors but also in the way they offer advice and kind words to their customers via their T-House blog and are always encouraging the customers to contact them and let them know their thoughts.

4.4.3 Culture

A brand can essentially be a culture and an ideology of its own (Kapferer, 2012: 159). As discussed throughout the current study, Tatcha is an American brand but at the same time everything about the brand is deeply Japanese-inspired, which means that it will, of course, reflect in their brand culture. The inspiration runs deep, as it was Victoria Tsai's trip to Kyoto, Japan, where she found healing both physically and mentally.

Tatcha is a curious case of country-of-origin advertising and foreign branding, which in turn makes Tatcha's brand culture interesting. Even though it appears that the brand's country-of-origin (COO) is Japan, it is still an American company – but their formulas are crafted in Tokyo by Japanese scientists. Therefore, instead of Tatcha being merely a straightforward example country-of-origin advertising, I would argue that it is also a case of foreign branding. For example, Tatcha's name is a combination of two Japanese words and even on its own it has a foreign feel, which is an example of foreign branding (Leclerc et al., as cited in Aichner et al., 2017). When the brand is viewed even closer, it becomes evident that their brand culture is Japanese-inspired, and as Japan arguably has a revered image in regard to beauty and skincare, Tatcha can positively benefit from such positive associations. Tatcha has also extended their country-of-origin strategy to people, as evidenced by Tatcha consulting and featuring geishas and a Japanese monk on their site.

Now, Tatcha is arguably forthcoming about their American roots, especially if their story and company website is explored further. Nevertheless, and to an untrained eye, their website effectively suggests that the COO of their brand is purely Japan because references to it are so heavily featured all around the company website from the ingredients used to their brand philosophy. In fact, it is what first drew me to the brand as I thought it was completely of Japanese origin and I immediately associated it with Japanese traditions and skincare knowledge. With this in mind, the relationship Tatcha has with Japan is nothing short of intriguing, because despite Tatcha being an American brand, they are entrenched in the Japanese culture and its various aspects and their formulas are crafted in Japan.

A brand's culture also encompasses its causes, ideals and values. Tatcha also has a "Purity Promise", in which they declare that Tatcha is committed to adhering to Japan's safety and purity standards, and as such they use "natural ingredients from renowned provenances" (<https://www.tatcha.com/purity-promise.html>). According to the page, Tatcha's formulas are "non-irritating, non-sensitizing, mommy-friendly and cruelty-free" and their ingredients are high quality, nutrient dense and from renowned sources that are considerate of climate.

Well-being is also a part of Tatcha's brand culture as they promote all-encompassing harmony from skin to soul. They have dedicated multiple blog entries to discussing well-being in all its forms. For example, in a blog post titled "A message from our founder" (published on 1.10.2021), Victoria Tsai discusses the importance of practicing self-care and self-compassion. This is a message that is often repeated in some shape or form in multiple T-House blog entries and everywhere else on Tatcha's website as evidenced by my analysis of the well-being discourse in section 4.3.2. Tatcha's Purity Promise, which was discussed in the previous paragraph, also features a pledge on Tatcha's part to respect the brilliance of everyone's skin as "a barrier organ" and they wish to care for it "in the context of overall well-being". In addition, they liken skincare to a meditative self-care ritual that can have many benefits "inside and out". Therefore, it is evident that well-being is a core value and an ideal that is a strong part of Tatcha's brand culture.

The ideological glue of Tatcha is that everything is connected and skincare is deeper than what many would usually perceive. Kapferer (2012: 160) argues that brands can even be an answer to "a deeper demand for meaning", which posits the brands as ideologies. In Tatcha's case, there is a definitive meditative and mindful aspect to their brand culture, and it is one that encourages the customer to take a deep breath, to look around and to express gratitude. This, in my opinion, is rather interesting for a beauty brand and it is what makes it stand out. It is my experience that many beauty brands do not portray the idea that beauty is something more than skin deep, but Tatcha does so at every turn which fosters a culture of going deeper and finding the connection between mind and body. Kapferer (2012: 160) argues that people know that hyper-consumption and acquiring goods does not equal happiness or fulfillment, which is where brands can step in. For example, brands can foster ideals and they can also answer the need for meaningfulness. Such meaningfulness is exactly what Tatcha offers, because as they say, skincare is care of all health as I have stated many a time. In this way they are able to blur the lines of traditional skincare and infuse it with something deeper, something more meaningful that can lead to curing mind and body alike. In other words, Tatcha fosters the ideal of bettering oneself through mindful self-care.

4.4.4 Relationship

In the context of brand identity, relationship is created by the way a brand conducts itself and its services and how it interacts with the customers (Kapferer, 2012: 162). One such example is customer interaction and Tatcha has a rather extensive customer service section on their website. The 'Help Center' features detailed information and frequently asked questions about such topics as skincare guide, ingredients and packaging, payments, shipping, return policy and promotions to name a few (<https://www.tatcha.com/help-center.html>). Tatcha's website is also rather easy to navigate, as everything is clearly labeled and categorized. The only downside to their website design is that the font in all the blog entries is rather small, leading me to believe that it is perhaps intended to be read on a mobile device instead of on a desktop browser.

Tatcha also offers skincare consultation, where the customer can either chat online, talk directly on the phone with a skincare specialist or even schedule a free video session with one. They also offer The Ritual Finder, which is a quiz designed to find out what the customer's skin needs and which products would be most suitable, after which an easy-to-follow step-by-step skincare guide appears. All of this creates a friendly and approachable atmosphere and promotes the interactive relationship between the brand and their customers.

Tatcha comes across as caring, attentive and appreciative, as they – and especially Tsai – always portray Japan in a positive light and explain their processes in great detail. Their brand has a deep understanding of the Japanese ingredients, customs and traditions, which they also explicitly show when discussing the ingredients and their origins as well as the ancient secret rituals of the geisha.

Not only does Tatcha offer tailored skincare for many needs and skintypes, but they also wish to promote the idea of being kind to your skin and seeing it as a caring relationship. Tatcha guides the customer to honor the dynamisms of a skin as an organ and they want to do away with unhealthy beauty standards and anti-aging, as they want to view aging in a more positive light.

There is also an air of inclusivity, as Tatcha caters to all skintypes, all ages and all shades. There is no mention of them targeting a specific age group, ethnicity, or race anywhere on their page, but from some of the images used and Tsai often talking about her experiences as a woman and motherhood and the philanthropy initiative being geared towards young girls, I would lean towards the perceived audience being mostly women. However, their marketing strategy still remains quite neutral in the sense that the website does not have many images depicting customers or models, and therefore the relationship between the brand and the customer is ambiguous in a positive sense – anyone can imagine themselves a part of the Tatcha community and the togetherness that it brings.

According to an Article in LA times (<https://www.latimes.com/fashion/la-ig-tatcha-beauty-products-unilever-sale-20190708-story.html>, accessed on 17.4.2022), one of the main appeals of Tatcha is that the brand truly understands the modern woman and that they have a point of view that stands out from the crowd. Further, the article discusses the transparency that Tatcha practices in regard to the brand's ethos, ingredients and the story of Victoria Tsai, the founder of Tatcha.

As shown through my analysis of the 'Secrets of the Geisha' discourse, Tatcha has explored the Japanese culture in great detail and they are respectful of the ancient traditions. They have carefully chosen their Japanese ingredients and the beauty secrets they wish to emulate, which comes across as Tatcha being knowledgeable and in a position to share aspects of the culture with their customers and to let them in on these 'secret rituals'. Since the products have Japanese ingredients and the formulas are crafted in Tokyo with the help of Japanese scientists, it shows that Tatcha has been thorough in their research and can offer trustworthy information to their customers, essentially strengthening the trust and the relationship between the two.

The brand itself has a personality (see section 4.4.2), but another interesting aspect is the visibility of the brand's founder, as the website tells the story of how the brand was born out of Victoria Tsai's own frustrations with corporate America as well as her suffering from acute dermatitis ((<https://www.tatcha.com/our-story.html>, accessed on 13.4.2022). She embarked on a journey to Kyoto where she found healing from skin to soul, which eventually led to her healing her skin. According to Tsai, she is "*a real woman*

with real skin issues” and Tatcha came to be because of her own journey (<https://www.tatcha.com/blog/a-dream-is-born-the-tatcha-journey.html>, accessed on 13.4.2022). I would argue that the founder being so open about her journey could resonate with the customers. They might appreciate her caring personality, which comes through in her numerous blog posts or perhaps the customers can relate to and commiserate with Tsai’s skin struggles and they too want to find healing in some shape or other. In other words, Tsai is the face of the brand, as she founded it and she and her stories are featured throughout Tatcha’s website.

4.4.5 Customer reflection

The last facet of the prism, customer reflection, is not about how a brand sees the customer but rather the reflection of how the customer hopes to be perceived (Kapferer, 2012: 162). Sometimes the customer even begins to use the brand as building blocks for their own identity.

At the bottom of Tatcha’s homepage, there is a text saying “Every Tatcha purchase supports education equality worldwide”, and as my analysis of the philanthropy discourse shows, it is something that the brand is passionate about. Therefore, the customer reflection would show someone who wants to be philanthropic and a part of something bigger, such as providing education equality for girls around the world. By using Tatcha, the customer also wishes to be seen as someone that cares about the environment and sustainability, as they have chosen to use a brand that is promoting such values.

I would also argue that Tatcha’s customer could also be someone who wants to be seen as practicing and valuing mindfulness and meditation and appreciating a minimalistic approach regarding ingredients and packaging. Moreover, despite their mindful brand image, Tatcha still describes their brand as a luxury beauty brand, which means that the customer reflection could extend to someone who wishes to be seen as a person who enjoys upscale products but is responsible at the same time, as they buy from a brand that produces clean and cruelty-free beauty products.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I analysed the company website of an American luxury beauty brand, Tatcha. As a brand, they are deeply Japanese-inspired. Their founder, Victoria Tsai, has a presence on the website and she has strong convictions and ethos, which also make the brand stand out in a sea of beauty brands.

The aim of the study was to uncover the types of discourses that could be identified on Tatcha's website and what multimodal means Tatcha uses to construct their brand identity. To fulfill the research aims of the study, I utilized various analysis methods to uncover the answers. First, I laid the groundwork for the analysis in the form of Pauwels' multimodal framework for analysing websites, which I used to analyse the homepage of Tatcha's website to serve as an introduction to the brand and the data. Next, I used corpus analysis to conduct a deeper analysis of the homepage and Tatcha's T-House blog to find the most used single-words and multi-words used on Tatcha's website, which guided my analysis further. After consulting the corpora, I moved on to identifying and discussing the types of discourse found on Tatcha's website with multimodal discourse analysis as my method of choice.

The current study shows that analysing types of discourse that are identified on the website of a brand is an effective way to understand said brand. As for the current study, I was able to identify four types of discourses, which are "Secrets of the Geisha", "Well-being", "Sustainability" and "Philanthropy". These discourses were found based on corpus analysis and multimodal discourse analysis of Tatcha's website. The results show that the discourses were built on succinct use of linguistic choices and devices, such as evaluative and descriptive language and emotional appeals. Moreover, As Tsai is such a visible presence on Tatcha's website, her stories were also the foundation for much of the discourses as she has written many blog entries detailing her adventures and the inspiration behind Tatcha's brand and its products. In addition, the discourses were constructed by using salient and colorful images and videos that told a story on their own but also enhanced the texts that they accompanied. One tactic was also to cite and discuss studies that benefitted Tatcha's point of view and further gave them credibility in regard

to different discourses, such as the 'Sustainability discourse'. There was also a continuous narrative of thanking the customer and including them in Tatcha's journey.

As discussed in section 2.1, brand identities are important because that is what is used to elicit customer engagement and it is the part of the brand that can be perceived. To that end, I constructed a brand identity prism, modified from Kapferer's 2012 model (see Figure 1) to better suit the focus of the study. It focused on the brand's physique, personality, culture, relationship, and customer reflection, leaving out the self-image facet of the brand identity prism as it was beyond the scope of the study. The modified version (see Figure 2) was still helpful and effective in visualizing the key facets of Tatcha's brand identity. The prism shows that Tatcha is deeply Japanese-inspired luxury beauty brand that projects a kind, respectful and calm personality. They are dedicated to being a clean and cruelty-free beauty brand that values sustainability, philanthropy, and mindfulness, which is then echoed in the customer reflection. Admittedly, Tatcha's brand identity prism could possibly look different if other sources of data were to be considered, such as Tatcha's Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter feed, but that is beyond the scope of the current study.

Tatcha is an example of a brand that combines of country-of-origin marketing and foreign branding in a fundamental way, the latter being a rather underappreciated research area. Despite Tatcha being an American brand, almost everything about it is Japanese-inspired, which makes for an endlessly interesting research subject. At first, I was under the impression that Tatcha would only use Japanese words in relation to skincare to make it sound 'exotic', but the analysis conducted here proved otherwise. The analysis shows that the Japanese words are used to express oftentimes words, phrases or ideas that do not have a direct translation in English or when Tatcha or Tsai want to express something specific about Japanese culture. Therefore, Tatcha's use of the Japanese language is not a straightforward example of linguistic fetish being used, which is when language is used in a symbolic sense and not necessarily to convey meaning.

As the present study is a case study, it has its own strengths and weaknesses. By its very nature, a case study is limited and intensively focused on something in particular and it might not have the power to add to a broader societal discussion.

Moreover, as the present study is mainly qualitative and therefore rather subjective. It leans on my own ideas, perceptions and interpretations. Moreover, the present study focuses on one brand's website as it was at a specific point in time and as such the results cannot verily be replicated or corroborated. Despite this, a case study such as the present study can be valuable exactly because it is such a condensed exploration of a particular topic and its data as it allows for an intricate analysis of the given data. It is also a good opportunity to test out different methods and approaches and to see whether or not they are fruitful. In other words, albeit it has its limitations, the current study still presents an intriguing study of Tatcha's brand and as such it can stimulate new research and concurrently serve as an inspiration for similar future studies.

Due to the limited scope of the present study, many possible approaches and ideas were discarded. For example, I noticed that Tatcha has separate company websites for Japan, China and Hong Kong, which differ greatly from the US version – at least visually. These versions use completely different images, which are often more sensual and artistic compared to Tatcha's US website. Such research is beyond the scope of the study, but I might suggest comparing these websites in any future studies and exploring how brands in general change their website layout and design depending on the language and the perceived audience. Another intriguing approach would be to analyse the types of endorsers that promote Tatcha (or any other brand), such as different experts and celebrities and in what contexts they are used. It would also be interesting to study the brand identities of Japanese beauty brands and contrast them with Tatcha, the Japanese-inspired American beauty brand.

The current thesis contributes to the field of brand identity studies in a meaningful way. To reiterate, Tatcha is an example of a brand that uses country-of-origin and foreign branding whilst also being transparent with its customers about doing so. Victoria Tsai's approach has been to showcase aspects of the Japanese culture that she personally has benefitted from or has been intrigued by, rather than just presenting Tatcha's products without any backstory or explanation. The source of their inspiration is very apparent and yet they still, in my opinion, benefit from the mere association with Japanese knowledge and wisdom even though it is not purely 'authentic' in a way.

Moreover, Tatcha employs many Japanese experts and their production is located in Japan, which gives them a touch of authenticity. Perhaps brands such as Tatcha need their own area of research because they do not exactly fall in with foreign branding either, which is more akin to brands having a foreign name and leaving it at that to benefit from the positive associations. In Tatcha's case, they do benefit from being associated with Japan, but it goes deeper than mere surface level.

As for the implications of the study, Tatcha is an example of a beauty brand that is focused on e-commerce, which makes their brand website valuable and worth analysing. Such brands are a rich source of research especially from a discursive point of view and can offer different insights in contrast with 'typical' brick-and-mortar businesses. Pauwels (2012) states that website analysis can be challenging and time consuming and the researchers are culturally positioned and dependent on their own skills. However, he also suggests that even though website analysis can be arduous, it is still a rich fountain of research and I tend to agree. By analysing the hypermodality of websites, meaning its different mediums, their interplay and cohesiveness, the present study can perhaps offer something new in terms of understanding online discourses in the context of beauty brand websites. I hope that the current study can also offer some insight into brands that draw their inspirations from outside their native countries and how such brand identities can be studied.

Finally, brand identity studies and beauty brand studies are interesting as they are now but as technological advancements are made and multimodal websites gain new affordances, it will be interesting to see how that will impact brands and their identities.

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