



## SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

**MSc in International Marketing and Brand Management**

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# **The Nationalist Beauty Ideal**

A Qualitative Study on Nationalism in the Marketing of Scandinavian Beauty Brands

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# Abstract

**Title:** The Nationalist Beauty Ideal

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**Keywords:** Regional Identity, National Identity, Banal Nationalism, Critical Discourse Analysis, Marketing Communication, Cultural Heritage, Corporate Visual Identity System, Country of Origin, Scandinavia, Scandinavian Beauty

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to explore how drawing upon nationalism and regionalism in the marketing of brands may lead to unintended consequences in greater society. This purpose has been reached by studying the Nationalist and Scandinavian discourses used in the marketing of eleven Scandinavian beauty brands.

**Theoretical Background:** The first chapter of the theoretical background elaborates upon marketing communication and the theory of Corporate Visual Identity to create an understanding of marketing as a practice, and its impact on consumers identity. The second chapter develops a deeper understanding of Country of Origin, an effect used to positively affect consumer perceptions. The third chapter addresses how elements used to create a Corporate Visual Identity can be used to highlight a Country of Origin by the theory of Cultural Heritage Process. Lastly, the fourth chapter presents the study's critical perspective by introducing the theories of Banal Nationalism and regional identity.

**Method & Research Design:** The study is qualitative and takes a social constructivist ontological position. Following this position the study takes a critical approach, following the Critical Discourse Analysis Framework created by Fairclough. The methodological framework consists of the three steps text, discursive practice and social practice. Thus, the study's analysis is conducted following these three steps.

**Empirical material:** The study's empirical material consists of posts, texts and logotypes retrieved from the eleven Scandinavian beauty brands' official Instagram-accounts and websites. This empirical material is referred to as texts, which is the term used in Fairclough's methodology.

## **Conclusions:**

The study led to the following conclusions. Firstly, the brands draw upon Scandinavian and Nationalist discourses to raise desire among consumers with the intended purpose of generating higher profits. Secondly, whilst the strategy is successful as regionalism and nationalism brings people together and creates a sense of identity. Hence, it is an idle way of reaching the core objective of marketing communication, to impact and influence through the process of relationship building. However, as brand's adopt this marketing strategy in the Scandinavian region, the countries and its people are portrayed in a narrow and one-dimensional manner. This narrow portrayal has the protentional to pave the way for more aggressive forms of nationalism.

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>5</b>
1.1 Background .....	5
1.2 Aim & Problematization.....	7
1.3 Limitations.....	9
<b>2. Theoretical Background</b> .....	<b>10</b>
2.2 Country of Origin.....	12
2.2.1. Strategies of Country of Origin .....	13
2.3 Cultural Heritage .....	15
2.4 Banal Nationalism and Regional Identity .....	16
2.5 Summary and Motivation of Theoretical Framework.....	18
<b>3. Method and Research Design</b> .....	<b>21</b>
3.1 The Study's Scientific Approach .....	21
3.2 Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Framework .....	22
3.2.1 Terminology of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Framework .....	24
3.3 Collection of Empirical Material .....	25
3.4 Analysis of Empirical Material .....	27
3.5 Trustworthiness and Criteria of Quality .....	29
<b>4. Results &amp; Analysis</b> .....	<b>30</b>
4.1 The Scandinavian Nature .....	30
4.1.1 Nature as a Backdrop .....	30
4.2 The Scandinavian Human .....	36
4.2.1 The Natural Scandinavian Woman .....	36
4.2.2 The Urban Scandinavian Woman .....	40
4.3 Regional or National Symbols, Names and Native Language .....	42
4.3.1 Logotypes .....	42
4.3.2 Native Language .....	43
4.3.3 "Made In" .....	44
4.3.3 Symbols.....	45
4.4 The Muted Colours of Scandinavia.....	47
4.5 A Summary of the Text Analysis .....	49
4.5 Marketing as a Practice .....	50
4.5.1 The Marketisation of the Scandinavian and Nationalist Discourse.....	51
4.6 Social Practice .....	52
4.6.1 The Banal Nationalism of Scandinavian Beauty Marketing.....	53
4.6.2 Inclusion and Exclusion in Scandinavian Beauty Marketing .....	54
<b>5. Conclusions</b> .....	<b>57</b>
<b>6. Discussion</b> .....	<b>59</b>
<b>7. Bibliography</b> .....	<b>62</b>

# 1.Introduction

## 1.1 Background

New beauty trends seem to emerge each and every day. The market is being flooded with new brands and products claiming to offer new ways for better makeup application, to products promising customers improved complexion or longer lashes. The list of products promising solutions that will “beautify” its customers can be made long. Hence, the notion that the world is becoming increasingly beauty obsessed is not only an assumption - It is in fact the truth. According to statistics the beauty industry has been booming in recent years, and it is continuing to boom. Worldwide the industry is expected to grow annually by 4,75%, and encompasses a range of products from personal care, cosmetics, skin care and fragrances. Moreover, the industry worldwide has been estimated to be worth approximately €400 billion in 2020 (Beauty & Personal Care, 2011). The seen boom in this industry has partly been an effect of an increased consumer demand. However, more importantly it is a reflection of the launch of many new brands, all of which are trying to stand out and compete in an increasingly saturated industry. To reach out to consumers beauty brands have mastered social media to increase influence, which in turn has fuelled consumer access to brands and products (Drenik, 2021).

One region that has made an impact on the industry with the launch of several beauty brands is Scandinavia. The Scandinavian market has seen a general increased demand for cosmetic and personal care in recent years, which has led the region to be the sixth largest market in Europe for multinational beauty brands (Beauty industry makeover, 2021). Furthermore, it is interesting to study the beauty brands born within the region, as many of the brands utilise cultural associations and symbolism as a central marketing strategy to increase differentiation.

This marketing strategy has garnered attention globally, as the Scandinavian lifestyle, the people and beauty are written about and emulated. However, interestingly, in the wake of the marketisation of the Scandinavian lifestyle, beauty brands that only operate within the borders of the region utilise the same strategy of celebrating and highlighting cultural associations to strengthen their brand. For instance, numerous magazine articles can be read, published by Scandinavian and international outlets outlining the Scandinavian lifestyle and how it can be emulated through the use of Scandinavian beauty brands. Many examples can be found showing women with flawless complexions, rosy cheeks and minimal makeup. “The Nordic makeup look is all about slightly enhancing your features and most importantly keeping things natural” (Linnéa, 2021). This quote from a magazine summarises how Scandinavian and Nordic beauty

ideals are often described. There is an emphasis on being natural and holistic, in which these ideals are being connected to the region or country within the region. Going hand in hand with the words natural and holistic is a focus on using natural ingredients, packaging that draws inspiration from the local geography and nature, and lastly the use of light and bright colours with pops of “Scandi pink”, a light pink colour, and dusty blues. Fjords, glaciers, pines, cloudberry and wild strawberries are common buzzwords that tend to be associated with the Scandinavian lifestyle, and thus are seen in the marketing of beauty brands (Jahns, 2019).

The idea of Scandinavia as a region with a shared identity and a shared set of social and cultural practices is an important point of departure in this study. Academic discussions on regions and regional identity have become recurring catchphrases since the 1980s, indicating the existence of cohesiveness or social and cultural integration within a specific geographical location (Passi, 2009). In connection to the sparked interest in regions and regionalism is the increase of corporations linking their brand to a region and the lifestyle of that location. In turn, this strategy has become a common marketing practice to attract end-consumers and to increase the desirability of a brand (Margarisová & Vokáčová, 2016). Consequently, corporations are able to capitalise on the notion that individuals living in a certain region or country share a set of similarities, values and cultural practices, different from other places around the world.

This strategy can be seen among several Scandinavian beauty brands in which the brand identity is built by drawing inspiration from the Scandinavian region or the local Scandinavian countries. It is therefore of value to explore the ways in which these brands portray the region, its countries, the lifestyle, and its individuals, since beauty is a rapidly growing industry and a matter that affects everyone in one way or another. It impacts those who actively engage in the world of beauty and those who try to avoid it. By studying a number of Scandinavian beauty brands the ambition is to create insight into the potential consequences of this marketing strategy.

## 1.2 Aim & Problematization

In marketing, expressing a connection to a specific geographical location, such as a country or region can have a positive impact on consumers' identification with social and cultural values. This type of marketing has been implemented by beauty brands and is seemingly successful. The practice of connecting a brand to a nation or region, with the aim to gain market advantages can be viewed as yet another marketing tactic used by brands is a desperate attempt to be noticed. It is partly true, as the underlying objective of the strategy is financial. However, behind the success is the fact that beauty is something deeply connected to individuals' lifestyle, and a noticeable feature in many peoples' everyday routines. Beauty has the ability of impacting our own perception of ourselves and may affect the way others view us. Hence, it is not difficult to see how emulating the feeling of a certain nation or region through the marketing of beauty brands can be successful, as beauty rituals tend to be deeply connected to the culture. Thus, the consumption and use of beauty becomes central to the identity of consumers. As a result, questions can be raised regarding how marketing within the beauty industry subconsciously affects consumers, and how it may impact individuals view on cultural, social, political and economic structures. In this regard, it is possible to draw parallels between the beauty market and major changes in society (Holtzman, 2006; Warde, 2005). Moreover, as it has become increasingly prevalent in marketing of beauty brands to implement a marketing strategy in which regional and national associations and symbolism are used to create a certain ideal and brand identity. The consumption of beauty products and brands with regional or national roots can function as a marker of belonging to a specific culture, nation or region (Warde, 2005).

If narrowing the focus to the Scandinavian beauty industry, there is an existing and well-established image of what encompasses Scandinavian ideals - fair skin, blonde hair with a natural and healthy rosiness. This ideal presented by the beauty industry portrays Scandinavians as health-conscious, with a holistic mindset to health, and who regularly enjoys nature (Jahns, 2019). Marketing of beauty products targeted toward the Scandinavian market can be seen to maintain and reinforce a particular notion of the local consumer. Accordingly, the portrayal of Scandinavian individuals gives rise to an upholding of cultural differences, which in turn has the potential of heightening the distinction between "we" and "them" (Kullgren, 2000). The creation and upholding of certain ideals, and the implementation of regional and national associations in the marketing of Scandinavian beauty brands is interesting to explore. Moreover, the celebration of a nation and its people could in other instances be seen as controversial or immoral. However, within the context of Scandinavian beauty marketing legitimate individuals to embrace and pay homage to the national cultural heritage. Consequently, it is essential to

examine and problematize the ideals and values presented in marketing of Scandinavian beauty, what Scandinavian beauty brands do to articulate these ideals and additionally investigate the consequences of the phenomenon. Hence, this study takes a critical perspective, by exploring the neutralisation of nationalism and regionalism in marketing and the potential unintended implications on society. This aim has been achieved by studying the existing notions and values of Scandinavian beauty and identity highlighted in the marketing of Scandinavian beauty brands. Moreover, the study wishes to contribute to the field of marketing communication by uniting the theory of Banal Nationalism with traditional marketing communication theories. To explore the study's aim the following research question has been formulated:

- *What may be the unintended consequences for society, ideals and identity when using nationalism and regionalism in the marketing of Scandinavian beauty brands?*



### **1.3 Limitations**

This study is limited to investigate the business-to-consumer market (B2C) of beauty brands local to the Scandinavian region. Hence, the study does not include brands originating outside of the region. This limitation is favourable as it makes it possible to analyse how beauty brands strategically draw upon nationalism and regionalism in a marketing context. It is, moreover, possible with this limitation to find insight of what values and notions of Scandinavian identity and beauty is being expressed through the marketing of local brands.

There are two central terms that have to be established as these are central to the understanding of the study. Firstly, the term "Scandinavia" is used continuously throughout the study as it is most commonly used to describe the type of lifestyle portrayed in the marketing of beauty brands studied. The Scandinavian region geographically includes the countries Sweden, Denmark and Norway. However, Finland is also included in the study's definition of Scandinavia, although it officially is part of the Nordics. This limitation has been made since the terms, the Nordics and Scandinavia are often used interchangeably in everyday linguistics, and in which Finland tends to be culturally associated with the countries Sweden, Denmark and Norway (Brighton, n.d). The second term is "beauty". The study takes a rather broad definition and understanding of the term beauty. It encompasses products and brands ranging from personal care, cosmetics, skin care and fragrances. Thus, the brands analysed offer products within one or several of these product categories. An understanding of these terms is essential as these are used systematically throughout the study. The terms are also central to the study's aim.

## **2.Theoretical Background**

*The following section aims to develop a theoretical background of the studied phenomena.*

*The theoretical background is divided into four main chapters whereby the first chapter elaborates marketing communication and Corporate Visual Identity as a phenomenon and its impact on consumers identity. The second chapter aims to develop a deeper understanding of the marketing phenomenon Country of Origin as a way to gain positive effects on consumer perceptions. The third chapter goes one step further by bringing up a reasoning regarding how specific elements in the Corporate Visual Identity that do contribute to a strong link to the Country of Origin by introducing the Cultural Heritage process. Lastly, the fourth chapter presents a critical perspective by introducing the theories of Banal Nationalism and regional identity.*

### **2.1 Marketing Communication and Identity connected to consumption**

The fundamental purpose of marketing is to influence individuals. However, the large number of offerings available makes it demanding for brands to stand out in a crowded market (Kotler, Armstrong, Harris & He, 2019). Consequently, brands have increasingly started to recognise the power of having one clearly defined brand identity communicated using marketing communication (Fill & Jamieson, 2014). The notion of creating a clear brand identity goes beyond ordinary advertisements and marketing, and instead deals with the domains of visual identity and Corporate Visual Identity Systems. Melewar and Saunders (2000), state that the theory of Corporate Visual Identity Systems can be used to understand and identify various visual elements that together form the coherent graphic design language and identity of a brand. Examples of Corporate Visual Identity System include brand name, symbols and logotypes, colours, slogans and typography. Moreover, in order to create a coherent and clear identity, these established visual elements must be continuously represented in all available channels, from stores and ads to websites and social media platforms. Melewar and Saunders (2000) argue that the increased implementation of coherent visual elements of a brand's identity is the result of ongoing and rapid changes in technological developments which has led to increased consumer access. Meaning that consumers are able to find multiple offers of similar products and services from many different brands. A central aspect to highlight in regard to technological development is the increasingly digitised marketplace. Hence, digital marketing platforms have gained increased importance in order to reach consumers. Moreover, pictures posted on social media have become increasingly important for portraying a brand's visual identity. In general, pictures are a necessary component for expressing a brand's visual identity since pictures are

concrete and support individuals' visualisation of the brand identity (Fill & Jamieson, 2014). The use of social media and other platforms has consequently become an important core activity of marketing communication to establish and strengthen relationships with stakeholders such as consumers (Kotler et al., 2019).

*“Marketing communications are a management process through which an organisation engages with its various audiences. By understanding an audience’s communications environment, organisations seek to develop and present messages for their identified stakeholder groups, before evaluating and acting upon the responses. By conveying messages that are of significant value, they encourage audiences to offer attitudinal and behavioural responses” - Fill & Jamieson, 2014.*

By definition, marketing communication is intended to engage stakeholders, and thereby customers through marketing activities by establishing a two-way communication that meets customer needs. Marketing communication activities should favourably be directly centred towards a specific target group, and hence, be based on an understanding of customer needs as well as the environment in which they are located. Fill and Jamieson (2014) emphasise the importance of adapting all marketing messages to suit the behaviour and preferences of customers. However, after conducting well-grounded marketing communication it is as important to define and observe the cognitive responses from customers in order to grasp the success of a specific marketing activity. The cognitive responses from customers may vary depending on industry and target group. Nevertheless, the fundamental goal of marketing communication is to get customers to be personally involved in the brand and tie a strong bond to their identity in order to maintain loyalty and long-lasting relationships (Fill & Jamieson, 2014).

As an extension of the personal involvement in a brand and their offerings, researchers such as Belk (1988) argue that possessions individuals choose to purchase become an extended and vital part of their identities. Belk’s (1988) theory can be connected to the argument presented by Melewar & Saunders (2000), whereby consumers do not purchase a particular product for its unique functionality, buying the brand’s character, identity and confidence that it exudes. Thus, the personality and identity of a brand is often the biggest deciding factor during consumer choices. Hence, marketing research drawing upon this idea argues that consumer behaviour is to a great extent dependent upon individual’s perception of themselves in relation to

the brands offering and meanings attached to them (McClelland, 1951; Prelinger, 1959; James, 1890; Belk, 1988). In the process of gaining an understanding of customer behaviour, brands comprehension of customers' tendency to perceive possessions as an extension of their identity is vital as it will affect how market communication will be conducted (Belk, 1988). By continuously communicating a consistent message and hence bestowing a strong brand identity, corporations can manage to affect meanings customers see in a brand (Fill & Jamieson, 2014). Eventually, making the customers willing to make purchase decisions based on personal attachment to a corporation's offerings as customers experience a desire to extend their identity with this specific possession (Belk, 1988).

## **2.2 Country of Origin**

The theory regarding Country of Origin is one theory within the field of marketing communication that has been identified to have had significant impact on consumer behaviour, and is a vital component in consumers buying decision process, since it has a proven effect on consumer perceptions (Schooler, 1965; Reiersen, 1966; Gaedeke, 1973; Dornoff, Tankersley & White, 1974; Baumgartner & Jolibert, 1978; Bilkey & Nes 1982; Al-Sulaiti & Baker 1998; Clarke, Ownens & Ford 2000; Knight & Calantone 2000; Lim & O'Cass 2001; Moon & Jain 2002; Beverland & Lindgreen, 2002; Homburg & Krohmer, 2003; Kotabe & Jiang, 2009; Moradi & Zarei, 2011).

The Country of Origin of a specific product should be separated from physical characteristics and intrinsic attributes since Country of Origin is not an attribute that is based on the product's actual performance. Consequently, Country of Origin is seen as intangible attributes (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995). For the last several decades there has been a shift in which customers, in almost all product categories and cultures, choose products based on more intangible attributes such as brand name, appealing packaging. Hence, based on this shift, Country of Origin has gained even more capacity to influence consumers' buying decision process (Aichner, 2013). Due to the notable impact on consumer perceptions, Country of Origin is the most widely researched characteristic of international business, consumer behaviour and marketing (Tan & Farley, 1987; Peterson & Jolibert, 1995; Kumura & Canhua, 2010). In general, consumers are willing to pay a higher price for a product branded utilising Country of Origin. The phenomenon can be explained through the notion that Country of Origin is considered to signal quality, and to give brands a competitive advantage (Moradi & Zarei, 2011). Moreover, to consumers, Country of Origin has become an important component in adding the decision-making process

which prevents overload of information. In this regard, the quality affecting consumer perception of a product refers to the durability, performance, conformance and reliability of a certain product (Koschate-Fischer, Diamantopoulos & Oldenkotte, 2012).

Due to the fact that Country of Origin help brands to understand consumer perceptions and noticeably impact the buying decision process, country-specific stereotypes are used in various brands' strategy of communication (Moradi & Zarei, 2011; Godey, Pederzoli, Aiello, Donvito, Chan, Oh, Singh, Skorobogatykh, Tsuchiya & Weitz, 2012). The effect of Country of Origin can be reached by either explicitly mentioning the origin, or by deliberately not stating the origin in the product or brand in the communication. The reason why it sometimes can be favourable to not explicitly mention the origin of a product is because some countries have no legitimacy within specific product categories (Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu & Hyder, 2000). Consumers from industrialised countries are for example willing to pay a higher price for domestic products rather than similar products from less developed countries. Hence, this can be seen as an example of how Country of Origin has an effect on consumers decision-making (Cordell, 1991). Studies within the field do indicate that Country of Origin has the greatest effect on consumer perceptions when this is the only parameter available. Thus, the influence of Country of Origin is moderated when other parameters such as price and quality are available (Lim, Darley, Summers, 1994; Pharr, 2005).

### ***2.2.1 Strategies of Country of Origin***

As previously mentioned, brands can benefit from emphasising the Country of Origin as it raises awareness among customers and has the potential of increasing brand value (Moradi & Zarei, 2011). In order to accomplish increased awareness and a more satisfactory perception through the implementation of Country of Origin, there are a number of strategies that can be implemented (Aichner, 2013). Strategy is in this regard synonymous to a strategic approach and does consist of guidelines for how communication of Country of Origin should be carried out to attract customers (Chandler, 1997). Moreover, brands have the ability to combine and use various Country of Origin strategies simultaneously to gain maximum advantages from their positively loaded origin (Aichner, 2013).

The first and most frequently used strategy to communicate Country of Origin is to utilise the phrase “Made In...”. By using this specific strategy, it is not required for customers to associate images, symbols or words with one specific country. In other words, the Country of Origin is

explicitly mentioned and therefore more tangible for consumers. There are mainly two advantages with using the “Made In...” strategy. Firstly, if the reputation of Country of Origin is unsatisfactory in one industry it could be beneficial to refer to a specific region within the particular country in order to avoid negative Country of Origin. Secondly, the utilisation of a geographical indicator can be fruitful if an explicit region has an existing high reputation within an industry (Lebrenz, 1996). It is rare that the overall image of a country can change by one specific brand. On the contrary, it should instead be an opportunity to take advantage of. Thus, this implies that brands in almost all industries have the opportunity to take advantage of a country's good reputation but can of course also be damaged by a country's negative reputation (Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2001).

The second strategy is to add labels of quality and origin. These forms of quality labels with a geographical dimension have a long tradition (Moschini, Menapace & Pick, 2008). In general, this strategy strengthens the confirmation of quality and credibility. However, the labelling does also ease the decision-making process for customers as the verification decreases the risk of unsatisfactory purchases (Hobbs, 2004; Resano, Sanjuán & Albisu, 2012). Labels of origin can thus generate advantages for brands operating in competitive markets by positively influencing customers' purchase decision process (Moschini et al, 2008).

The third strategy, commonly used by brands is to embed the Country of Origin in their brand name. However, this strategy can be used in various ways. For instance, a city, region or country can explicitly be mentioned in the brand name. The brand name can also consist of letters, elements or stereotypical names that are directly related to the products Country of Origin. In this regard, it is not essential if the word has an actual meaning as long as it demonstrates the brand's origin (Aichner, 2013).

The fourth strategy involves usage of the native language in marketing communication which has had a demonstrable effect on brands' performance. This strategy covers everything from including the native language in the brand name and slogan, to incorporating it in printed and digital communication. In contexts where the brand name is in the native language, the actual meaning of the name is secondary. On the contrary, it is essential that the targeted market associate the brand name with the brand's Country of Origin. In this regard, the brand name does not even have to originate from an existing language as long as the brand manages to convince the customers with the desired associations (Aichner, 2013).

The fifth strategy is to benefit from portraying stereotypical or famous representatives from the origin country or region. By placing a stereotypical or famous individual with a strong connection to the country or region in their marketing communication, brands can manifest and strengthen their Country of Origin. From this point of view, stereotypical representatives of the brand possess personal traits and physical attributes that to a great extent are associated with the brand's Country of Origin. Accordingly, it is vital that the stereotypical individual is visibly associated with the origin by having a stereotypical appearance and dress accordingly to trends within the region (Hinton, 2000).

The sixth strategy for demonstrating Country of Origin is to utilise flags, symbols, emblems, or additional elements with strong associations to the origin. Above all, this strategy is used on product packaging where country or region-specific products frequently place flags or symbols on the package (Aichner, 2013). Lastly, the seventh strategy is to incorporate famous buildings, monuments or even landscapes with a strong connection to the region in their marketing communication. By adopting this strategy, brands can gain advantages of their Country of Origin without explicitly mentioning them in their marketing communication. Since this strategy is visual, customers can effortlessly associate recognisable buildings and landscapes with a certain region.

## **2.3 Cultural Heritage**

The theoretical framework of Cultural Heritage presented by Björkholm (2011), is designed to be used as a theoretical framework that explains intangible elements linked to a particular culture. Moreover, the Cultural Heritage process framework is based on the fundamental idea that Cultural Heritage has a more prominent status than other elements that carry an inherent cultural meaning. Björkholm (2011) argues that this is due to the fact that a Cultural Heritage has a greater symbolic value. As a result of Cultural Heritage's significant symbolic value, it is also being carefully preserved. Furthermore, according to Björkholm (2011) Cultural Heritage gives rise to a symbolic construction of value and significance by being mentioned and considered. In order to establish Cultural Heritage, a long and systematic application of certain symbolic values is required for individuals to be able to attribute a certain phenomenon to the status of being Cultural Heritage. The key to something achieving the status of Cultural Heritage lay in the number of individuals continuously using the intangible, cultural element. Accordingly, the most elementary starting point in the Cultural Heritage process is the idea that

Cultural Heritage is not static or self-evident. It only exists as long as it is being used and acknowledged as Cultural Heritage. Having this view in mind, individuals who move the Cultural Heritage process forward must be aware of society's surrounding perception of cultural ideals and views on what is considered right and wrong (Björkholm, 2011).

The Cultural Heritage process begins with a selection phase where important cultural elements are identified. In this first selection phase the view of a cultural element status changes as it, by being selected, acquires a special position vis-à-vis other cultural elements. The selection phase leads to a more systematic and long-lasting, value-adding phase where the cultural element is attributed specific values, symbolism and meanings. The next step is the delimitation phase where the cultural element shifts to adapt to the recipient's values. In this phase, the cultural element may be standardised and corrected based on the recipient's response. The last phase of the Cultural Heritage process is an objectification phase where the Cultural Heritage becomes static through objectification.

All four phases aim to demonstrate the creative process of Cultural Heritage and how certain cultural elements become bearers of cultural symbolism. As a phenomenon, Cultural Heritage is something that is created in the contemporary world in which they exist and hence they are based on prevailing norms and cultural policy ideologies. Cultural Heritage is surrounded by a natural status that is used in the creation and maintenance of social hierarchies. In turn, these inherent mechanisms are prominent in the creation of national and regional identity.

## **2.4 Banal Nationalism and Regional Identity**

Billig's theory of Banal Nationalism can be used to provide a critical perspective on nationalism and regionalism used in marketing. Billig (1995) states that the idea of nationalism is often misunderstood and misleading as the concept in itself is associated with extremist beliefs and values about a nation. As a result, individuals tend to assume that nationalism only takes form in a traditional sense, as an extremist and dangerous ideology, which brings to mind Hitler's Nazi Germany or Mussolini's fascist Italy. However, Billig (1995) argues that this idea of nationalism is flawed and simplified, and that nationalism as a term should be expanded whereby it is something that is part of everyday life and common societal practices. In other words, nationalism according to his reasoning should be regarded as a normal state that exists in all established nation states. Furthermore, nationalism has become such an integral part of everyday life that it for the most part goes completely unnoticed and can best be described as



banal. Billig (1995) describes the way in which Banal Nationalism plays out in society with multiple examples. One example being how nation states constantly remind individuals of their national affiliation through routines, speech and societal systems. For instance, the way politicians, teachers, media and marketers talk about the nation or address individuals can be viewed as a form of Banal Nationalism. It shapes the population's perception of the world, the nation, and in turn individuals' identity. An important aspect of Billig's theory is the way in which Banal Nationalism helps to reproduce certain habits, beliefs and practices that together form a national identity and culture. He argues that this nationalist cognition being constantly present in individual's lives has a great impact on individuals' behavioural patterns. Moreover, since nationalism according to Billig's (1995) way of reasoning overarches every part of life, these reproductions of practices, habits and beliefs function as a societal glue that reinforces the nation state's existence, by creating a false sense of unity between individual's living within a certain geographical area.

Billig's critical claim is that individuals underestimate the power of Banal Nationalism. According to Billig (1995), the hidden and modern form of Banal Nationalism makes nationalism a very strong and powerful ideology. Above all, this hidden form of Banal Nationalism remains uncontrolled and is not challenged. Simultaneously, Banal Nationalism has a great influence on political ideologies that have a direct impact on the structure of society. Thus, Billig (1995) manifests that Banal Nationalism should not be considered a weaker form of nationalism, rather, Banal Nationalism becomes a power factor used by various actors to set the agenda within fields of for instance marketing. Hence, using elements of Banal Nationalism in marketing can have an impact on individuals' perception of the world and thereby subconsciously influence their values. As a result, Banal Nationalism can potentially lay the foundation for the more dangerous and traditional forms of extreme nationalism. That being said, individuals that are contributing to the creation and establishment of Banal Nationalism are generally unaware of the consequences of their acts. This may in itself be a result of the fact that Banal Nationalism is not taken seriously and is relatively unquestioned (Billig, 1995).

Billig's theory of Banal Nationalism focuses on the social construction and reproduction of nation states in connection to the formation of national identities. However, the theory does not address the way regions can function similarly to modern nation states. As the world has become increasingly globalised regional identities have become more prominent which has led to the coining of terms such as regionalism and regional identity (Passi, 2009). Kullgren's (2000) reasoning of regional identity can bring some interesting and important insights into regional

identity and how it may correlate to Billig's idea of Banal Nationalism. Billig (1995) and Kullgren (2000) share a similar outlook whereby both argue that national belonging is a social construction. Consequently, Kullgren (2000) also claims that regional belonging is a social construction, and that regional categories have become so widely accepted as part of individuals' everyday experience that regional boundaries are never questioned. They are seen by most individuals as natural occurrences.

However, these regional categorisations play a significant role and create an imaginary sense of community, which can be comparable to national belonging and ethnicity. Kullgren (2000) claims that regional identity is similar to national identities in the sense that it is a socially constructed agreement whereby individuals have an articulated affiliation to a specific geographical location. This affiliation to a geographical location thus creates a sense of belonging and familiarity. Over time the continuous articulation and use of notions and speech that define the region, slowly spreads and come to largely define the inhabitants' idea of the region. The most banal function of this form of categorisation process is to distinguish between "we" and "them". Hence, in order for regional identities to be sustained there must be a "them" in order for a "we" to be established. As a result, regional societies are based on forming an opinion about the region in relation to other regions (Billig, 1995; Kullgren, 2000). Lastly, performativity is an essential part of the survival of the Regional Identity. Meaning that the continued reinforcement and re-enactment of certain behaviours over time enforces the existence and legitimacy of a regional identity.

## **2.5 Summary and Motivation of Theoretical Framework**

Primarily, theories of marketing communication lay the foundation for how marketing is conducted as well as how elements should be used to build a coherent brand identity. In this section, Melewar and Saunders (2000) states that the aim of implementing Corporate Visual Identity Systems in the branding process is to generate a consistent projection of a brand's identity through symbols, names, colours, logotypes, slogans and typography. The theory emphasises that the personality and identity of a brand is the biggest deciding factor during consumer choices since the visual identity makes the brand recognisable and familiar for the customers. In addition to this perspective, Belk (1988) is used to add a consumer perspective where possessions are seen as being extensions of individuals' identities. Hence, consumer behaviour is highly influenced by individuals' perception of a brand's offering and meanings

attached to the brand. Meanings and symbolism are in this regard established and presented to customers through marketing communication.

A specific theory used within the field of marketing communication to create symbolic meaning is the eminent marketing theory named Country of Origin. As a whole, this theory gives prominence to brands' abilities to gain competitive advantages and affect consumer perceptions when associating with their origin. In this first section, various strategies for implementing Country of Origin have been presented, which in turn can be recognisable as concrete domains of visual identity. Furthermore, the process of Cultural Heritage presented by Björkholm (2011) describes the process where cultural elements within a region or country evolves into a Cultural Heritage. Björkholm (2011) explains how certain elements carrying an inherent cultural meaning can gain more prominent status than other elements. A systematic application of symbolic values is the key to attribute the prominent status to elements and eventually turn them into a Cultural Heritage. Thus, it is possible to apply Björkholm's (2011) theory to marketing, as Cultural Heritage can be visualised in marketing communication through the use of Corporate Visual Identity System, and hence demonstrate a brand's Country of Origin.

In contrast to the previous sections, the final section of the theoretical framework provides a more critical perspective. According to Billig (1995) nationalism has become an essential part in everyday life and therefore goes almost completely unnoticed even though it has a huge impact on how individuals chose to live their life. Thus, the population's perceptions of the world and behavioural patterns that are a result of the nation they are living in. Accordingly, Banal Nationalism contributes to a reproduction of habits, beliefs and practices that together form a nation's culture and identity. However, the critical claim assumes that individuals tend to underestimate the power factor of Banal Nationalism as it is most often hidden and subtle. As a result, nationalism can find its way into different contexts and influence individuals' subconscious notions and values, which later can lead to more extreme forms of nationalism. This hidden indoctrination of national values can continue in the subconscious since Banal Nationalism is not regulated or controlled. Kullgren (2000) provides additional interesting and important insights with his theory of regional identity. Thus, Billig's (1995) and Kullgren's (2000) theories correspond to each other since Kullgren (2000) claims that regional belonging is a form of social construction and therefore regional categorisations have become accepted as part of individuals' everyday experience and generates a sense of community.

The theoretical framework is motivated by initially presenting the impact of marketing communication for a brand's ability to create a coherent brand identity. It also highlights how consumers attach personal meanings to their own identity through the marketing communication used by brands. Furthermore, Country of Origin is prominent in order to acknowledge how symbolic meanings related to a product's origin are attached using marketing communication. In order to be able to extract which elements are essential to the construction of the Scandinavian identity, the theories of Corporate Visual Identity System and Cultural Heritage are used in this study. In addition, the theories Banal Nationalism and Regional Identity provides a comprehensive and critical understanding of how the nation or region has a major impact on individuals' values and behaviours. Since the purpose of this study is to investigate the beauty industry from a Scandinavian perspective, these theories have been included to gain an understanding of how nationalism and regionalism in marketing of Scandinavian beauty brands can lead to unintended consequences in society.

### **3. Method and Research Design**

*This chapter entails descriptions of how the study was conducted by providing an overview of the study's scientific approach, methodology, collection of empirical material as well as analysis of material. The study is exploratory and takes the ontological position of social constructivism. The social constructivist view of reality is reflected in the choice of method, as the study has been conducted using a critical discourse analysis of texts produced by Scandinavian beauty brands.*

#### **3.1 The Study's Scientific Approach**

This study is exploratory by studying how and what values marketers are using when constructing and reproducing the identity of Scandinavian beauty through marketing. In turn the study has a social constructivist view of reality, meaning that the reality is determined by the multitude of experiences and the way individuals make sense of the world, rather than by external and objective factors (Easterby-Smith, Thrope, Jackson, Jaspersen, 2018). Evidence of this position can be seen in the choice of theory and methodology. Consequently, the study takes an abductive approach, meaning that reasoning will be conducted with a logical inference, and that theory with empirical material will be alternated to create a deeper understanding of the empirical material (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). Moreover, abduction is the preferred approach when carrying out exploratory research where one might encounter deviating observations which do not confirm existing theories within the field (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Having an abductive approach is thus suitable both as the study is exploratory, and because this allows greater freedom in the analysis process of the empirical material, which consist of marketing communication produced by a number of Scandinavian beauty brands. Abduction does also provide guidance in structuring the research to cultivate deviations and therefore uses observations as an advantage when generating theoretical insights (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014).

Lastly, the study takes a reflexive approach to truth, meaning that there is an understanding that research can never be free of interpretations, theory-neutral or that facts do not equal absolute truths. This, as many facts can be interpreted as constructions of individuals social, political or theoretical beliefs. Thus, taking a reflexive approach is in line with the study's social constructivist position to reality whereby understanding the experiences and the ways individuals make sense of the world are important and valuable aspects to focus on. The

methodological approach of using reflexivity does also mean that every step of the research involves a conscious process of reflection (Alvesson, Hardy & Harley, 2008). Moreover, the acknowledgement of reflexivity allows us to be inspired by opening up for new perspectives of thinking and reflecting. It also means that in every stage of the study the subjectivity of ourselves is being acknowledged as our own previous experiences and views of the world impact the way the empirical material is being interpreted (Alvesson et al., 2008). Having subjectivity in mind, it is therefore important to strive towards viewing the material from multiple perspectives.

### **3.2 Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Framework**

The study has been conducted using critical discourse analysis, in which social media posts and content from the official websites of the analysed beauty brands have been studied in order to gain insights, and to answer the research question. In order to understand the aim and methodological position of a critical discourse analysis there is a need to describe what implies with the term discourse. The term discourse rests upon the notion that our language is structured into different patterns in which we utilise and follow in various social domains (Winther & Philips, 2000). For instance, it is common to talk about an existing medical discourse, referring to the terms and ways individuals within the medical profession discuss medicine. In this study the two discourses that will be highlighted are a Scandinavian discourse, and a Nationalist discourse used by beauty marketers in their marketing communication. As the study takes a critical perspective and uses posts and texts from websites as material, Fairclough's critical discourse framework has been chosen as the most suitable methodology. Furthermore, the purpose of Fairclough's analysis is to unveil different types of societal structures such as social structures and power structures through the analysis of a given discourse (Winther et al., 2000). In that sense the analytical framework is not neutral, but ideologically driven with the objective to uncover societal structures (Winther et al., 2000). Having this structural perspective is important as it will aid in the reasoning of Billig's critical theory in connection to this study's aim.

Moreover, according to Fairclough (1992), discourse has three separate functions. It has a relational function, referring to social relations, an identity function, meaning social identities, and an ideational function, referring to knowledge and meaning making systems. Having this understanding of the various ways discourses affect social life, Fairclough argues that a

discourse should be analysed with a focus on two dimensions. Firstly, the *communicative event*, that being the use of language in various mediums such writing, films and interviews (Fairclough, 1995). In this study this refers to the use of language and images found on websites and on Instagram. The second dimension is *order of discourse*, which is the sum of all discourses used within a social domain or social institution (Fairclough, 1995). As for the aim of this study it would be the discourses seen within the social domain of marketing of Scandinavian beauty products and brands.

Central to applying Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is the understanding of his *three-dimensional model*. Each of the three elements are applied to the discourse or discourses studied in order to gain insights and understanding. The first step of the model is what Fairclough refers to as *text*, which refers to the material being studied and can include anything from speech, writing, pictures and images or a mix of visual and linguistic elements. These elements should be analysed using language analysis to understand the text or some type of visual analysis. This is also one of the reasons why critical discourse analysis is suitable for this study as the material will mainly consist of visual elements with a few expectations of written texts. The second step is called *discursive practice* and refers to the study of how text is being produced, distributed and consumed. This part of the analysis concerns the identification of which discourses can be drawn upon from the analysed texts and how the discourses are combined (Fairclough, 1992). Additionally, discursive practice focuses on the way authors or creators of text build upon existing genres and discourses in order to create a text (Winther et al., 2000). Thus, creators of texts are important to study as they play a vital role in upholding certain social orders and are drivers of social change. Fairclough's view of the text creator is yet another reason why Fairclough's critical discourse framework is suitable for this study, as the aim is to study the unintended consequences of nationalism and regionalism used in the marketing of Scandinavian beauty brands. This leads to the last step of the model called *social practice*, which is the objective of the analysis process. It refers to the way in which communicative actions create meaning for various experiences (Winther et al., 2000). Moreover, social practice also concerns the societal, organisational or institutional concerns of a discursive event, and how that shapes the nature of the discursive practice (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough argues that discourse is an important form of social practice that both reproduces and changes knowledge, social relations and power relations as well as identities. Simultaneously, discourses are also shaped by other social practices and existing structures (Fairclough, 1992).

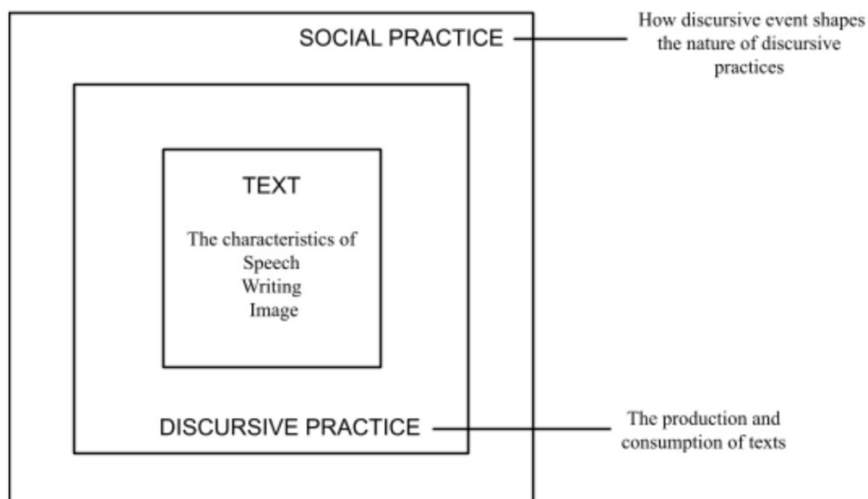


Figure 1. *Illustration of Fairclough's three-dimensional model*

### **3.2.1 Terminology of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Framework**

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Framework contains a number of terms that are important to understand in order to apply the framework. These terms are used to further understand the ways in which various discourses construct and reproduce power structures and social structures in the social world (Bryman & Bell, 2017). As established discourse is an important example of social practice within critical discourse analysis. Along with this notion is the view of discourse as both *constituent* and *constituted* by social practice. Meaning that a discourse is a type of social practice that can both create identities, power structure and knowledge, whilst also recreating existing identities, power structures and knowledge (Fairclough, 1992). Thus, this notion refers back to Fairclough's view of the three functions of a discourse.

Another term central to Fairclough's analytical framework is *interdiscursivity*. Interdiscursivity refers to the explicit or implicit relations that one discourse has to another. In other words, the term is used to describe when one discourse uses elements of another discourse (Fairclough, 1992). Hence, interdiscursivity has the ability to change the boundaries within an order of discourse and between an order of discourse, whereby discourses change either to create new sociocultural changes, or uphold the existing order of discourse and social order (Winther et al., 2000). In this study interdiscursivity has been studied by looking at a Scandinavian and Nationalist discourse used in marketing, and how these discourses relate to one another.



### 3.3 Collection of Empirical Material

The collection of empirical material began with general research of what is written about Scandinavian beauty. In this stage, magazines and newspaper articles were read in order to gain an understanding of the way Scandinavian and beauty ideals are portrayed and written about by individuals and media. A number of sources include the online magazines Byrdie and Nordic Style Magazine, and the magazines Damernas Värld, Glamour Magazine and Vogue. As the study focuses on Scandinavian beauty brands the next step of the collection process was to develop an understanding of the different Scandinavian beauty brands available on the market. In this stage, various Google Search Terms were used to identify listings of beauty brands found on the Scandinavian market. A number of search terms used were *Scandinavian beauty brands*, *Scandinavian beauty*, *Beauty Brands in Scandinavia*, *Beauty brands in Sweden*, *Beauty Brands in Denmark*, *Beauty Brands in Norway*, *Beauty Brands in Finland*, *Makeup Brands in Scandinavia* and *Skincare Brands in Scandinavia*. When selecting beauty brands to study a criterion was established to ensure a systematic selection of Scandinavian beauty brands. The criteria was based on two perimeters. Firstly, that the brand had to have its headquarters in a Scandinavian country, and secondly, that brand had to utilise a marketing strategy in which the brand plays upon being from a Scandinavian country. The process of finding Scandinavian beauty brands led to a finalised list of the eleven beauty brands: *Emma S.*, *Indy Beauty*, *Lumene*, *Löwengrip*, *Björn Axén*, *Maria Åkerberg*, *Tromborg*, *Estelle & Thild*, *LA:Bruket*, *Björk & Berries* and *Nilens Jord*.

Several of the magazines and newspaper articles found in the first stage of researching Scandinavian beauty mentioned many of the selected beauty brands, which was a pleasant indicator that the beauty brands chosen would lead to insights relevant to the study. In this stage the aim was to develop further knowledge of the beauty brands available. The collection process was conducted online as information and relevant empirical material is easily available and accessible on either the beauty brands' social media platforms or websites. Moreover, the empirical material, or what Fairclough refers to as "texts", consists of marketing material and has been narrowed down to include posts from the beauty brands' official Instagram accounts and marketing material from the official websites. The social media platform Instagram has been selected as the platform is a very popular and successful marketing tool for lifestyle brands. As beauty is included in the category of lifestyle brands, all of the eleven beauty brands were found to be posting regularly on Instagram. Moreover, Instagram is a particularly interesting platform to study since it is a very visual platform where beauty brands through images can

create a clear brand image and identity. The posts collected from the beauty brands were posted during 2020 and the spring of 2021. The official websites of the selected beauty brands was also included as this is a medium fully owned by the beauty brands, in which the brands can control how they wish to be perceived.

In regard to the study's ethical considerations the position is that the study can be conducted without violating any ethical or moral principles. This as all texts have been retrieved from the beauty brands official Instagram accounts or websites. Thus, the empirical material is not distributed by a private person. Furthermore, the collected texts have all been produced and distributed for commercial purposes aimed for the public. In this stage of the collection process the texts were downloaded and stored in a digital folder to ease the process of analysis and sorting. Keeping the texts in one single folder made it easier to gain an overview of the collected material. Below is a summarising table of the Scandinavian beauty brands analysed in the study, the number of texts collected, and the sources from which the texts were retrieved.

Table 1. Number of texts collected from each brand

Brand Name	Instagram	Instagram handle	Website	Website name
Björk & Berries	7	@bjorkandberries	4	www.bjorkandberries.com
Björn Axén	1	@bjornaxen	2	www.bjornaxen.se
Emma S.	3	@emmasskincare	2	www.emmas.com
Estelle & Thild	2	@estellethild	1	www.estellethild.com
Indy Beauty	5	@indybeautysweden	1	www.indybeauty.se
LA:Bruket	2	@labruket	3	www.labruket.se
Lumene	8	@lumenefinland	5	www.lumene.com
Löwengrip	8	@lowengrip	2	www.lowengrip.com
Maria Åkerberg	3	@mariaakerbergofficial	2	www.mariaakerberg.com
Nilens Jord	3	@nilensjord	3	www.nilensjord.dk
Tromborg	2	@tromborgcom	3	www.tromborg.com

### 3.4 Analysis of Empirical Material

The analysis process is based on categorisation. The purpose of this process is to find similarities and differences between the studied marketing material (Bernard & Ryan, 2003). It is also a way to “spend time with the material” to be able to look at the texts from different perspectives and with fresh eyes (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). The first step of the categorisation process aimed to find valuable themes and subthemes (Bernard & Ryan, 2003). In this stage marketing material from the eleven Scandinavian beauty brands were collected and put rather broadly into a wide number of themes and subthemes. The second step of the categorisation process was to identify the themes considered to be of higher importance (Bernard & Ryan, 2003). The themes initially found were thus evaluated and reflected upon. Some of the material was also re-sorted as some texts were found to belong to another theme than first considered. The third and fourth step of the categorisation process was to find a hierarchy of themes, and to link the themes to

the theoretical framework (Bernard & Ryan, 2003). The sole purpose of this process was to ease the analysis process by finding patterns that could be essential for answering the research question. The categorisation process boiled down to the below four themes:

1. The Scandinavian Nature
2. The Scandinavian Human
3. Regional or National Symbols, Names and Native Language
4. The Muted Colours of Scandinavia

The above themes are listed in the hierarchical order whereby the themes considered to be of most value and importance are listed first. Moreover, during the categorisation process the abductive approach was kept in mind as theories were added to the theoretical framework in order to make sure to capture interesting insights and findings (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). In this way the fourth step of the categorisation process was fulfilled as the theories will aid the presentation of interesting findings. Furthermore, the themes lay the basis for the analysis, and Fairclough's methodological framework has been applied taking these themes into consideration. Thus, the analysis is structured to first analyse each theme separately by applying Fairclough's first level of analysis which is text. The texts are used to highlight the ways in which the theme is portrayed in marketing of Scandinavian beauty brands. The following part of the analysis combines the four themes and focuses on the second part of Fairclough's framework which is discursive practice. Moreover, the last part of the analysis explores the themes from Fairclough's last analytical step which is social practice. In this way the analytical structure is shaped as a pyramid, starting out with a close analysis of the phenomena, to then widening the perspective to a societal level. Keeping subjectivity in mind, it is acknowledged that the study has a reflexive approach to truth, whereby the authors are reminded by how our subjectivity may impact the study's result and affecting what themes are considered to be important.

### 3.5 Trustworthiness and Criteria of Quality

The *Trustworthiness* of this study is vital and is expressed through the establishing of four components. The first component is *Credibility* and refers to the accuracy of a study's findings (Bryman, 2015). In order to ensure credibility, the method of triangulation has been used to integrate methods, theories and empirical findings (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Andy, 2002). This method has been used to investigate the marketing of Scandinavian beauty brands in a systematic manner, and to produce a balanced interpretation of the collected material.

The second component is *Transferability* referring to how well the study's findings are applicable in various contexts (Bryman, 2015). In this regard, this study's aim is to create additional insights in an unexplored part of a vital marketing phenomenon. Additionally, by focusing on providing results that can be applicable in a broader perspective, the aspiration was to enable the reader to absorb the findings from this study and apply it in various contexts.

The third component is *Confirmability* which refers to the study's findings and degree of neutrality and are not depending on the researchers' personal motivations (Bryman, 2015). In order to gain confirmability, the selection of empirical material has been systematic and objective in order to gain a clear perception regarding marketing of Scandinavian beauty products. In addition, the analysis process is based on the presented theoretical framework as well as Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Framework, which in turn has paved the way for an objective analysis of the empirical material.

The last component is *Dependability* and refers to the capability of replicating the findings from this study in another study conducted by other researchers. A study that can be replicated indicates that the study has been conducted in a consistent manner (Bryman, 2015). Concerning this dilemma, the aim has been to provide a clear understanding about the chosen research method, the empirical material and theories applied, to enable researchers to replicate our study with similar findings.

## **4. Results & Analysis**

*In this chapter the texts from the eleven brands Emma S., Indy Beauty, Lumene, Löwengrip, Björn Axén, Maria Åkerberg, Tromborg, Estelle & Thild, LA:Bruket, Björk & Berries and Nilens Jord have been analysed using Fairclough's three-dimensional model. The first four sections of this chapter consist of an analysis of the collected texts divided into the themes Scandinavian Nature, The Natural Human, The Use of Regional or National Symbols, Names and Native Language, and The Muted Colours of Scandinavia. This is the first part of Fairclough's analytical framework. The fifth section concerns the discursive practice, which is the second part of Fairclough's model and is called Marketing as a Practice. The last section of the analysis focuses on social practice with the aim of analysing the text's societal impact.*

### **4.1 The Scandinavian Nature**

#### ***4.1.1 Nature as a Backdrop***

A prominent theme in marketing of the studied Scandinavian beauty brands is the use of nature as the backdrop. Almost all of the studied beauty brands have chosen to portray natural elements that directly draw associations to the Scandinavian nature. A few examples being photographs of lush forests with moss, firs, pines and birch trees, to images of the Scandinavian archipelago and its smooth rock formations. The incorporation of landscapes is an effective marketing communication strategy, in which brands can gain advantages by being associated with their Country of Origin, without having to explicitly state the country or region. Thus, brands can create effortless brand associations by being reconcile with certain landscapes or regions (Aichner, 2013).



Björk & Berries, Instagram, 18 April, 2021



Maria Åkerberg, Instagram, 5 April, 2021



Lumene, Instagram, 15 September, 2021



L:A Bruket, Instagram, 1 August, 2020



Emma S., Instagram, 6 August, 2020



Löwengrip, Instagram, 10 April, 2021

When viewing the images above that exemplifies how the brands use natural elements in the marketing there are few commonalities. The photographs tend to either use natural elements that lead to associations to Scandinavian forests or to the archipelago. This can for instance be seen with the above images from *Lumene* and *Björk & Berries* where these brands often place their products in forests among moss, lichen on birch trees. Moreover, the brand *Björk & Berries* often use the imagery of birch as the word “björk” is the Swedish word for this type of wood. The recurring use of birch is thus arguably a brand strategy to create a cohesive and consistent brand identity (Melewar & Saunders, 2000). Moreover, the use of the birch can be interpreted as a nod to the Country of Origin with this tree being commonly seen in the Scandinavian region (Aichner, 2013). Moreover, the tree could also be interpreted as having a symbolic significance, since it is used in traditional craftsmanship, and during annual celebrations such as midsummer (Clark, 1975). The use of birch in the marketing can therefore also be interpreted to be a nod to the region’s Cultural Heritage (Björkholm, 2011).

Additionally, it is possible to draw similar cultural associations to the region’s archipelago, where for instance the image from the brand *Maria Åkerberg*, where a few products have been placed on a rock surrounded by chives, which is commonly found near the ocean, and often

used in Scandinavian cuisine (Åkerström, 2020). Moreover, in the photograph published on *Emma S.* Instagram the products have been placed on a towel where some sand can be seen with beach daisies framing the image. These types of daisies can often be spotted on beaches during the summer in the Scandinavian region. It is evident how the brands use both recognisable landscapes as well as plants and other organisms to create associations to the region and Country of Origin (Aichner, 2013). In turn, these texts aid in the creation of a clear visual identity as these elements may function as part of the graphic language that in turn create a consistent projection of the brand's identity (Saunders & Melewar, 2000).

The presence of the Scandinavian nature is more common in the marketing of some of the analysed brands. For instance, the Finish makeup and skincare brand *Lumene* post photographs of sweeping landscapes to their Instagram without explicitly showing their products. Thus, the brand lets nature speak for itself, and in turn *Lumene* manages to create a perception of the brand as being closely linked to the Finish nature. The centrality of nature is also prevalent when viewing *Björk & Berries* marketing and Instagram feed. There is barely one post without the inclusion of a natural element. Below collage exemplifies how the two brands regularly post photographs in which the products have been strategically excluded, in order to convey the centrality of nature for the brand identity.





Lumene, Instagram, 5 January 2021



Björk & Berries, Instagram, 25 July 2020



Lumene, Instagram, 15 June 2020



Björk & Berries, Instagram, 22 October 2020



Lumene, Instagram, 15 July 2020



Björk & Berries, Instagram, 10 April 2020

#### ***4.1.1 The Celebration of Nature in Writing***

The way the Scandinavian nature is being celebrated through marketing can also be seen in how the Scandinavian beauty brands write about nature as a source of inspiration for the various product lines and the brand identity. Arguably, it is in the writing that the Scandinavian or national pride becomes most evident when analysing the brands. The following quotes have been retrieved from the brands websites.

*“To us in Sweden, nature is not something you visit. It is present when you walk outside the door. Sun, wind, rock and ice; salt, sand, clay and water. The elements of continual change. The harsh conditions cause daily stress to skin and hair in many ways, but instead of avoiding nature, we turn to it for inspiration and answers”* - L:A Bruket, Translated “About Us” statement, 2021

The paragraph above provides a few interesting insights into the brand's philosophy and brand identity. The statement arguably gives a sense of Swedish pride, in which the brand intentionally or unintentionally makes a clear distinction between the way Swedes interact with nature in comparison to how others enjoy nature. The statement *“To us in Sweden, nature is not something you visit”*, immediately distinguishes between “we” and “them”, as *L:A Bruket* insinuates that the way Swedes interact with nature is different, and closely linked to the Cultural Heritage of the country (Björkholm, 2011). The paragraph continues by listing various elements present in Sweden, creating a feeling of an existing inner strength among Swedes. Once again, Swedes are being distinguished from “others”, by ending the last sentence stating that, *“instead of avoiding nature, we turn to it for inspiration and answers”*. In turn, the brand aims to become synonymous with Swedish culture and pride. It is as though the brand, *L:A Bruket* is an integral and natural part of Swedish culture and heritage. A similar type of pride can be spotted when analysing a text from *Björk & Berries*.

*“Björk & Berries began as a small local project in northern Sweden with the desire to preserve the magic of our nature, its beauty, scents and healing properties. We took to the woods to handpick leaves and berries to capture the essence of the Swedish flora in our first natural perfume and with that, set the foundation for what Björk & Berries is today”* - Björk & Berries, Our Saga, 2021

*Björk & Berries* focuses on the locality of the brand, and once again there an emphasis on how the Swedish nature is an important point of inspiration for the identity of the brand, and for the

products offered. The first sentence “*Björk & Berries began as a small local project in northern Sweden with the desire to preserve the magic of our nature, its beauty, scents and healing properties*”, captures the brand philosophy as they state that the aim of the brand is to preserve the magic of nature. This first sentence indicates the celebration of Swedish nature and culture in two ways. Firstly, by explicitly stating the Country of Origin (Aichner, 2013), and secondly by phrasing the sentence as “*our nature*”. In using the word “*our*”, it can either be interpreted to refer to the founders, and nature as theirs. However, the use of “*our*”, can be expanded to include every Swede. Thus, it becomes a point of pride and a way of creating a sense of belonging and community (Kullgren, 2000). Moreover, similarly to *L:A Bruket*’s text the phrasing creates a feeling that *Björk & Berries* is synonymous with Swedish culture and heritage. The last example of how the Scandinavian nature being present in the marketing can be seen with the brand *Lumene*.

*“Berries, seeds, plants, tree saps and even mushrooms have evolved in the wild over thousands of years to survive and thrive under a uniquely disruptive and challenging annual light cycle. 8 months of purifying, unbroken winter darkness – save for the magical Northern lights, followed by 4 consecutive months of intense life-giving light 24 hours a day. This light phenomenon, further amplified by an unusually stable low ground temperature, stimulates Arctic plants to produce unparalleled high levels of potent nutrients and antioxidants. By capturing the power of these unique actives, Lumene channels this reviving light in its formulas. This is the secret of naturally luminous skin: we call it “Arctic Lumenessence”” - Lumene, Our Story, 2021*

The above texts can be seen as a tribute to the natural beauty of the region, as well as the country that *Lumene* originates from. It is a celebration of nature and heritage, as they emphasise how the mentioned natural elements have been able to thrive and survive for thousands of years. Arguably, the text resembles a fairy-tale, and with its detailed description of the climate and the natural forces that shape the landscape, *Lumene* manages to frame the text in such a way that the brand becomes almost synonymous with the nature they describe. The end of *Lumene*’s “About Us” text captures this almost symbiotic relationship with nature that *Lumene* wishes to establish through their marketing communication by writing, “*By capturing the power of these unique activities, Lumene channels this reviving light in its formulas*”. Moreover, with the last sentence, “*This is the secret of naturally luminous skin: we call it Arctic Lumenessence*”, *Lumene* also unites their description of the region’s nature with ideals of beauty where words

such as luminosity, pure and natural come to mind. Thus, inferring that the use of Lumene will transform consumers into these naturally beautiful beings with luminous skin.

## **4.2 The Scandinavian Human**

### ***4.2.1 The Natural Scandinavian Woman***

Since beauty products are used by and on individuals, a large part of the marketing studied portray individuals, most commonly women. Consequently, it became natural to study how Scandinavian women are portrayed in the marketing. It also intensifies the need to investigate the notion of the Scandinavian identity presented in regional beauty marketing. The women portrayed by the Scandinavian beauty brands all possess attributes of youth, health and purity (Linnéa, 2021). Moreover, the most prominent appearance presented in Scandinavian beauty marketing is the blonde and fair-skinned women with little or no makeup. As seen in the pictures below, a recurring image is women caught in the moment with the wind in the hair, sun-kissed, freckled skin, smiling with naturally crooked teeth. In this regard, the general image marketers want to convey is that Scandinavian women are natural and unfixed in their natural habitat. Due to the fact that women are often placed in the Scandinavian nature, another parallel is drawn to the stereotypical notion of the Scandinavian identity and thereby their Country of Origin (Aichner, 2013). The environment in which the women are portrayed in makes them seem almost more like fairy tale creatures living harmoniously in nature. Since nature is in focus, the image of Scandinavian individuals as enchanting and natural creatures is reinforced and thereby beauty is something that is perceived to come from within, which intensifies as the individual spends time in nature, by the sea and in the sunshine.



Lumene, Instagram, 24 July 2020



L:A Bruket, Instagram, 17 August 2020



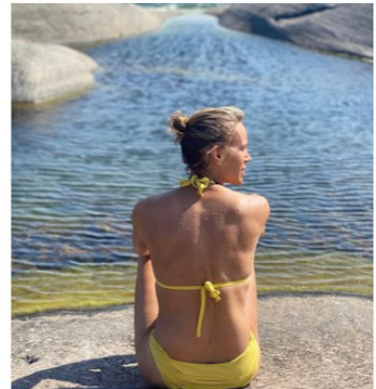
Björk & Berries, Instagram, 4 December 2020



Maria Åkerberg, Instagram, 30 March 2020



Lumene, Instagram, 16 November 2020



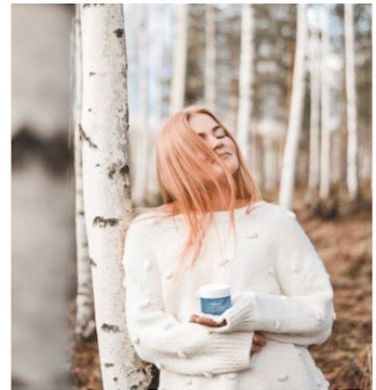
Emma S., Instagram, 29 July 2020



Nilens Jord, Instagram, 3 February, 2021



Tromborg, Instagram, 21 April 2021



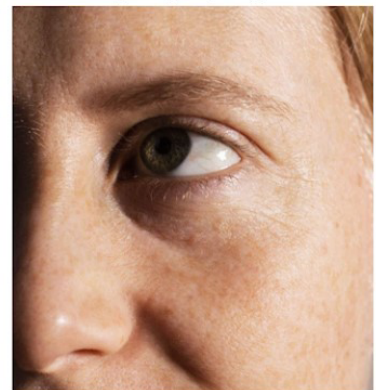
Lumene, Instagram, 23 April 2020



Björk & Berries, Instagram, 17 July, 2020



Maria Åkerberg, Instagram, 14 April 2021



Björk & Berries, Instagram, 17 May 2020

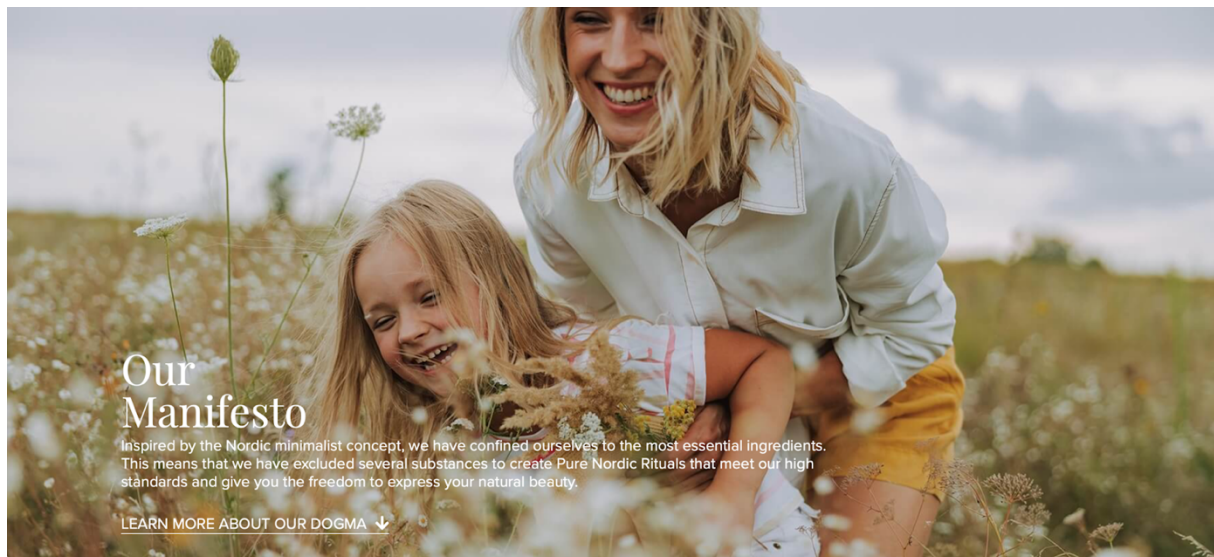
By viewing the collage above it becomes evident how the Scandinavian beauty brands utilise and portray stereotypical Scandinavian women in an attempt to strengthen the associations to their origin. In this regard, the attributes and personal traits of the individuals seen in the marketing for the Scandinavian beauty brands are essential in manifesting the stereotype, and thereby the correlation with the brand's Country of Origin (Hinton, 2000; Aichner, 2013). However, the image of the natural woman living in an almost symbiotic relationship with the Scandinavian nature is far from the reality that exists today, therefore the ideal of natural beauty achieved through perfect harmony with nature can be seen as an unachievable ideal. Nevertheless, it is arguably the unachievable ideal that makes this branding desirable among consumers.

The desirable Scandinavian beauty ideals are not only portrayed in images published on the various brand's Instagram accounts and websites. In fact, the brands also tend to describe in text how the use of certain products will improve the appearance of individual's, using terms such as "Luminous", "Glowing", "Healthy", "Lustrous", "Bright" and "Natural". These descriptions are interesting since they are repeatedly used by almost all observed Scandinavian beauty brands in this study. Three examples of this phenomenon can be found below.

*"Get the perfect Nordic Glow and careless look with Lumene Invisible Illumination skincare infused makeup products. These products help brighten, hydrate and perfect your skin for a Nordic, healthy and naturally glowing beauty."* - Lumene, "The Nordic Glow with Invisible Illumination ritual", n.d.

*"Tromborg's makeup lends your skin a beautiful and natural glow"* - Tromborg, "Tromborg Makeup", n.d.

*"Inspired by the Nordic minimalistic concept, we have confined ourselves to the most essential ingredients. This means that we have excluded more than 100 substances to create 'Pure Nordic Rituals' that meet our high standards and give you the freedom to express your natural beauty"* - Nilens Jord, Our Manifesto, 2021



(Nilens Jord, Website, April 2021)

The last quote by Nilens Jord is worth giving some additional attention. The above brand manifesto has been written on top of a photograph depicting a mother and daughter enjoying themselves on a field during a warm summer somewhere in the Scandinavian region. In this way the photograph amplifies the message of the text and provides a deeper sense of meaning to the mentioned words such as “*Nordic minimal concept*”, “*Essential ingredients*”, and “*Pure Nordic Rituals*”. The brands combine their values of beauty and make it comparable to nature. Thus, it is possible to interpret that their meaning of beauty is to be natural, similarly to the thriving Scandinavian nature. Additionally, *Nilens Jord* emphasise that they “*seek to empower and liberate the beauty of all Nordic women*” (Nilens Jord, “Our Manifesto”, n.d.). By using phrases such as “*empower*” and “*liberate*” the beauty, *Nilens Jord* insinuates that beauty is something Scandinavian women carry naturally within them and can be empowered and liberated through the use of their products. This further strengthens the notion of Scandinavian beauty as natural and inherent in the Scandinavian DNA. As a result of the above recurring descriptions, it can be deduced that this is an ideal that primarily Scandinavian beauty brands want to emphasise as noteworthy and desirable. In addition, these ideals go hand in hand with other prominent Scandinavian ideals as clean, pure and naturally rooted in the notion of Scandinavian nature. Hence, strategies of stating the brand’s Country of Origin are combined to gain recognition and positive associations among consumers (Aichner, 2013).

#### 4.2.2 The Urban Scandinavian Woman

As a contrast to the natural woman placed in the Scandinavian nature, the brands *Löwengrip*, *Indy Beauty* and *Björn Axén* have chosen a completely different strategy. These brands stand out in comparison to the other observed brands, since they focus less on nature. Instead, these brands portray an urban lifestyle, seemingly targeted towards young entrepreneurial women. Texts posted by these beauty brands express a more luxurious lifestyle in the Scandinavian urban city with fancy apartments, shopping and visits to luxury hotels. Consequently, it is clear that these beauty brands emphasise the individual through their urban lifestyle. As seen in the collage below, the perception of the natural Scandinavian woman without makeup is replaced with voluminous hair, glossy makeup and business clothing.



Indy Beauty, Instagram, 28 May 2020



Löwengrip, Instagram, 15 March 2021



Indy Beauty, Instagram, 25 April 2020



Löwengrip, Instagram, 20 December 2020



Björn Axén, Instagram, 17 June 2020



Löwengrip, Instagram, 12 February 2020



Indy Beauty, Instagram, 19 March 2021



Löwengrip, Instagram, October 2020



Indy Beauty, Instagram, 5 May 2020



There is one common denominator that unites the Scandinavian brands that implement this alternative marketing strategy. These Scandinavian beauty brands have a clear personal sender, with an entrepreneurial and already famous Scandinavian woman as the founder of the brand. Examples of this phenomenon are found in both *Indy Beauty* owned by the largest Swedish Youtuber Therese Lindgren (Indy Beauty, n.d.) and *Löwengrip* founded by the international entrepreneur Isabella Löwengrip (Löwengrip, n.d.). These brands highlight their founder in their brand name such as "Löwengrip". In addition to this, these women are commonly the face of the brand and can be seen on both the brands Instagram accounts and websites. Interestingly, these two women can be seen as representatives of Scandinavia since they have had an international career before founding the beauty brands. Hence, Therese Lindgren and Isabella Löwengrip are clearly connected to the Scandinavian region by customers both within and outside Scandinavia. In addition to being celebrities, these two women also have physical attributes that in many ways go hand in hand with the Scandinavian ideals given their blond hair and fair skin. In consequence, it is possible to create associations to Scandinavia only by observing their physical appearance without even knowing their origin. In advance, their Scandinavian origin and physical appearance strengthens the Scandinavian identity of their brands, making the brands even more authentic since the founders are Scandinavian and thereby hold personality traits that are promoted in creating the Scandinavian identity within a brand (Aichner, 2013). Consequently, by including entrepreneurs as spokespersons these brands manage to add another dimension of what it means to be a Scandinavian woman.

## 4.3 Regional or National Symbols, Names and Native Language

### 4.3.1 Logotypes

Since a brand's logotype reflects the brand's identity and thus connects its visual expression to its fundamental vision (Melewar & Saunders, 2000), it became essential to analyse the brands' logotypes. After taking a closer look at the Scandinavian beauty brands it was recognisable how a majority of brands has similar strategies for developing logotypes. In general, Scandinavian beauty brands tend to have simple and clean logotypes with the brand name in focus. Additionally, all logotypes had black text written on a white background. The reason why Scandinavian beauty brands have similar logotypes may be a result of wanting to have a symbol that can easily be printed on various beauty products. That being said, the emergence of these simplistic logotypes could also be a result of the pure, simple and clean feeling that largely characterises the Scandinavian identity. By having a simple and stylish logotype, brands can manage to strengthen the tie to their Country of Origin (Aichner, 2013). In addition, a systematic and consistent use of certain elements help to establish a strong brand identity. Therefore, the continuous use of these simple and distinct logotypes lay the foundation for a solid Scandinavian brand identity (Melewar & Saunders, 2000; Aichner, 2013). Below the logotypes of the eleven beauty brands can be seen.



(Websites of Löwengrip; Emma S.; Björn Axén; Maria Åkerberg; Indy Beauty; Tromborg; Nilens Jord; Lumene; Björk & Berries; Estelle & Thild; L:A Bruket, April 2021)

In addition, the simplicity of the logotypes can also be interpreted to establish the connection to the brands' Scandinavian identity. Furthermore, several of the Scandinavian beauty brands have logotypes and brand names that include the name of the founder. Furthermore, these names are exclusively typical Scandinavian names including letters such as “Å”, “Ä” and “Ö”. According to Aichner (2013), the choice of using names strongly related to the region and their Country of Origin can lead to a favourable perception of the brands since it insinuates the brands connection to a Scandinavian identity. In this regard, brands see advantages in being associated with Scandinavia and therefore choose brand names including names such as “Löwengrip”, “Björn Axén”, “Maria Åkerberg” and “Tromborg”.

#### 4.3.2 Native Language

As an extension of Scandinavian beauty brands' use of Scandinavian names associated with the region, some beauty brands take it one step further by giving products or product lines names in their native language in order to consolidate their origin (Aichner, 2013). The most prominent empirical example of this phenomenon is found from the Finnish beauty brand *Lumene*. All of the brand's product lines have Finnish names such as the word for “Valo” (“Light”) and the Finnish word for “Tyyni” (“Calm”). Additionally, *Björk & Berries* have product lines called “Fjällsjö” which translated in English means “Mountain Lake”.



(Websites of Lumene; Björk & Berries, April 2021)

A common theme for both brands is that the product lines have exclusively Finnish and Swedish names that are derived from or consist of attributes used to describe the Scandinavian nature. Thus, by naming their product lines in this way *Lumene* and *Björk & Berries* manage to establish even more clear associations to their origin (Aichner, 2013). In addition, by continuously and systematically using these types of words as a part of a brand language, Scandinavian beauty brands manage to strengthen their brand by highlighting their Scandinavian identity (Melewar & Saunders, 2000). Thereby, they can also take further advantages from their Scandinavian identity in connection to the positive impact on customer perception and consumer behaviour (Aichner, 2013).

#### 4.3.3 “Made In”

Another way of expressing the origin of the beauty brands is to explicitly state where the products or brands come from (Aichner, 2013). Below are a few examples of how the analysed brands use variations of this strategy.

“A family-owned business from Sweden” -Maria Åkerberg, “Historia”, n.d.

“A Danish family-owned business”  
-Tromborg, “About Tromborg”, n.d.

“A Swedish Skincare brand”  
-Emma S., “Om Emma S.”, n.d.

“Rooted in the wellbeing rituals of Northern Finland” -Lumene,  
“Our Story”, n.d.

“Beauty Innovation from Sweden” -Löwengrip,  
“About”, n.d.

“Swedish Ecoluxury”  
-Björk & Berries, “Our Saga”, n.d.

This strategy is possibly the most distinct and recognizable since the brands are explicitly mentioning their origin and therefore are making it impossible for customers to not observe the origin of the specific brand or product (Aichner, 2013). Evidently, this strategy has been successful and recurring, which in turn could potentially implicate that Scandinavia and the Scandinavian countries have symbolic values that creates positive associations among consumers.

#### **4.3.3 Symbols**

A product's origin can be demonstrated by using symbols with an emotional and symbolic meaning which is repeatedly used to bestow affiliation and origin (Aichner, 2013). A commonly used quality label among Swedish brands is the symbol brands receive if they are a supplier to the Swedish royal family. The award can be equated with a quality label as the honorary award is given to Swedish brands that during at least five years have produced highquality products that are noticed and used by a member of the Swedish royal family. Thus, brands that are rewarded are perceived as role models of high-class Scandinavian design. brands that receive this honorary award usually choose to have the symbol on their products to demonstrate seriousness, quality, trustworthiness and reliability (Kungahuset, n.d.a).



(Kungahuset, n.d.a)

In specific, this symbol is intriguing to study since it has a clear link to Swedish culture and thus creates associations to the brand's origin (Aichner, 2013). The symbol consists of the three crowns, which makes the symbol recognizable and thus it becomes part of the Cultural Heritage (Björkholm, 2011). Secondly, it is a quality marker that is linked to a specific region, which in itself creates additional competitive advantages within the given region where the marker is

widely known (Aichner, 2013). Last but not least, it is also important to highlight the fact that it is the Swedish royal family's use of a corporate product that causes the award to be presented. The Swedish royal family has a position where they are considered as a status symbol both in Sweden but also internationally (Kungahuset, n.d.b). Thus, their opinion is of great importance for consumers' perception of a brand's ability to deliver good quality. Furthermore, it is possible to assume that consumers think that a product is of higher standard under the circumstances that it is used by royalties. As a result, it can be argued that consumers feel a sense of luxury if buying and using the same products as the Swedish royal family. Altogether, with this symbol brands do receive a quality labelling strongly connected to the Swedish Cultural Heritage (Björkholm, 2011). In addition, the symbolic meaning that is characterising the Swedish royal family will become a part of the brand as well. Within the beauty industry only one brand has received this award, Björn Axén. The brand proudly displays its award on their website, in their marketing and even on their products. Hence, it is possible to glimpse the significance of this quality label and how brands are willing to manifest their award in marketing contexts.

**BJÖRN AXÉN**



(Björn Axén, Website, April 2021)

A feature of the above-mentioned quality label is the use of the prominent Swedish symbol of the “Three Crowns”. In Swedish culture, the symbol of three crowns is a national emblem and is therefore widely recognised as a symbol of the Swedish identity. Historically, it was brought to Sweden and used by the Swedish royalty to demonstrate the three kingdoms: Sweden, Norway and Scania (Lindgren, 1992). By continuously using the three crowns in association with Sweden, the symbol has gained a symbolic value which has created a distinctive position that can be likened to Cultural Heritage (Björkholm, 2011). Still to this day, the emblem of the three crowns is a symbol of the Swedish official state authority and can appear in formal contexts as well as informal contexts (Lindgren, 1992). Interestingly enough, it is even possible to find the emblem in marketing for Scandinavian beauty brands.

A variation of the symbol of the “Three Crowns” is used on the packaging by the brand *L:A Bruket*. Hence, it is possible to draw the conclusion that L:A Bruket wants to demonstrate their origin and highlight the heritage to Sweden. In this sense, the symbol of the three crowns carries

a Cultural Heritage that is directly related to Sweden (Björkholm, 2011) and therefore, it evokes associations among consumers. It could also be interpreted as a strategy to explicitly state the brand's Country of Origin (Aichner, 2013). Moreover, since the symbol of the three crowns is somehow similar to the quality label of a Royal Court Supplier, it is possible to assume that *L:A Bruket* wishes to gain similar market advantages as when using the real symbol without actually being awarded the emblem. Thus, by using the symbol of the three crowns that can be easily mistaken for the Royal Court Supplier emblem, L:A Bruket purposely tries to gain positive reactions among consumers. Moreover, since the Royal Court Supplier emblem is a label of quality using the three crowns insinuates that the brand's products are of high quality. Below image shows one of *L:A Bruket's* packages with the symbol of the "Three Crowns" seen in the upper right corner of the label.



(L:A Bruket, Website, April 2021)

#### 4.4 The Muted Colours of Scandinavia

An extensive aspect of a brand's visual identity is related to the colour scheme used (Melewar & Saunders, 2000). The colours used by all of the eleven brands can best be collectively described as muted. A few examples of colours being shades of white, marine blue, beige, light and dusty pink, light blue, soft green, grey and black. The colours are in turn often accentuated with the implementation of various materials such as leather, marble, granite, brass and wood. The use of clean, pure and soft colour tones can be interpreted as reinforcements of the Scandinavian identity. Above all, the choice of colour can be interpreted to have a strong connection to the Scandinavian nature and environment, which in turn establishes a deeper symbolic value of the colours used by the brands (Björkholm, 2011; Aichner, 2013). The muted colours, used by all of the observed Scandinavian beauty brands, are seen on their websites, products and pictures posted on Instagram. Another important aspect to highlight is how the colours used help to convey a brand identity of simplicity and sleekness, which is an

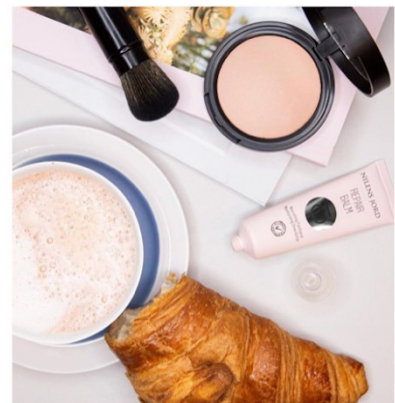
overarching feature among all the analysed brands. The below collage is a visualisation of the colours used by the brands. In turn, these colours aid the visual language of the brands, which strengthen the brand identity of being connected to the Scandinavian region or a country within the region.



Estelle & Thild, Instagram, 10 August 2020



Emma S., Instagram, 18 February 2021



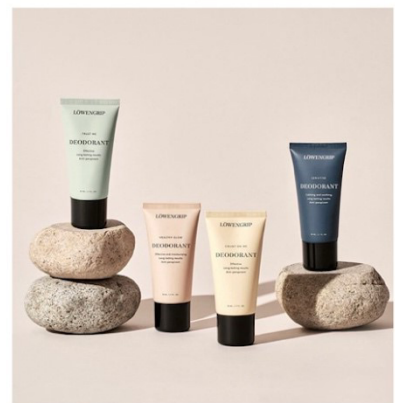
Nilens Jord, Instagram, 6 October 2020



Löwengrip, Instagram, 1 March 2021



Lumene, Instagram, 10 December 2020



Löwengrip, Instagram, 1 February 2021



Estelle & Thild, Instagram, 22 August 2020



Indy Beauty, Instagram, 16 September 2020



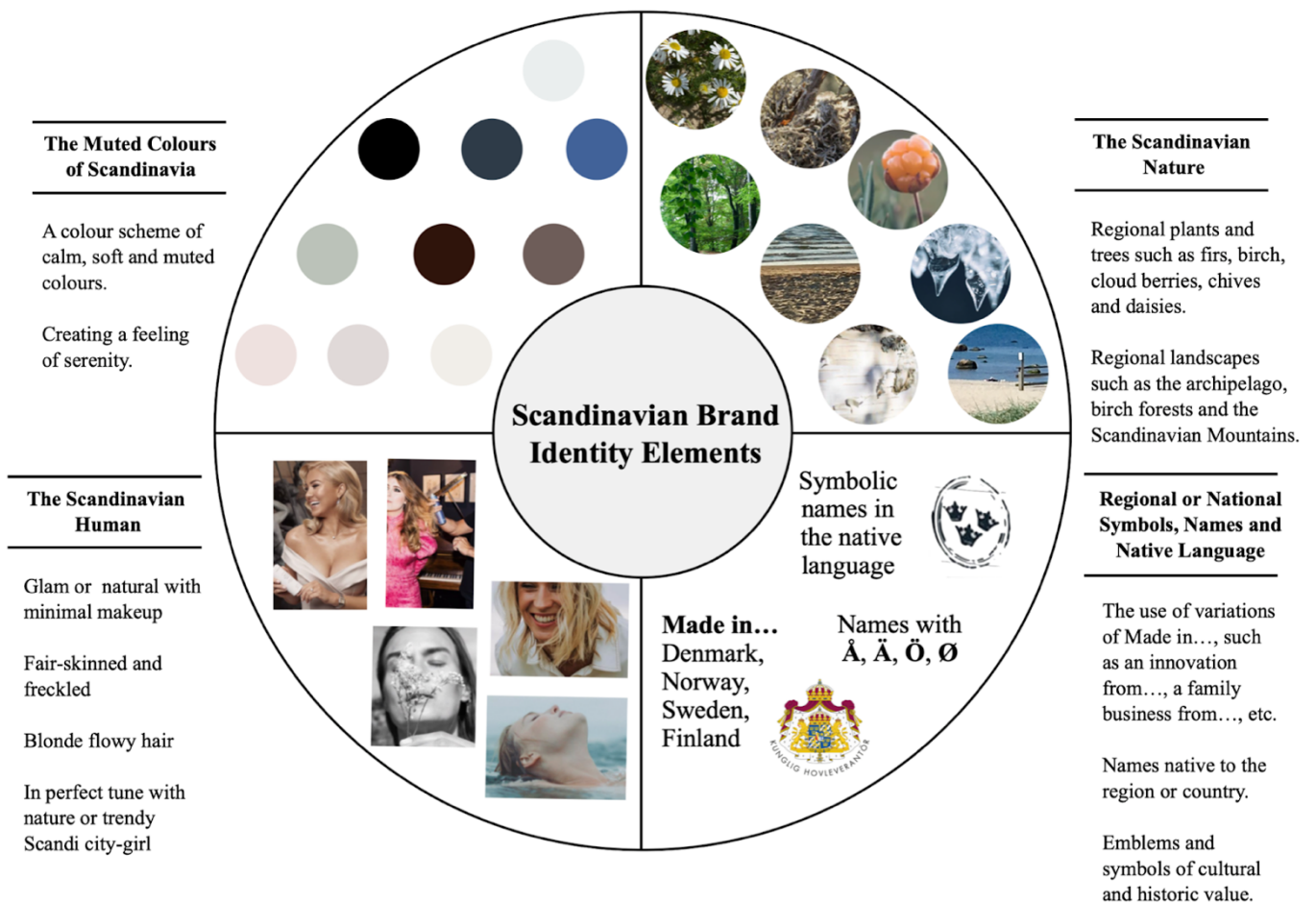
Tromborg, Instagram, 24 April 2021



## 4.5 A Summary of the Text Analysis

In the below figure is a summary of the elements found during the analysis of the texts. These elements are used systematically by the brands in their marketing communication to highlight and reinforce their connection to the Scandinavian region. Each square of the circle directly correlates to the four themes: *The Scandinavian Nature*, *The Scandinavian Human*, *Regional or National Symbols, Names and Native Language* and *The Muted colours of Scandinavia*.

Figure 1. Elements Reinforcing the Scandinavian Brand Identity in Marketing Communication



## 4.5 Marketing as a Practice

The texts analysed have all been produced with a commercial objective in mind. Hence, linking it to the theory of Corporate Visual Identity Systems, each of the distributed texts produced by the brands have been created with the aim of identifying a clear projection of the brand identity (Melewar & Saunders, 2000). In this regard, logotypes, product colours, design, and style of photography form a cohesive graphic language that aims to make the product and brand more desirable to consumers, and to stand out in a crowded marketplace. Having the aim of these texts in mind it is possible to view the production and distribution of these texts as part of a marketing practice. Moreover, it is of interest to further analyse this marketing practice, its objectives and practices, since the fundamental purpose of marketing is to influence individuals to eventually consume what is being offered on the market. In this regard a core activity of marketing to achieve increased influence, and in turn higher sales, is to establish and strengthen relationships with various stakeholders (Kotler et al., 2019). Furthermore, within this marketing practice, which can also be understood as marketing communication - the building of relationships is central to the success of a brand, and thus utilising tools that will facilitate the right type of communication is essential.

One central way in which the analysed Scandinavian beauty brands have tried to build relationships and gain attention among end-consumers is through the use of the platform Instagram. As seen, most of the collected texts have been retrieved from the brands official Instagram accounts, which is arguably the perfect form of distribution channel for the beauty brands in three important ways. Firstly, Instagram is one of the biggest and most popular social media platforms of the 21st century (Trankovska, 2021), and is therefore a favourable platform when trying to gain the attention of a large consumer-base. Furthermore, the potential consumer prospects of utilising Instagram explain why all of the beauty brands are very active on the platform. Secondly, Instagram makes it easy for the brands to establish two-way communication with consumers, which is important for relationship building and engagement (Fill & Jamieson, 2014). In this way, the brands can quickly adapt their content to what appeals to consumers. Lastly, as Instagram is a visual platform, brands can convey their brand identity and message through appealing photographs that grab the attention and raise interest among consumers. Adding to the last point, since Instagram is an image-based platform, it is arguably very suitable for lifestyle related content as it tends to photograph well. Moreover, many of the beauty brands also offer products such as perfumes or skincare which can be difficult to visualise. However, through images the brands convey the feeling of how the product will make the consumer feel.

In turn, photographs are an immensely powerful tool, whereby appealing pictures can evoke positive feelings among consumers that lead to increased desire (Fill & Jamieson, 2014; Gulbrandsen & Just, 2016).

#### ***4.5.1 The Marketisation of the Scandinavian and Nationalist Discourse***

The ways in which the brands create a need and evoke feelings of desire among consumers is an important aspect of this thesis and is arguably central to the understanding of the function of marketing as a practice. In analysing the texts produced and distributed, it is possible to distinguish how the brands utilise two discourses in their marketing communication to build and strengthen relationships with consumers (Fill & Jamieson, 2014). The first discourse being a Scandinavian discourse, and the second being a Nationalist discourse. The brands seem to draw upon these discourses simultaneously, but in different ways. Thus, the use of these discourses can be seen as an example of interdiscursivity, which refers to how one discourse relates to another discourse (Fairclough, 1992; Winther et al., 2000). Furthermore, it is important to notice how these discourses exist outside of a marketing perspective. These discourses are used as part of the discursive practice of everyday rituals, the language, trends and the cultures of the region, and each of the Scandinavian countries. However, by making references to the Scandinavian region and its countries through the practice of marketing, these discourses become repackaged to fit a marketing objective. Hence, it is possible to refer to this as a Scandinavian or Nationalist marketing discourse, whereby the two discourses have been constituted by social practice. Meaning the Scandinavian or nationalist marketing discourse uses the other discourses to recreate a new type of commercialised identity, knowledge and power structures (Fairclough, 1992). Thus, when the brands try to connect themselves to the region or a nation it can be seen as a bridging element between the identity of the brand and the existing identities of regional or national consumers. In turn, it has the potential of fulfilling the objective of marketing, which is to create interest and desire, to eventually lead to favourable actions (Gulbrandsen & Just, 2016).

Belk's consumer culture theory of the extended self can be applied to further understand the effects of the Scandinavian and Nationalist marketing discourses, and how it impacts consumption of the texts. According to Belk's theory the possessions that individuals chose to purchase become a vital part of their identity, and thus an extension of themselves (Belk, 1988). Arguably, very few beauty products are in themselves extensions of individual's selves, however, the understanding of the term "possession" can be viewed in a wider sense, to include

the type of brands an individual consumes. In this regard, the beauty brands a person makes recurring purchases from can become a vital part of the personal identity. This is a desirable goal, as the core activity of the modern marketing practice is to build relationships with relevant stakeholders (Kotler et al., 2019). In turn, relationship building is also central to the financial objective since a consumer that associates with a brand is more likely to continue to support and purchase from that said brand. Moreover, by drawing upon the two mentioned discourses, as part of the marketing communication, the brands may appeal to consumers' identity on a deeper level. In other words, building upon Belk's theory, the consumption of beauty products from brands that draw upon a Scandinavian or Nationalist discourse may strengthen the identity of consumers.

#### **4.6 Social Practice**

The above analysis of the discursive practice focused on how the production and distribution of the texts is the result of a modern marketing practice. This practice emphasises relationship building as a means to raise interest, create desire, and eventually increase sales and recognition of the brand (Fill & Jamieson, 2014; Gulbrandsen & Just, 2016). In analysing this marketing practice in relation to the Scandinavian beauty brands, it becomes clear how marketers draw upon Scandinavian and Nationalist discourses to evoke interest and create relationships with consumers. The utilisation of these two discourses can be seen in the type of environments the brands place their products, the women being photographed, and in the text that explicitly state the brands' connection to the region or country. The portrayal of these regional and national elements can in turn create a sense of pride among consumers. Thus, the marketisation of the Scandinavian and Nationalist discourse, can in itself be viewed as a Scandinavian or Nationalist marketing discourse. Moreover, since individuals' possessions and consumption patterns become a vital part of the personal identity (Belk, 1988), drawing upon existing identification factors such as national and regional identity in marketing can arguably make a brand more desirable to consumers.

Building upon the analytical section concerning discursive practice, this section analyses the discourses found in a wider, societal sense. Thus, this part of the analysis focuses on social practice. The first section will pay greater attention to how the nationalist and regionalist language used by the beauty brands may impact the view of nationalism in society. The second part of the analysis focuses on the implications of these discourses and how the effort of creating relations with consumers has the potential of unintentionally excluding individuals.

#### ***4.6.1 The Banal Nationalism of Scandinavian Beauty Marketing***

On an individual level when the brands draw upon a Nationalist or Scandinavian discourse through their marketing it may evoke pride among consumers who feel represented by the ideal and identity presented. For instance, when the brands use imagery of ethnic Scandinavian women, or write about the wonders of the Scandinavian nature it may lead to positive feelings among consumers who can relate to this specific portrayal. On a one-to-one basis this specific portrayal of the nations within the Scandinavian region and its people is seemingly unproblematic. However, as seen through the study's text analysis section there is a pattern in the marketing of Scandinavian beauty brands, in which certain cultural ideals and information are reproduced or recreated in the marketing. In this way when the brands implement a marketing communication strategy that heavily focuses on cultural heritage and the country of origin it arguably becomes an acceptable form of regionalism and nationalism. This marketized, and very narrow portrayal of a nation and people is important to highlight as it goes unnoticed and unquestioned by most. It should also be put in comparison with other sectors of society where nationalist language is often viewed with scrutiny. In this way, through a disguise of aesthetically pleasing beauty and lifestyle marketing, individuals are invited to openly celebrate their own nation through the identity of the beauty brands.

The banality of this strategy can be linked to Billig (1995) arguing that Banal Nationalism surfaces as a result of taken for granted nationalist values being found and practiced in individuals' everyday lives and routines. A banal form of nationalism can hence be seen in the Scandinavian beauty industry, in which beauty and care products, integral to peoples' everyday routines draw upon nationalism and regionalism in their marketing communication. Furthermore, this marketing is being seen by thousands as it is being distributed in both digital and traditional marketing channels. In this way, the Banal Nationalism seen in the marketing of the beauty brands has the potential of creeping into the lives of individuals without any deeper reflection. Instead, it is seen as an innocent and positive and banal form of celebration of one's origin and heritage. The beauty marketers' perspective should also be analysed whereby there is a risk of nationalist and regionalist language increasingly becoming seen as nothing else than a standardised marketing recipe for success. In other words, the intent is to create a desirable brand image that will generate increased sales and profits, whereby producing a romanticised image of Scandinavia or the nation of origin is an easy means to an end. Billig's (1995) reasoning can once again be added as he argues that individuals greatly underestimate the power of Banal Nationalism, and this can be interpreted to be the case seen in the marketing of the studied brands. Moreover, as using a Scandinavian and Nationalist discourse is a seemingly

successful strategy there is a risk that more brands adopt this approach, in turn there may be less of a chance that this narrow portrayal of a country or region is being viewed as something potentially dangerous. Simultaneously, as marketing exists all around us ideals resting upon unintentional regionalist and nationalist grounds can be spread and widely perpetuated on various channels for communication and marketing.

In analysing the potential effects of banal nationalism in the marketing of beauty brands, attention should be given to what dangers this approach may lead to in greater society. Billig (1995) provides some interesting insights arguing the banality of modern nationalism is what makes it a powerful ideology. It has the potential to affect individuals' view of the world and values, and thus may lead to the growth of more accentuated and aggressive forms of nationalism (Billig, 1995). Thus, when the brands recreate and reproduce a very narrow portrayal of what it means to be from a certain region, nation and culture these notions and ideals may be imprinted in individuals' subconscious. In the end affecting peoples' values that benefit a wider nationalist agenda. The change of values among individuals could potentially also lead to a more widespread mindset that accepts exclusion on some groups in society.

#### ***4.6.2 Inclusion and Exclusion in Scandinavian Beauty Marketing***

Adding to Billig (1995), Kullgren (2000) discusses how regional identity contributes to a socially constructed feeling of belonging to other individuals. The reason for this occurrence can be linked to the societal notions created through Banal Nationalism, in which regional identity becomes an integral part of everyday life. In this study, this has become increasingly prominent as a result of the Scandinavian ideal of beauty, which has been constructed on the basis of a subjective perception of what is considered to be part of the Scandinavian Cultural Heritage and elements of the Scandinavian identity (Björkholm, 2011). On a personal level, individuals may experience an increased sense of belonging as feelings of pride of one's national or regional belonging when it is channelled through the beauty brands. Especially since Scandinavia, and the countries associated with the region, have over the years reached the point of being something of a global status marker. For instance, in media the designs, values and ways of living have been broadcasted globally as aspirational and inspirational (Mcmahan, 2018). Hence, individuals that are represented in marketing of Scandinavian beauty brands may feel a strong connection to the Scandinavian identity, and therefore also beauty brands that incorporate this Scandinavian or Nationalist discourse. Eventually, this can lead individuals to gain an emotional and personal attachment to a specific Scandinavian beauty brand and their

products. Consequently, products individuals choose to buy from these brands may become an extension of their identity as individuals feel emotionally connected to the brand identity (Belk, 1988).

That being said, there is also a flip side to the phenomenon that is characterised by a freeze and exclusion from the community and the Scandinavian identity. In this respect, power structures that comes from Banal Nationalism and regional identity are seen to lead to a sense of community and familiarity among individuals with a similar Scandinavian belonging, but also a resistance and distancing to those individuals who are of another regional identity or those who are not considered to fit into the notion of the Scandinavian identity. The consequence of this is that there is a gradual categorisation of individuals where some are included in the community, while others are excluded. Billig (1995) and Kullgren (2000) argue in this context that the socially constructed belonging gives rise to a distinction between "we" and "them". Based on the collected empirical material, the marketing is clearly aimed at a certain group of individuals, which in itself gives rise to the exclusion of "them" who are not considered to be a part of the Scandinavian identity.

Beauty ideals presented through the Scandinavian discourse creates a distorted image of the Scandinavian woman's appearance. Thus, Individuals that are not able to identify with these Scandinavian ideals may feel excluded from the community. The image of a woman wandering along the beach or sitting seemingly unadorned and washing herself in a stream creates an image of reality that a large number of individuals cannot identify with in today's society. In contrast to this relaxed and natural ideal, we find brands such as *Löwengrip*, *Indy Beauty* and *Björn Axén* who instead present the urban and cool lifestyle that is characterised by a life of big city pulse and flair. Regardless if a brand chooses to target the individual who lives a relaxing life in nature or the big city girl on the go, it is clear that the entire Scandinavian population is not represented in marketing conducted by Scandinavian beauty brands. This applies not least to the presentation of the natural and inherent beauty that is presented. As a result, Scandinavian individuals that are excluded from the Scandinavian discourse, and hence are not represented in the marketing context, may experience negative feelings due to the exclusion. Negative feelings are created in this as a result of them being constantly reminded of how they do not live up to the Scandinavian ideals and the discourse that are emphasised in marketing for Scandinavian beauty.

By marketers recreating a Scandinavian ideal of beauty, individuality is limited when the Scandinavian individual is placed in a compartment and standardised on the basis of the image created in a marketing context. In this standardisation process, the Scandinavian ideal of beauty is formed, which in itself gives indications of which individuals are included and excluded in the picture of what is Scandinavian and what is not. Additionally, an over-representation of the blonde and fair-skinned ideal represents the desirable in the regional identity. All in all, current marketing created by Scandinavian beauty brands seem to exclude large parts of the Scandinavian population, whilst simultaneously potentially unintentionally opening up for the growth of a nationalism agenda among the countries within the Scandinavian region.



## 5. Conclusions

This study applied Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Framework to explore beauty marketers' use of nationalism and regionalism in marketing communication, and its greater implications on identity, ideals and society. The study has been conducted by exploring the texts produced and distributed by eleven Scandinavian beauty brands, and the empirical material consisted of posts from official Instagram accounts and websites. The study aimed to answer the research question: "*What may be the unintended consequences for society, ideals and identity when using nationalism and regionalism in the marketing of Scandinavian beauty brands?*". To answer this question Billig's theory of Banal Nationalism has been applied in combination with other theories with a focus on national and regional identity, as well as theories from marketing communication research.

Through an analysis of the text's discursive practice, it was found that the brands draw upon a Scandinavian and Nationalist discourse in order to raise interest and desire among consumers. The brands use this type of marketing practice to reach the objective of increased sales and to overall increase the value and attractiveness of the brand. However, the use of these discourses in a commercialised setting has shown to lead to a rather one-dimensional image of Scandinavia, its people, and the countries within the region. The Scandinavian beauty ideal seems to favour fair, freckled skin, that is flawless and seemingly achieved without effort. Hence, the Scandinavian person portrayed in the marketing of the beauty brands, can best be compared to fairytale creatures, roaming around in lush forests, casually relaxing on a cliff in the archipelago, or wandering around in snow-filled landscapes. The brands portray a form of effortless and natural grace, in which nature is seen as something deeply connected to being Scandinavian.

This portrayal of nature and people is in itself not an issue, however, through the application of Fairclough's three steps of analysis it becomes evident how this image is sustained by making a clear differentiation between "us" vs. "them". Through this type of differentiating language Scandinavian and its people are portrayed as superior as they for instance are more connected to nature and thus stronger. If connecting this to Billig's theory of Banal Nationalism, upholding and reinforcing this view in marketing could in the long run seek its way into peoples' subconscious, in turn paving the way for a more dangerous type of nationalism. Moreover, the commercialised form of nationalism and regionalism can also be used as fuel for nationalist movements that seek increased influence and power in society. Although, this is most likely not the intention of brands implementing this type of marketing strategy. Drawing upon a

Nationalist and Scandinavian discourse is proven to be a successful strategy as it achieves the fundamental core activity of marketing communication - to influence and impact stakeholders through the process of relationship building. Hence, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the brands through unintended implementation of nationalist and regionalist rhetoric feed upon peoples' deep desire to belong and search for identity. Despite the success of drawing upon these discourses in marketing, it is worth re-evaluating whether the use of nationalism and regionalism to increase the value of brands within products categories such as beauty, is worth the risk of upholding unequal and potentially dangerous societal power structures. As found in this study, the one-dimensional portrayal of Scandinavian people only accentuates what someone should be to feel included in the Scandinavian identity, and thus risks upholding societal power structures that excludes certain individuals living in the region.

To summarise the findings, marketing should never be seen as banal, much like Billig's view of nationalism. Marketing is produced and distributed with the intention of being consumed. Hence, all marketing has the potential of creating and reproducing certain ideals and structures in larger society that may exclude certain people. Drawing upon national and regional elements in marketing should therefore be done with caution and with deliberate consideration of the unintended implications it might pose.

## 6. Discussion

This study came to be as a result of the observed, narrow portrayal of culture and beauty ideals in the marketing communication of Scandinavian beauty brands. In turn, it raised the question of what this type of marketing approach may pose on greater society. It is a known fact that most marketing is created with a business objective in mind, whereby the aim is to generate increased sales and large profits. In order to reach these planned financial objectives brands commonly develop various types of visual elements that together create a clear brand message and identity that appeal to consumer desires. As found in this study, the Scandinavian beauty brands studied have built the brand identity surrounding the praise of the Scandinavian region and country of origin. This brand identity entails a romantic portrayal of the Scandinavian nature and people, as well as a beauty ideal that seems to favour blonde, fair and perfect skin, with minimal makeup. However, through a deeper analysis a number of potentially problematic aspects appear. It becomes evident how the brands strategies of drawing upon a Scandinavian and Nationalist discourse may unintentionally anchor nationalist notions in wider society by affecting the values of consumers.

Undoubtedly, the most fascinating aspect of the study's results is that the banality of the nationalism seen in marketing communication produced and distributed by the brands is banal. It is unnoticed and for the most part unquestioned. At first sight, pictures of natural and sunkissed women in the Scandinavian forests can create a feeling of calmness and serenity, and hence being a highly desirable or aspirational image for many individuals. However, in the midst of this Scandinavian idyll, it is interesting to point out the problems that arise when marketers are continuously using this marketing strategy. In order to bring this potentially problematic and difficult subject to light, Billig's theory of Banal Nationalism has been applied in the context of Scandinavian beauty marketing. Furthermore, by combining Billig with traditional marketing communication theories this study was able to contribute new insights into how nationalism is present in the field of marketing and hence the unintended consequence of incorporating nationalism and regionalism notions into beauty marketing. This theoretical framework has enabled the exploration of the Scandinavian beauty industry, and its potential impact on consumers and society. Consequently, the consumption and potential use of beauty products may subconsciously affect individuals' values within cultural, social, political and economic structures. Thus, parallels could potentially be drawn between the use of beauty products and major changes in society which in turn makes this study enriching for both brands, companies and consumers as well as society as a whole.

It is of interest to raise a discussion regarding the responsibility of Scandinavian beauty brands, and other brands implementing a similar marketing communication strategy. As seen from the results presented in this study constructing a brand identity that heavily romanticises a certain region or country, whilst praising its people because of their cultural heritage has the potential of contributing to a strengthened nationalist agenda, which in turn can have noticeable consequences in society as a whole. Moreover, it is possible to imagine a scenario where the seemingly harmless Banal Nationalism that characterises the marketing of Scandinavian beauty could lead to major consequences in society as nationalistic and rationalistic values spread in these banal contexts and becomes strongly rooted in individuals. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that the marketing of products such as beauty could have a vital impact on fundamental values in society. By presenting a romanticised image of the Scandinavian identity, beauty brands can contribute to an unintentional indoctrination of nationalist and regionalist values. Hence, Corporate responsibility is an important part of this discussion, as the brands' marketing and brand building are rarely criticised. This has been established, because it is not being noticed. Furthermore, this study has only focused on the Scandinavian beauty market and the generalised portrayal of the Scandinavian countries, and its people seen in the brand identity and communication of a number of brands within the industry. Thus, there are most likely more markets suffering from the same problems. In this respect, the whole phenomenon becomes even more problematic, which in itself intensifies the need to question the role of the brand in the public debate.

This study is therefore important, not only within the field of marketing, but also in the public debate as the results of this study indicates how widespread nationalism is in today's society and the different ways it can be demonstrated. It is through the lens of Banal Nationalism that it is possible to examine the unintended and unforeseen consequences of an overly romanticised and narrow portrayal of a specific country or region.

However, in order to explicitly extract the impact marketing and brand building affect the general view of society, a more long-term study is required. This is essential since basic values of this kind are often something that develops over a long period of time. Not only would it be fruitful to do further investigations of the evolution of the beauty market, but also how individuals that are consuming beauty marketing are affected, and how their values potentially have evolved over time. In this regard, it would have been interesting to look back in time and to see the change in marketing and brand identity of companies operating in the

Scandinavian beauty market. Furthermore, it would have been interesting to extract from a historical perspective whether there is a correlation between the view of national identity in marketing and the emergence of nationalist parties. These studies could, on a more comprehensive level, provide a clear representation of the effect of market seeding on society and the consequences of marketers' construction of brand identities. In addition to the historical perspective, proposals for future research would consist of capturing consumers' views on this form of marketing. In this respect, it is interesting to investigate both the groups that are included in the presented Scandinavian identity, but also groups that are excluded in these contexts. Furthermore, it would also be compulsive to glance at the phenomenon in different industries and in different countries in order to get a comprehensive view of how individuals' values may be affected by marketing characterised by elements of Banal Nationalism and strong regional roots.

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