The Effortless Fashionista

A Study of Lead Consumers Production of Subjectivities Through the Adaption of Fast Fashion on Instagram

Cecilia Hallgren
Yulia Engqvist Johansson

June 2021

Master's Programme in International Marketing and Brand Management

Abstract

Course: BUSN39 Degree Project in Global Marketing - Master Level

Keywords: Social Media, Instagram, Fast Fashion, Influencers, Netnography, Subjectivity

Thesis Purpose: The main purpose of this study is to investigate what ideals lead consumers produce through the adoption of subjective positions that they offer to consumers. Thus, the research aims to contribute to existing theoretical knowledge of the production of consumer subjectivities.

Methodology: This present study adopts an ontological relativism position, followed by a social constructionist view. The philosophical standpoint leads to the research following an abductive approach with a qualitative research design. Moreover, the study combines netnography conducted on social media and a case study approach to gather empirical data.

Theoretical Perspective: To answer the research question, the study bases its fundamental standpoint on Michael Foucault's theoretical contribution of governmentality, combined with discourse theory, framing and self-presentation theory, and a collection of theoretical contributions within postmodern fashion consumption.

Conclusion: The empirical findings reveal that influencers produce ideals that construct subjectivities that consumers voluntarily mold themselves into, ultimately benefiting fast fashion brands. Moreover, three critical areas of the influencers' subjectivity construction were identified where the findings illustrate how influencers become both consumers and producers of subjective consumer ideals, which lay as the foreground for corporations selling their products.

Contribution: This study contributes to existing consumer-produced subjectivity literature and how influencers' adoption of fashion constructs subjective ideals to their followers mediated through Instagram. Moreover, a conceptual framework was developed that illustrates the subjectivity construction process and its theoretical framework that lay as a foundation for future research. Additionally, the study contributes with an analytical tool suitable for emerging in critical discourse analysis of visual images and text.

Acknowledgements

_____   _____

Cecilia Hallgren   Yulia Engqvist Johansson

Table of Content

List of Figures

1.0 Introduction

The perfect picture can include and entail many things. After going through the 100 similar-looking images taken of a single outfit, followed by hours of editing, the picture is finally uploaded to Instagram with a personal text. After the image is uploaded, notifications start streaming in. The influencer then looks pleased down on incoming comments and likes that pops up on the phone. The comments are filled with praises of the influencer's style consciousness and questions of where they can buy the same outfit. The day after, another post uploads in collaboration with a known fashion brand, showing off different garments while carefully not wearing the same style twice. The text caption talks about the stylish look and ends with a discount code that allows 20% off any clothing product. On the other side of the screen sits one of the influencer's followers and looks at the idol's Instagram flow, the follower's primary source of inspiration, and view of the ideal beauty and fashion icon. After going through the most recent posts, the follower clicks on the link in the description and goes directly to the brand's landing page to make the purchase. Being trendy and keeping up with trends displayed by the idols is key for the follower's sentiment of reaching the best version of oneself.

Holt (2004) acknowledges that consumers strive to live up to socially cherished ideals by a nation's culture. Nevertheless, if failure to live up to those values, people experience anxiety. Hence, consumers seek guidance from lead consumers, also known as influencers. Today consumers do not solely consume on needs but also for the symbolic value that it generates. Since the rise of social media, the social circle of friends and family has extended to include more abstract relations (Siegle, 2019). Instagram has become a powerful tool to influence people, where popular accounts hold large audiences (Kozinets, 2019). Through their screens, consumers create a close connection by following their idols throughout their day by consuming content online. To create a close relationship with influencers, consumers absorb these subjectivities to share the same experience, life world and become a part of the perfect picture portrayed by their idols. Hence, an influencer becomes a trustworthy friend one can take within the back pocket. Thus, through the power of influence, influencers rule within

certain discourses, leading to the production of ideal subjectivities, objective realities of what is considered a favorable identity, personality traits, visual look, or lifestyle (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014). Hence, by holding consumers' attention, influencers can affect, construct, and forward the representation of a particular subjectivity that influences consumers and creates the desired identity, no matter how unreachable (Skeldon, 2019).

1.1 Problematization

Ideal subjectivities guide consumers' identity projects by promoting people to engage, behave, and consume in a certain way. The phenomenon is observable, particularly within the fast fashion industry, and displayed through influencers. Thompson and Haytko (1997) further argue that consumers utilize meanings from their fashion consumption to construe their experience and interpret different aspects of their life. The fashion marketplace has grown increasingly attractive due to its symbolic value, an outlet for people to express individuality, personality, differentiate, or pursue a favorable identity. Hence, fashion garments and brands can be utilized as resources to help individuals reach certain ideals where clothes act as symbols. Thus, the symbolic meaning assists the consumers to fulfill their desires for a favorable identity or fit in social norms (Simmel, 1957; Belk, 1988). Moreover, digitalization and the rise of visual-rich social media platforms such as Instagram have increased the pressure to pursue a favorable identity and engagement in consumption trends (Cao et al. 2020). Within fast fashion, the growth of social media has given rise to influencers who encourage ideal subjectivity, which guides, form, and directs consumers on how to act and construct themselves (Dean, 2010). Consequently, influencers, through their digital presence, can create online narratives that encourage ideal identities.

Social media, in general, may be regarded as the technology of the self, in which influencers produce ideal subjectivities for their followers and themselves by posting, sharing, and creating content. Consequently, influencers actively govern themselves through technology and build their state of subjectivism (Smart, 2003). Influencers are "prosumers" of ideals that draw from different forms of discourse created by governments or corporations (Zwick et al., 2008). Hence, influencers are raised experts who achieve recognition and a significant number of

followers through public consumption, where they are "choosing, evaluating, and engaging with clothing and posting accounts of this consumption" (McQuarrie et al., 2013, p. 137). Therefore, consumers place their trust in the hands of influencers to make the right decision not only on how people should dress but also how they should conduct themselves. Thus, consumers give them a role of authority within a particular space to bend to their likeness by producing or recreating certain ideals (Rocamora, 2002; Dean, 2010). According to Rose (2001), discourse is a set of statements that pattern people's ability to think and act. In other words, it "is a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it" (Rose, 2001, p. 136). Hence, certain discursive practices become resources to create new subjectivities passed on from influencers to their followers. Additionally, it leads consumers to engage with influencers while simultaneously becoming part of validating and reproducing subject positions in their search for reaching their ideal self (Zwick et al., 2008).

Moreover, the consumers' chase for a favorable identity is endorsed by influencers encouraging them to be in a particular way by presenting attractive identity positions. Additionally, due to the influencers' broad follower reach, brands utilize influencers as tools to reach their target audience since engaging consumers is the main selling point for fast fashion brands, and influencers are the perfect fit to facilitate purchases (Siegle, 2019). Thus, corporations mobilize the influencers to produce subjectivities that people should convert to because it benefits the companies and the product itself. Consumption thus shapes people in a certain way where consumers voluntarily try to live up to the ideals from hidden power exercises. In other words, people are encouraged to mold themselves according to certain ideals while simultaneously being unaware of their participation in the construction (Fairclough, 1995).

The problematic aspect behind these subjectivities is the production of anxiety and desires that are hard for people to maintain. In other words, the ideal identity or perception of fashion is constantly changing, where new trends are continuously being produced. Hence, the chase for the ideal identity becomes an unattainable discursive practice that consumers commit to. Yet, consumers constantly feel a need to live up to these ideals and spend time-consuming particular subjectivities forwarded through influencers. This leads to an unsustainable, never-ending

process, where the desired identity can only be achieved temporarily since the image is constantly changing as fashion quickly adapts to new trends (Bauman, 2010). Hence, ideals are the building blocks of subjectivities, which make them further relevant to capture empirically.

Hence, the research question is,

What ideals are lead consumers producing through the construction of subjectivity?

1.2 Research Purpose

This study aims to investigate what ideals lead consumers produce through the creation of subjective positions and, by this, advance existing theoretical knowledge of the production of consumption subjectivities. Thus, the thesis seeks to contribute to current academic findings by offering a comprehensive concept of the phenomena by studying it through the lens of fast fashion and influencers, an environment that is rich in subject positions.

This study is critical due to its social impact, understanding what affects us, and allowing consumers to recognize when they are becoming victims of subjected ideals and consumer subjectivities that guide them into living a particular type of life. Thus, understanding oneself and the society that exists right now is of great importance. Additionally, the growing impact of Instagram gave rise to a developing phenomenon of influencers who became a big part of Instagram user's lives. Therefore, influencers play a critical role and have the potential power of consumer subjection. Moreover, since this is a timely subject in the complex postmodern society, the study will lead to significant implications for evaluating oneself in society and contributing and producing subjectivity.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis outline with the description of every chapter and its content is shown in Figure 1.

1.0 Introduction
The chapter provides a general background of the paper followed by problematization of the researched topic and ends with the research purpose.

2.0 Literature review
The chapter presents an extensive summary of the existing literature within the study field, including an overview of primary concepts and defining gaps the present study aims to fill.

3.0 Theoretical Framework
The chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework including the main theories that guide the study and will be used to analyze the empirical material.

4.0 Methodology
The chapter overviews the methodological research choices and explains the scientific research approach and design, data collection methods, selection, analytical framework, quality of the study, and ends with ethical considerations.

5.0 Empirical Analysis
The chapter provides an analysis of the collected data together with the relevant findings in connection with the researched subject. The theoretical framework is applied to the outcomes of the research.

6.0 Discussion
The chapter discusses the main empirical findings in relation to the literature review underlining the contribution to the existing research in the field.

7.0 Conclusion
The chapter concludes the overall discussion of the paper and research findings concerning the research question, outlining the study's theoretical and practical implications. The chapter also presents research limitations and propositions for future research.

Figure 1 Outline of the Thesis.

2.0 Literature Review

The following chapter reviews the current state of knowledge within consumer subjectivity production and aims to present an up-to-date picture of research in the chosen field. There is scarce research on the chosen topic due to the specific subject of consumer subjectivity production. Therefore the present study draws its research from Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) and various marketing discourses. In the framework of the present paper, we considered the concept of governmentality to conceptualize the production of consumer subjectivity. In the final section of the chapter, our contribution to previous research will demonstrate how consumption subjectivities can be envisioned through influencers and how it is being done.

2.1 Consumer-Produced Subjectivity

Previous research has treated Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality as a foundation for analysis of discourses. Additionally, prior studies show that the market system has envisioned different consumer subjectivities. Skålen et al. (2008) acknowledge how Foucault views power as embedded in discourse and for knowledge and, ultimately, the truth. The regime of power/knowledge becomes subjective positions that lead to constructing identities to people that they might incorporate themselves. Hence, people govern themselves and others what they believe is the truth and the right way to be, which creates and directs towards a particular subjectivity (Skålen et al., 2006). Zwick et al. (2008) introduce the concept of co-creation as a new political form of corporate power, where the consumer is free but at the same time controllable. This combination makes consumers become active and entrepreneurial subjects who willingly participate in co-creation, a discursive procedure to configure social relations of production. In contrast, Giesler and Veresiu (2014) draw upon governmentality, where consumers are viewed as moral projects through responsibilization. Commonly, the research demonstrates how governmentality lays as a foundation in which subjectivities are produced through discourses, such as imagery, technology, market actors, governments, and, particularly, consumers themselves.

2.1.1 Marketing Discourse

Skålen et al. (2008) adopt a critical standpoint towards marketing discourses, intending to demonstrate the problematic aspect of marketing becoming a source of power for legitimizing, producing, and reproducing consumerism and managerialism representing contemporary society and its organizations. Hence, the authors explore how discourses invested in this power impact what it does to societies and humans, where Foucault's theory has been utilized as a framework to conceptualize power embedded in knowledge and understand how marketing managerial discourses produce subjectivities. Foucault (1977) proposed a definition of governmentality with the implied meaning of "the conduct of conduct" as the form of activity that is "aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons" (Gordon, 1991, p. 2). The first conduct in the phrase implies the leading or guidance of the government is premeditated, with the second indicating people's thoughts, acts, and feelings. At the same time, it also refers to some reflexivity about self, implying that conduct refers to both: regulation of the self and others. Through the notion of Foucault's governmentality, Skålen et al. (2006) acknowledge how the approach combines freedom and control by allowing us to explain the mechanism that lay in people's willingness to subject and govern themselves through the adoption of certain subjective positions.

Skålen et al. (2008) acknowledge that language use and discourse represent the world and produce it. "Language is not only content; it is also context and a way to recontextualize content. We do not just report and describe with language; we also create with it. Moreover, what we create in language "uses us" in that it provides a point of view (a context) within which we "know" reality and orient our actions" (Boje et al., 2004, p. 571). Moreover, governmentality emphasizes how discourses invested in power and knowledge, such as embedded in marketing, promote government of people by subjecting certain rationals to encouraging people to cultivate certain mentalities. Nevertheless, discourse does not determine the form of subjectivity (Dean, 1999). However, it can facilitate, promote, and attribute things such as what identities can be obtained through a particular discourse. Therefore, it does not determine what identities people ultimately adapt to (Skålen et al., 2008). Dean (1999) further acknowledges that discourses become resources for constructing their own identities when

choosing to reinvent themselves. Hence, subjection promotes and regulates spaces in which produced knowledge is facilitated and dispersed in society to fit certain ends. Consequently, discourses may manage consumers' choices and desires by manipulating freedom.

Thompson and Haytko (1997) elaborated on discourse notion defining it as "a complex system of cultural meanings that are encoded in conventional ways of talking about fashion" (p. 15). The authors stated that "fashion discourses provide consumers with a plurality of interpretive positions that, because of their diverse associations, can enable them to juxtapose opposing values and beliefs" (Thompson & Haytko, 1997, p.15). Consumers utilize the contradictory interpretations of fashion discourse to cope with controversies between their sense of individual freedom and susceptibility to a source of social norms in their everyday lives. People adopt different cultural discourses on fashion to develop various social categories as a foundation for their own social identity (Roper et al., 2013; Thompson & Haytko, 1997). In this process of self-identification, the perceiving of self is continuously redefined through comparison with others. In other words, discourses facilitate how people perceive themselves and the world around them (Miller & Rose, 2008). Faurschou (1987) expressed his critical views stating that people are involved in the ideology of consumption by fashion discourses. This process forces people to immerse themselves in fashion discourses and adopt established cultural and societal norms and ideals through which they perceive themselves. These ideals lead to consumer's constant dissatisfaction with their lifestyle and appearance, stimulating continuous consumption (Fırat, 1991; Jameson, 1991).

In their research, Cova and Cova (2009) stated that marketing discourses tend to emphasize the main characteristics of the consumer while their consumption practices are organized by discourses. Authors in their paper distinguished three major marketing discourses: relational, experiential, and collaborative, which develops consumer's reality and leads to the creation of different consumer types. The right of freedom spawned and strengthened the postmodern approach where consumers were liberated from collective ideals and norms that led to individualistic consumers' creation, uncontrollable and volatile. The new type of consumer leads to developing relational marketing approaches that offer the technological solution, allowing individuals to dialog with a company and participate in the knowledge-sharing

process. The experiential approach is based on "stressing hedonistic values and individual subjectivity" (Cova & Cova, 2009, p.86). This discourse portrays the experiential type of hedonistic consumer who is rational but emotional. He is looking for pleasure in and through their consumption experience and prioritizing products and marketing campaigns that "dazzle their senses, touch their hearts and stimulate their minds" (Schmitt, 1999, p. 22). The experiential marketing approach requires consumers to immerse in the experience, for that consumers need to communicate with a company and actively participate in a process as they "play key roles in creating the performance or event that yields the experience" (Pine II & Gilmore 1998, p. 101). The collaborative marketing approach sees consumers as partners to a company on a path to a value creation that leads to the birth of "new creative consumers and their new technological context" (Cova & Cova, 2009, p. 88). Within collaborative marketing was developed the concept of ''consumer agency'' where consumers are at the forefront of generating ideas that companies can use (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Postmodern consumers reject all norms and values and are willing to decide how they would like to live by becoming the co-producers of their reality. In other words, they become actively involved in their consumption and willing to participate in creating products or services that are made for them.

2.1.2 Co-Creation

Zwick et al. (2018) propose another view to collaborative marketing as discussed by Cova and Cova (2009), where the discourse of value co-creation treats modern corporate power as a shaping factor to a particular norm or subjectivity rather than aimed at disciplining consumers. Companies prefer to cooperate with consumers to meet their needs, while consumers started to be perceived as "market partners" (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). According to Zwick et al. (2018), the co-creation process is the power change where the consumer is governed through liberation instead of enforcement. Companies have come to view consumers in self-transformation of desires, and ideal lifestyles turned into subjectivities as a source to draw reproduced and updated social and cultural knowledge. Thus, consumers become "prosumers" or "consum-actors" and transform from passive recipients of communication and commodities to active producers through value co-creation (Firat & Dholakia, 2006; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Zwick et al., 2018). Therefore, consumers are treated as empowered,

entrepreneurial, and liberal consumer subjects while the company-customer relationship is emphasized as mutually beneficial. In other words, consumers combine their own consumption experience with the assets offered by companies (Vargo & Lusch, 2008) to co-create and co-extract value from their experience as consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). A Foucauldian perspective of governmentality underlies the co-creation paradigm as the "attempt to establish a specific form of government" (Zwick et al., 2018, p. 176). Zwick et al. (2018) treated the subject by introducing the concept of co-creation as the new way of consumer control. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) also consider marketing a form of political power exercising control over "co-opting" consumers and their competencies by shaping their co-creation practices. Although, "marketing as the exertion of political power to produce particular forms of creativity and practice" (Cova & Cova, 2012, p. 159) is not equal to domination, as customers need to be free to be able to co-create and stay innovative (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

The co-creation concept attempts to set a particular form of government to create a specific form of life in which consumers voluntarily and unwaged are put to work, where the consumer-determined subject is not passive but an active self. Rose (1999) explained it as follows "Unlike the more top-down approach of disciplinary power, which is aimed at shaping the actions of individuals through the imposition of orders, rules, and norms, government works from the bottom up and represents a form of power that acts through practices that 'make up subjects' as free persons" (Rose, 1999, p.95). Hence, a co-creation process is a political form of power that resulted in creative consumer birth who is free but controllable. Dean (1995) stated that to perform as creative consumers, people have to be "shaped, guided, and moulded" (Dean, 1995, p. 165). Therefore, different marketing discourses are engaged in the governmentality of consumers "through the faces that they produce and promote" (Cova & Cova, 1992, p. 94). Consumers become subjected to marketing's desire to produce cultural conditions that aim to attract consumers to engage in the innovation process (Zwick et al., 2018). Hence, 'the market thus becomes a platform for participating in a culture of exchange, where companies offer consumers resources to create' and where consumers offer companies vital insights into customer knowledge (Zwick et al., 2018, p 172). Consequently, consumers are treated as free subjects capable of self-transformation, with desires to engage in self-shaping (Rose, 1999).

Thompson (2014) presents another view in which consumers are put to work to defend their collective interests. Through the practice of consumption, consumers create a vast amount of marketplace resources to construct personal and collective identities that are favorable for a particular subject and to resist commercialized formed norms, stigmas, limitations, and structures enforced by government and corporations. Hence, consumer identity work becomes a form of identity politics that challenge marketplace power. Shankar et al. (2006) argue that people become consumers and get empowered where empowerment is defined through their ability to exercise choice and customize desired items and services. It stimulates the market to produce more by making consumers less dependent on a particular manufacturer and expanding their freedom. However, freedom exercised through choice is accessible for those consumers who can take part in the market by trading their economic, social and cultural capital (Shankar et al., 2006; Bourdieu, 1984). Consumption replaced traditional institutions and became the ''prime socialization agent'' (Shankar et al., 2006, p. 1017). The consumer's identity is defined by marketing discourses constructing people by setting norms and ideals that individuals can achieve through consumption by thus becoming desperate and irrepressible consumers (Belk et al., 2003; Foucault, 1977; Shankar et al., 2006). Charitsis et al. (2018) added to the subject stating that companies govern consumer value co-creation activities and interactions through various marketing strategies and tools, encouraging them to create disciplinary mechanisms while marketers control the environment that motivates them to do so. In turn, consumers interact through cognitive labor by actively participating in creating a biopolitical climate. Consumers shifted from silent targets of marketing activities to active participants and ''operant resource'' (Charitsis et al., 2018, p. 348). In other words, they become active contributors to their expertise and skills, while their activities are an essential component in the co-creation process and the development of the marketing system. The biopolitical subjectivities are produced by consumers, while marketing activities lead consumers' biopolitical production in a way that will allow capital to gain the most from the takeover of these production results. In other words, companies affect the construction of ''a self-governing, voluntarily acting and socially self-tracking consumer'' (Charitsis et al., 2018, p.356). The government of the consumers is performed through biopolitical marketing

dimensions such as gamification, socialization, and competitiveness that create particular consumer subjectivities, including self-quantified subjects.

2.1.3 Responsible Consumer Subjects

On the contrary to viewing subjectivity through co-creation, Giesler and Veresiu (2014) brought up the concept of responsible consumers, drawing their theory on sociological theorizing on governmentality. Responsibilization is one of the Foucauldian "technologies of the self" where individuals are affected by their ethical self-understanding (Shamir, 2008; Smart, 2003). Responsible consumers are governed as moral subjects and are self-responsible for their own consumption choice. Consumers base their choice on the liberty of choice regulated by many ethical guidelines defining the "right choice." Devinney et al. (2010) express similar views and point out that consumers pursue a moral imperative and make their consumption choice based on their ethical beliefs. Giesler and Veresiu (2014) build the study on the idea of the responsible consumer subject as moral projects, where the responsible consumer subject is a function of the capitalist market's reach for stability and growth. Hence, it constrains consumers to bend to norms that reinforce social structures. Consequently, in indifference to Zwick et al. (2018) definition of consumers being controlled through the co-creation process, Giesler and Veresiu (2014) argue how consumers are governed through their consumption choices. Hence consumers are not free from governmental control but rather part of enforcing it by becoming a part of its strategy to reshape choice and construct consumer behavior morally. Ultimately, political power shapes responsible consumer subjects rather than responsible consumers being created through experience. Moreover, the process of responsible consumer subject creation is theorized as a governmental process. While responsibilization and composition of the responsible consumer happen through four different but interconnected processes such as personalization, authorization, capabilization, and transformation or P.A.C.T. *Personalization* revalues the social problem as the one for individual responsibilization rather than collective. *Authorization* draws on knowledge to make individual responsibilization and responsible consumer subjectivity adoption legitimate. *Capabilization* is responsible for market structure creation that supports product and service development to

ensure ethical self-management. *Transformation* happens when "consumers adopt their new moralized self-understandings" and "reconstructed as free, autonomous, rational, and entrepreneurial subjects" (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014, p. 841-842).

Brown (2013) elaborates further by stating that individuals take responsible actions depending on self-regulation based on their environment and socioeconomic status. In other words, consumers' socioeconomic status allows them to act freely by making them responsible for their consumer choices. The view of governmentality of liberty explains that consumers are controlled through indirect molding of "free" social practices (Smart, 2003). According to Giesler and Veresiu (2014), the free market can be considered the liberation force that promoted "good moral conduct and individual responsibility" (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014, p. 842). The market system ensures the availability of the resources that can meet individual needs while all socio-moral responsibilities and ethical responsibilities lie on individuals rather than on the market. Hence, the market system actively participates and influences the creation of various consumer subjectivities. The concept of consumers becoming 'enterprises of themselves.' where they become associated with the desired society through their consumption choices while taking risks and responsibilities that are connected to it. Thus, consumers form themselves as subjects through ethics such as rules and morals for actions marked as right or wrong (Smart, 2003). Brown (2013) introduced the concept of "bad behavior," where people themselves set frames defining what is considered good or bad consumer choice and being morally responsible for their consumer choices and consequences. Consumption of any kind in that sense is a production of the self, where the consumer individualizes himself through a "free" choice of subjectivity, consumption, and adoption.

2.2 Subjectivity Performed in Virtual Spaces

In a postmodern society, technologies such as mediation devices are utilized as marketing instrumentals in the construction of the consumer, which can be related to governmental strategies that aim to 'govern at a distance' (Miller & Rose, 1990; Rose, 1999). These technologies' power/knowledge relation becomes a way to know and target customers by framing them as 'customer-knowing subjects' (Skålen, 2006). Foucault's (1977) view of

'technologies of the self' demonstrates how consumers construct themselves in different forms and practices. Through the process, consumers utilize the techniques available as resources to produce their subjectivity. Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) suggest the notion of "brand public," where consumers use social media tools as mediation devices that unite many private perspectives and published experiences, hence forming online communities. Thus, social media platforms function as an outlet of discourses in which published content and narratives can be constructed to form a particular subjectivity (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016; Thompson, 2014). Foucault (1977) further emphasizes how discourse and language create cultural subjects. Hence, through social media, a new language is configured, introducing a way to conduct discursive and subjective work in the virtual marketplace (Zwick & Dholakia, 2004). Active social media engagement is motivated by forming positive relationships and encourages people to imitate one another by remediating their opinions, views and sharing their content online. Which ultimately mediates consumer-produced subjectivities (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). Hence, subjectivity can be related to ongoing practices of the self-conducted through the concern of finding the truth, the ethics of how to behave and construct themselves (Smart, 2003). According to their ideals and norms, consumers adjust the marketplace, creating social media discourses that serve as a resource for the consumer's subjectivity creation. For example, social media's active rise and development lead to the Instagram transformation from a digital photo album to the marketplace, reflecting the time and societal views. Consequently, it becomes a source of consumer subjectivity (Thompson, 2014).

Corporate capitalism is seen through social media as its platform creates the communal discourse of sharing. Hence the appropriation of the creative skills of online consumers are put to work through co-creation, where the empowered, entrepreneurial and free consumers are allegedly in control of the digital and global marketplace, but also becomes an operant resource of the production process as they create branded content and provide market-relevant information (Zwick et al., 2008). Gretzel (2017) found that users form many social media conventions and show a desire to individualize and innovate by following specific images and online traces. Consumers express their opinion on social media, but corporations can moderate it to benefit themselves. Consumers, therefore, become part of organizational strategies and discursive producers to reconfigure social relations of production and work through the

freedom of the consumer subject (Zwick et al., 2008). Additionally, social media is a platform where brands can produce different associations where value can be added in various ways (Kozinets, 2019). Moreover, value co-creation is influenced by individual or public effects on social media, followed by other people's desire to imitate (Gretzel, 2017). Driel and Dumitrica (2020) studied the particular subject of authenticity. For the influencers to maintain trustworthy, they engaged in subjecting cultural content production from their everyday life. By publishing original content online, they project transparency and emotional affliction by combining information about a product with their relationship invested in it. Hence, influencers produce and manage their online persona to a strategic self-presentation of being authentic.

2.3 Theoretical Contribution

The previous research in the field is mainly concentrated on consumer subjectivity as the result of power change where the consumer is governed through liberation instead of enforcement (Zwick et al., 2018). The concept of co-creation as a new political form of power resulted in creative consumer birth, while the control over consumer subjectivity can be pursued through "platforms for consumer practice" (Zwick et al., 2008, p. 165). This study assumes that social media, specifically Instagram, in that case, can be considered as platforms for co-creation, where regular users and influencers produce and consume different content (Bertilsson & Rennstam, 2018). There is no clear evidence that Instagram can be considered a platform for consumer subjectivity creation or that influencers contribute to this process. Therefore the present paper sets out to contribute with a closer look at what role social media and influencers play in the consumer subjectivity creation and ideals in the fast fashion context.

The present study also contributes by looking at social media influencers as prosumers who consume fast fashion products and post their social media content to co-create value for fast fashion brands. Simultaneously, they create consumer subjectivity for their followers that imitate influencers driven by a common interest and enthusiasm (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). At the same time, Giesler and Veresiu (2014) stated that responsible consumers result from a governmental process, where they are being managed as moral subjects who have to be responsible for their consumption choice. Nevertheless, the study does not recognize

consumers' production of subjectivities since consumers co-create ideals and shared values. Therefore the present paper contributes to research on how these consumers might be affected by other contemporary social discourses. Moreover, influencers are a growing force that are both subjects for being exposed to subjectivity and producers through social media self-presentation. Additionally, while Arvidsson & Caliandro (2016) acknowledge the formation of online communities, the study will further look into how consumers conduct their personal network with influencers. Finally, while earlier literature has acknowledged how governments and companies exploit consumers and enforce certain ideals and values, there is a lack of two-sided conversation about how regular consumers become lead consumers and thus engage and produce new subjectivities. Accordingly, the present paper contributes to the theory by considering subjectivity for consumers by other consumers, the influencers on social media. Moreover, the thesis expands the subject and provides an explicit overview if, within social media, influencers have the power to influence and set societal norms by governing people and, consequently, creating their subjectivity.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

The following chapter aims to introduce and explain the concepts and theories used for the empirical material analysis. The chapter is broken down to governmentality and discourse theory to explain how consumer subjectivity is produced. Secondly, the chapter explains the motivation for fast fashion consumption rooted in postmodern society's development. Finally, the chapter narrows down to the conceptual framework to explain how consumer subjectivity is produced.

3.1 Governmentality

The phrase "conduct of conduct" refers to a particular lead of people's behavior that was formed from the theoretical contributions of Michael Foucault (Skålen et al., 2006). The reference describes government, where our conduct and others are formed, handled, and controlled by a set of social practices that hold different forms of rationality. Governmentality is leading through freedom by using controlling techniques, where individuals are free to choose their actions, but their choices are limited by certain constraints such as societal norms.

These constraints are so natural and regular that it is challenging for individuals to perceive or recognize them. Therefore, groups or people who have the power to influence what the majority considers normal, rational, good, or bad have a great power "to shape how we freely choose to conduct ourselves" (Egan-Wyer, 2019, p. 52). Government is interwoven with knowledge, which explains people's motivation to govern themselves and others ''in regimes of truth'' towards something they believe is true and the right way to be (Smart, 2003). In other words, the governmentality approach explains that people are free in their choices to conduct themselves. At the same time, their options are being molded and directed towards particular "correct" choices (Skålen et al., 2006). According to Rose (1999), the government is not the same as domination. Domination aims to diminish or even remove the "capacity for action among the dominated" (Egan-Wyer, 2019, p. 52). Thus, the government aims to guide these actions, thoughts, and emotions towards its objectives. Foucault also distinguishes power and violence, underlying that power has to be applied to people who are free in their choice of how to act; otherwise, it is pure violence (Egan-Wyer, 2019). Skålen et al. (2006) stated that governmental rationality "is embedded in discourse and which produces subjectivity" (p.277). The discourses do not define subjectivity; instead, people pick how they want to be governed by adopting particular subject positions. The governmentality approach by Foucault combines freedom and control by explaining the mechanism that lay in people's willingness to subject and govern themselves through adopted subjectivities (Smart, 2003).

The problematic aspects of power and knowledge dynamic have a central role in governmentality, where human beings are both subjects, objects of action, and knowledge (Smart, 2003). Dean (2010) further argues how the government performs an action that attempts to shape freedom through rules and norms. Simultaneously, subjects of governmentality have their capacity to act and think, which is exercised when governing ourselves. Thus, ''regime of rationality'' or ''mentalities of government'' concerns the rationalities people apply to think, act, and respond to an issue that may build upon knowledge or insight claims. Hence, the mentalities of government emphasize how thinking is involved in government and immersed through language and technological tools, the so-called ''technologies of the self.'' These mentalities are often collective ideas of how reality looks like, thus rarely questioned by its actors. Therefore, ''the way we think about exercising

authority draws upon the expertise, vocabulary, theories, ideas, philosophies, and other forms of knowledge that are given and available to us'' (Dean, 2010, p. 25). Additionally, the rational mentality that reinforces ruling draws upon political discourses or vocabulary combined with imagery to evoke emotional rationalities. Foucault (1977) acknowledges 'symbolic power' where knowledge is provided by a certain class hierarchy or expertise which people draw upon and rely on when exercising self-government. Therefore, the parts of ourselves that we aim to change or work on, the tools we adapt to do it, and the reason behind it. The identity we seek to achieve varies significantly on the engagement within a particular discourse practice. While people rely on class hierarchy and knowledge from certain field experts to conduct themselves, there is also an ongoing struggle to resist power. Thus, ''where there is power, there is resistance,'' which entails that resistance is present in every space in which power is exercised, and the relation between them makes up society (Smart, 2003, p. 130). Moreover, Smart's (2003) collection of the work of Michael Foucault acknowledges ''the techniques of the self,'' which refers to how people form and transform themselves by altering their bodies, thoughts, and conducts. For example, the body is recognized as a central component for exercising power since it entails productive power relations and has both political and economic significance. Thus, the connection between power, body, and knowledge becomes techniques used to employ particular identities.

Furthermore, Dean (2010) developed an analytical framework of governmentality, based on the ideas and theory developed by Foucault, which explores the ethical government of the self that takes part in four dimensions. The first dimension involves ontology in which the regime seeks to act upon, exploring the aspect of *what* people aspire to govern. Secondly, concerns ascetics, *how* governing is achieved, for example, the governing of ethical guidelines. The third dimension places focus on deontology, concerned with *who* people become when being governed, the mode of subjectification. The final and fourth dimension involves teleology, which relates to *why* people govern or are governed, that all practices of governments serve to fulfill a goal or certain ends. The framework explores the conditions in which specific structures occur, change, and exist. Thus, the analytic scheme emphasizes the different ways of governing and how people conduct themselves, and the regimes in which it occurs. Subjectivity functions through spaces where governmentality rationality promotes and

regulates and where the enactment of choice arises. Further, subjectivity is achieved by producing knowledge that serves certain ends, which exercises power that is both repressive and productive (Smart, 2003). An analytical approach to governmentality acknowledges the different government practices and relation to the different views of 'truth,' which is produced through social, cultural, and political discourses. Through the spectrum of truth, people govern themselves and others and give rise to the production of different ways to conduct truth. Thus, government does entail not only power and authority but also the state of self and identity (Dean, 2010).

3.2 Discourse

The methodology and theory of discourse can be found in the work of Michael Foucault, one of the most influential researchers that has impacted the interest in language and discourse. His ideas regarding the relationship between knowledge, power, and subjectivity have influenced modern discourse methods and analysis. According to Svensson (2018), a discourse is a way to speak and write about the world and social practice. Foucault (1977) argued that subjectivities are constructed through different processes, particularly discourses expressed through texts, expressions, and other forms of language usage. Discourses build the world by enabling and disabling how people think, experience, and act in everyday life. Hence, human subjects are produced and not born. Therefore, discourses give people categories and concepts to organize expressions and lives. For example, the distinction between females and males in society is cultural and linguistic construction rather than natural. Gee (1999) acknowledges how people create identities and practices through language while simultaneously combining them with other factors. A spoken word gains its meaning when communicated either a who or what, representing a socially constructed identity or subjectivity, the ideal person one seeks to be. The what represents the activity that helps to build the who. Hence, ''you are who you are partly through what you are doing and what you are doing is partly recognized for what it is by who is doing it" (Gee, 1999, p 23). Language alone does not create discourses, it is constructed together with our actions, how we think, attitudes, communication with other people, symbols, technologies, or objects that, together with language, lead to its creation. According to Gee (1999), discourses involve constructed social identities, the production of identities and

activities, practices of coordination and being coordinated by other people, characteristics, ways of acting, interacting, feeling attitudes, values, knowledge, thinking, and writing.

Moreover, discourse theory is based on the fundamental ideas from Foucault, with interest in language usage and its meaning for the creation and reinforcement of different power relations in society. Thus, it emphasizes how society is created or constructed by people in their everyday social interactions. Understanding language is central for exploring what limits humans and what makes us believe that certain things need to be in a certain way (Svensson, 2018). An important starting point for discourse theory is the meaning of the social phenomena within an ongoing production process. Hence, a word or phenomenon can never be claimed entirely, as society constantly struggles with how things should be interpreted. Different groups and powers in the society fight to establish the final interpretation of various phenomena, to define the absolute truth. Hence, society on its own is a result of struggling powers of meaning and power. All objects in the world exist concerning other things. However, the relation between them is not essential or natural, but somewhat temporary and dependent on people's language use and continuous struggle for defining meaning (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, it is possible to change society by changing language usage (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Language plays a vital part since it can enable communication between people and limit our imagery of the world and self-image. The social context we share with other people depends on our ability through symbols, such as language, sharing our experiences, and acting together (Svensson, 2018).

Moreover, Deetz (1992) argues there is tension over the communication paradigm, where discursive closure works to suppress conflict and express alternative views. This discursive closure works through strategies that concern *disqualification*, *naturalization*, and *neutralization*. Disqualification arises when specific topics or people are denied or excluded from forwarding their opinion due to a lack of particular expertise. Moreover, naturalization is the phenomenon of overlooking and accepting things the way they are without acknowledging the socio-historical process that has formed these taken-for-granted assumptions. "When discussion is thwarted, a particular view of reality is maintained at the expense of equally plausible ones, usually to someone's advantage" (Deetz, 1992, p. 188). On the other hand, neutralization relates to where the particular value or subject positions are hidden, thus

appearing not to contain any value and therefore becomes less evident. A critical view of discourse thus aims to analyze the text and visuals on a micro level, using a Foucauldian discourse sociological perspective and discourse theory. The essential aspect is to illustrate the language's role in creating and recreation of inequalities and injustice in society. The ambition is to contribute to societal changes and liberation from taken-for-granted truth, locked ideologies, and destructive power relations. Through a Marxist theory, the critical aim is directed towards business, capitalism, and markets (Svensson, 2018). Norman Fairclough (1995) explained 'critical' as a way to question these assumptions, limitations of human knowledge, and to analyze usage of language related to power. While Foucault, in his extensive work, demonstrated the connection between discourse and social constructions such as power relations, Fairclough (1995) identified the process of everyday language usage and the creation of meaning. Hence, to create a bridge between social structures and language usage, language is viewed as a social practice, whereas discourses are shaped and contained through social systems. Simultaneously, the discursive practice shapes the structures that constrain it, where there is an ongoing relationship between the language produced in social interaction, discourses, and structure.

3.3 Framing Theory & Self-Presentation Theory

The theory introduced by Goffman (1974) explains the individual's choice of how to process the presented information depending on how certain information is presented to an audience ("the frame"). Goffman (1974) used the notion of "frame" to explain that people's perception and understanding of the situation are based on the principle of organization that manages events and, consequently, people's subjective involvement. In other words, the idea of frames is an abstraction that serves to label "schemata of interpretation" that helps individuals to "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" events and situations by thus gaining meaning and understanding of the situations that help to guide individuals actions and communicate them to others (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). The frameworks and created frames within them significantly impact how information is processed and communicated. The framework theory implies framework analysis to investigate and structure people's experiences in their social lives.

People tend to interpret and perceive events and occurrences that happened in their world through their primary framework and used to apply the primary framework by default. The type of framework that people employ as primary provides an understanding of the occurrence to which it is applied. According to Goffman (1974) primary framework is classified as natural and social. Both frameworks help people to perceive and interpret data, while their functions are different. Natural frameworks view events that are seen as undirected, not guided, and physical. On the other hand, social frameworks identify socially driven events as they incorporate aim, will, and manipulating efforts from other individuals. These actions can be described as "guided doings" (Goffman, 1974, p.22) that subject the doer to certain socially acceptable ideals. The primary frameworks of a specific social group comprise the main component of its culture. People view events based on their primary frameworks, while the choice of the utilized framework defines the way of interpreting the event to which it is applied. People might be unaware of these frameworks, their meaning, or their purpose but use them daily. Whether they are aware of them or not. The frames are widely used in mass media and news when they frame the transmitted information in a certain way. The goal drives mass media to affect how the information is perceived and set an agenda.

Goffman (1956) presented the self-presentation theory, where he applies a "dramaturgical approach" by operating with the theater figurativeness to demonstrate the importance and nuances of personal interaction. People tend to use "impression management" to present themselves to other individuals as they would like to be perceived. According to the theory, social interaction can be compared with a theater performance, while people in their everyday life can be considered as actors who are playing their roles on the stage. The audience is represented by other individuals who watch the performance and respond to it through various reactions. Goffman (1956) distinguished the term region that can be explained as "any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception" (p. 66). The author divides regions into "front" and "back" stages that affect the actor's performance depending on the region. The front stage is the main and open to an audience, where the actor knows that he is being watched and primarily follows a particular storyline that has a specific meaning for the audience. Backstage, "the impression fostered by the presentation is knowingly contradicted as a matter

of course" (Goffman, 1956, p. 70). The backstage region is hidden from the audience and allows actors to be themselves by taking a break during which they are not performing the assigned role they have to play on the front stage.

3.4 Post-Modern Fashion Consumption

A dramatic shift happened when in the middle of the twenty century, the society of producers was replaced by the society of consumers. In developing postmodern society, consumers started to have more freedom, including freedom of consumption and purchasing. It provided an unlimited choice of goods for purchase together with the necessity to express their individuality that led to an inevitable change from "solid modernity" to the "liquid modernity'' (Bauman, 2000). Liquid modernity affected the growth of fast fashion consumption based on the theory of cohesion and differentiation (Simmel, 1957; Bourdieu, 1984). The theory defines fashion as a social and cultural phenomenon enabling people social equalization and individual differentiation simultaneously. In other words, fashion allows people to express themselves and distinguish among other individuals while allowing them to be a member of a group. Fashion is different depending on social class and status, so the upper stratum of society usually has another fashion than the lower one. The upper class can be seen as trendsetters, while they abandon set trends as soon as the lower stratum appropriate them (Simmel, 1957).

A similar opinion expressed by Niinimäki et al. (2010) stated that liquid modernity and constant changing of the society motivate fast fashion consumption as consumers have a strong desire to renew themselves and to feel the wind of change through new and trendy clothes. The underlying motives of these changes are the consumer's need for social confirmation that can be achieved through wardrobe upgrades and outdated clothing replacement. One of the biggest reasons for fast fashion consumption is the desire for novelty, which is fulfilled by consuming new and trendy clothing items. The idea of fast fashion consumption also follows two purposes of individual's needs that are achieving individual or collective benefits. In most cases, the need for purchase is motivated by getting a certain social status that can help fit social norms, construct identity with the help of brands and symbols, and aspire for a particular lifestyle. The clothes, in that case, is the tool linking inner-self with a visual identity that helps to express the

person's ideals and principles. Niinimäki et al. (2010) shared Simmel's views and declared that clothing items could have symbolic value allowing consumers to differentiate themselves from others and be a part of a group. The incongruity of the social environment through their look threatens consumers not to be accepted by other consumers. Fast fashion consumption is also connected to emotional values by thus consumers perceive the meaning of consumed clothes as it affects feelings and emotions while consuming an item (including novelty). People consume clothes to reach certain emotions, and the inability to receive desired emotions can lead to emotional dissatisfaction. It confirms that people consume fast fashion driven by different desires rather than values and rationality (Niinimäki et al., 2010).

On the contrary, Bauman (2010) stated that fashion is a perpetuum mobile, "a self-feeding, self-sustaining, self-propelling and self-invigorating process" (p. 55). This phenomenon can be explained by the interaction of two basic needs: the desire to be a part of something grand and, at the same time, the desire to express themselves and their individuality as the dialect of freedom. Change is the essence of fashion; fashion does not require external factors to change itself, making it a perpetuum mobile in which motion can not be stopped. Paradoxically, but a fashion system in that sense is constraining and liberating at the same time. In comparison, Simmel (1957) explains fashion as "a peculiar form of life which is to secure a compromise between the tendency to social leveling and the tendency to individual uniqueness" (p.78). Bauman (2010) continues the argumentation line stating that the existence in the context between the two competing powers can not be considered as "a stable state." It can not be established forever as well as fashion that is constantly changing. The desire to be fashionable leads to the "banalization or commonalization of these tokens of distinction" (Bauman, 2010, p. 56). If one slows the pace of change or is not attentive enough, it can lead to individuality loss. Therefore, new trends have to be obtained by individuals as fast as possible, while outdated ones have to be immediately dismissed. Consumers are following fashion or trends and by this showing their belonging to a particular group. Moreover, individuality and good taste are part of the system they would like to be part of. Fast fashion consumption can be discussed within the context of "individual survival," where compliance with fashion and trends is redefined as a desperate desire to stay within the group and avoid exclusion. Consumers have to follow trends to keep pace, meaning the existence within a consumer-

oriented economy, a distinctive feature of the fast disposal of sold and purchased products aligned with the philosophy of fast fashion consumption (Bauman, 2010).

3.5 Conceptual Framework

The chapter has entailed the thesis theoretical framework which is believed relevant to understand how and why consumer-produced subjectivities are constructed. Thus, Figure 2 illustrates the study's conceptual framework in which the different theoretical standpoints have been combined to answer the research question.
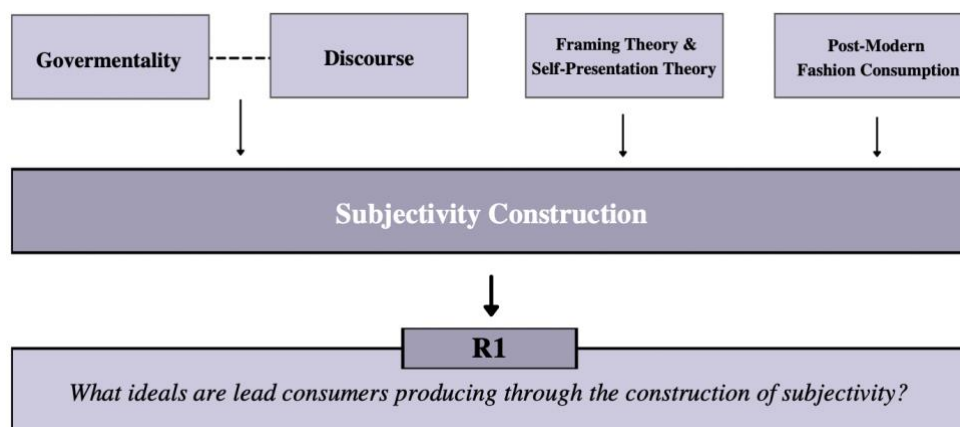
Figure 2 The Conceptual Framework.

The theoretical contributions by Michael Foucault (1977) lay as a foundation for the research, which is connected and related to the theoretical contribution to discourse practices. Together, they form an understanding of how particular subject positions are created and forwarded through language, where language is a critical part of the construction of people's world and self-image. The subjectivity creation is tightly embedded and related to the context and meanings. Therefore, the framing theory by Goffman (1974), together with the self-presentation theory (Goffman; 1956), will be used in the present paper to help to understand the impact of influencers' self-representation and their roles on subjectivity production by establishing particular frames in which subjective positions are constructed. Finally, since the present study aims to understand how consumer-subjectivities are constructed within the fast fashion context, post-modern fashion consumption contributes to the impact of clothes as

symbolic value and how consumers utilize clothes to reach their ideal image of themselves. Together, the theoretical theory and models complement each other and lead to subjectivity construction. Hence, the conceptual framework will guide and aid the research to answer the research question.

4.0 Methodology

In this section, the decisions and choices that were made throughout the study will be presented. The methodology chapter illustrates qualitative research, conducted through the abductive approach where the data is collected through netnography and social media research guidelines.

4.1 Scientific Approach

The philosophical standpoint affects the view of the world and the methods we adopt to understand it. Thus, the underlying ontological assumptions and knowledge of reality form are meaningful for the decisions taken for conducting the research. Therefore, the ontological view leads to the study adopting a relativism position, the understanding that there is not one single truth as there might be influences of many different perspectives on the subject (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2018). Hence, the research aims to discover the underlying social discourses that encourage influencers to produce and reconstruct particular subjectivities. The epistemological view is shaped by the researchers' knowledge of acquiring knowledge of the specific subject. Moreover, the study follows social constructionism, which implies that reality is socially constructed that is given purpose through people's daily interactions and how people utilize the medium of language to share their experiences. The main reason for selecting the social constructionist view is based on the study's aim to understand the different meanings and experiences that lead to consumer-produced subjectivities. Additionally, the research adopts a theoretical standpoint that people create and reproduce society through their actions, interactions, and language use. Hence, language does not solely forward representation of the world but also produces it (Skålen et al., 2008). People's roles, norms, routines, ways of speaking, writing, feelings, and thinking about the world are cultural phenomena. Therefore, knowledge and experiences about the world are viewed as linguistic and social constructions limiting what is considered, experienced, or felt. Thus, the world does not construct itself in a

specific way, rather it depends on the experiences, perspective, and language that people practice (Svensson, 2018).

The present study adopted an abductive research approach to conduct the aimed research. Since this research seeks to answer the open research question of what and how influencers form ideals through the construction of subjectivity, the selected approach was beneficial as it allows an ongoing interchange between theoretical and empirical findings (Locke, 2012). It is facilitating the research process to go back and forth throughout the study with an open approach for novel discoveries. Therefore, the theoretical framework utilized in the thesis could be modified and developed in line with the empirical findings, rather than being guided and developing propositions from existing theories. The process allows a stepwise abstraction from the empirical material into more elevated analytical themes on a conceptual level. Hence, the open approach can lead to discovering new perspectives and empirical insights while simultaneously allowing the researcher to consult earlier research remarks (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018; Dubois and Gadde (2002).

4.2 Research Design

The scientific approach and philosophical view affect the pursued research design, the decisions of what should be studied, where, and how it will take form. Since the research explores consumer-produced subjectivities and influencers' creation of ideals, qualitative research is favorable due to its exploratory capability and flexible outline (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, together with the application of the abductive research approach, the qualitative method was chosen. Combining the two, the qualitative method ensures a flexible and creative process, while the abductive approach affects the decisions made throughout the research process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Strauss and Corbin (1998) acknowledge that the qualitative research method is favorable for producing empirical findings that cannot be collected from statistical data. Instead, the method gives in-depth insights into people's lives, experiences, behavior, or other cultural phenomena. Since this study aims to analyze consumer-produced subjectivity formed through discourses, language plays a vital instrument and cultural factor. Thus, the qualitative research design was applied for the present study. Figure 3 below

demonstrates the steps taken in the research design, empirical material collection, and analysis. The four phases show the measures taken for conducting the research where the theoretical framework was applied abductively throughout the process.
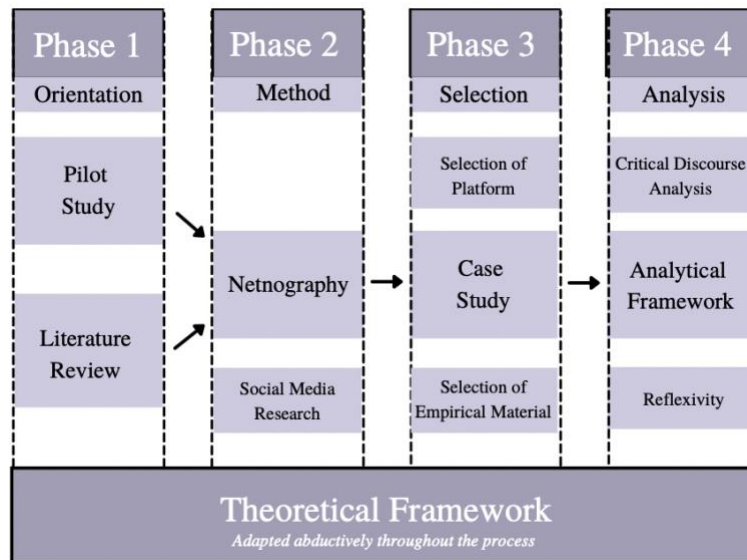
Figure 3 Research Design.

Table consisting the research design, empirical material collection, and analysis.

The first phase of the study involved the orientation stage, where the research took its starting point through a pilot study on how consumers construct their identity under the influence of Instagram through fast fashion consumption. Moreover, the literature review motivated the research to investigate discourse practices and consumer-produced subjectivity. Additionally, it revealed how subject positions are intervened, especially within the fast fashion industry, and forwarded through influencers' online presence on Instagram. These insights led the main study to evolve into researching lead consumers and their production of subjective positions online that form consumer ideals. Further, this guided the research into the second phase concerning the empirical material collection. Since fast fashion and Instagram entail rich material for studying consumer-produced subjectivities, a netnography was considered a suitable method for collecting the data. Furthermore, netnography aligns with the constructionist view and is beneficial for studying cultural and social phenomena (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018; Kozinets, 2019). Thus, in the third phase, the online observation was conducted using a case-study-based

approach, where two cases were selected. According to Eisenhardt (1989), a case study is a research strategy that aims to understand different angles' dynamics within a specific context. Combining the two methods is favorable for the present study since the research question involves answering the how or why a particular subject or phenomena occurs (Eisenhardt (1989); Kozinets, 2019). Lastly, in the fourth phase, the constructionist view guided the research to identify the unit of analysis, where critical discourse analysis was selected for interpreting the data. Thus, critical discourse analysis provides the study with a frame in which the creation of subjectivity can be explored (Phillips et al., 2008).

4.3 Data Collection

As indicated in the research design, the empirical data was collected through the combination of Kozinets's (2019) definition of netnography methodology and case study approach (Eisenhardt, 1989). Netnography is a research method built upon the idea of ethnography but conducted online (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Since the study explores influencers' construction of consumer-produced subjectivities, running an online observation was beneficial for the study due to its valuable and rich content in which subject positions can be observed. While there are few and relatively broad concepts of performing an online observation, the structured guidelines and research practice of netnography were beneficial for conducting a research study through a social media site, specifically Instagram. Moreover, adopting a case study facilitated qualitative research to generate in-depth knowledge of the studied phenomena in its real-life context. Additionally, due to its explorative nature, the research strategy combined data collection methods with archived data and observations (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The data is collected from publicly available sources online, where rich virtual observations in virtual fields, such as photographs and texts. The benefit of conducting an online observation is that most data is already available, making it easy to collect. Thus, the empirical data collection concerns archived data, also known as secondary data sources. Additionally, the data collected included secondary visual data involving online resources of photos published on Instagram (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). According to Rose (2001), the visual is a central aspect

to understanding cultural meanings in society, where meaning can be found in visual technologies such as images combined with textual description. The images display a view of the world and in a certain way (Kozinets, 2019). Hence, collecting graphical images and text is engaging for this study to interpret the subjectivities envisioned through the influencer's published content on Instagram. Thus, the observed subjectivities are the ones that are produced right now to gain a snapshot of reality. Therefore, the data collection aims to collect data on how influencers subject meanings through their published content and what message it entails to represent particular subjectivity online. Since this data is public, there is no internal blockage to access (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018).

4.3.1 Netnography

There are enormous archival data resources online in today's digital society, which poses an opportunity to conduct a virtual observation. With the growth of social media, these online traces have become increasingly complicated, taking different forms and meanings (Kozinets, 2019). While there are few and relatively broad concepts of performing an online observation, the structured guidelines and research practice of netnography were beneficial for conducting a research study through a social media site, specifically Instagram. Netnography is a tool for facilitating social media research, categorized as digital anthropology, the study of human relations investigated through digital technology. Netnography is a favorable method for performing observational research in virtual fields (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). The method sets a general guideline to conduct qualitative social media research, including ethical guidelines, collecting and creating data. When applying a method to understand social media data, netnography allows the researchers to immerse themselves and engage in the data, thus, adding in-depth human insight (Kozinets, 2019).

Moreover, netnography is a form of qualitative research that aims to understand cultural experiences that can be engaged with, communicated with, and reflected on. Hence, netnography is a method of viewing data and the world. Conducting netnography is relevant for the present study due to its flexibility and focus on cultural experiences. The research position of netnography is based on human experience and cultural knowledge to understand the underlying context of people's lives and social systems of shared meanings (Kozinets,

2002). Thus, the cultural focus can be found in language and symbols, memes, emojis, expression of various online rituals. Moreover, culture is socially patterned through human engagement by telling stories, sharing beliefs, thus passing on subjectivities through compelling images and media filled with underlying meanings (Kozinets, 2019). Since this study explores how subjective positions can affect fashion and language usage ideals through text and imagery, the cultural aspect is entailed.

4.3.2 Social Media Research

Social media research aims to investigate online communication that people engage with and has proven beneficial for uncovering social trends. As a research method, the field's growing interest can be related to technogenesis, the fast-paced development of new abilities to communicate, learn, be entertained, and connect every part of our lifeworlds online. As consumers, we adopt new products and services, co-create within the marketplaces simultaneously as we embrace the products that meet our needs and produce constant change (Zwick et al., 2008; Kozinets, 2019). Hence, while the world may develop quickly, consumers play a vital part in producing the concept of how the world looks (Smart, 2003). Therefore, technological achievements also facilitate consumers, such as influencers, to use them as tools to construct consumer-produced subjectivities. Online social experiences can tell us about existing relations, structures of power, how it changes us, and selecting people capable of succeeding within it. Those adapting to social media more rapidly hence also get ahead in society, as having a large follower account has become vital power access and influence. Social media is utilized to discourse with imagined and actual others about matters relating to them, their perspectives, the language they use, and ideas.

4.3.3 Case Study

According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2018), case methods can be designed with the theoretical perspective of relativism and constructivism epistemology, a view that emphasizes achieving a rich insight into a complex context. Additionally, case studies are beneficial for novel findings, ideas and for illustrating a specific phenomenon. Case research is a comprehensive

observation method that allows the interpretation of multiple data sources. Adopting a case study also aligns with qualitative research to answer research questions that seek to understand how or why a particular phenomenon occurs. Furthermore, this research will look into two cases within a specific context of influencers within fast fashion. According to Morgan et al. (2016), multiple case studies are advantages for providing validity in the findings from the study. Moreover, combining methods leads to triangulation which improves the overall accuracy and trustworthiness of the study (Yin, 2014; Eisenhardt, 1989). The explorative nature of qualitative case studies allows observation to illustrate in-depth insight while simultaneously capturing the whole context. By adopting a complete observation, the method is favorable for answering the present study's research question since "observations allow the researcher to actually see what people do rather than what they say they do" (Morgan et al., 2016, p. 1061). Hence, the method is relevant for this study of observing the production of subjectivity. Meanwhile, the next section will demonstrate the selection and motivation of the cases for this present study.

4.4 Selection

The selected context for conducting the research was limited to the Swedish fashion industry and Swedish influencers. The applied criteria were made to restrict the data result while simultaneously maintaining a balance between breadth and depth when looking at research phenomena.

4.4.1 Selection of Case

To answer the research question of how consumer-produced subjectivities are produced and forwarded through influencers, the 'in-betweens' of corporations, to its target audience, the data search was limited by the following criteria. First, to ensure relevance with a balance between breadth and depth, the context is limited to the Swedish Fast Fashion Industry and Swedish Fashion Influencers. Secondly, the influencers were identified through the online fast fashion brands Nelly.com and NA-KD that are well-known for their collaborations with social media influencers. Both brands actively use influencer marketing on social media and involve influencers in the process of collection development. The two Swedish fast fashion brands also

were chosen based on their wide popularity in Scandinavia and Sweden. In 2020, Nelly.com was rated in fifth place among the most popular brands in Sweden, with a revenue of over 146 million dollars (ecommerceDB, 2021). Moreover, Gothenburg-based NA-KD is expanding at an incomprehensible speed, confirmed by its income of two billion Swedish kronor in 2020 (Gunnilstam, 2021). These brands are Swedish e-commerce retailers that offer a broad range of clothing brands on their website together with an affordable price range and "latest trends and must-haves" (Nelly.com, 2021). Additionally, the brands release their own collections regularly and actively use social media such as Instagram and influencer marketing to promote their collections (Casaló et al., 2017; Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018). This approach is dictated by the brand's segment that produces clothes for "women aged 18 to 29 in the Nordics" and "specifically targeting millennials with stylish yet affordable clothes" (NellyGroup.com, 2021; O'hear, 2018). Both cases of Nelly.com and NA-KD are interesting to look at as they demonstrate how consumer subjectivity is produced through Instagram and within the fast fashion industry and what role brands and influencers play in this process.

After identifying the two fast fashion brands and their target audience pinpointed relevant influencers for the study within the same age group. Since the brands have ongoing campaigns with different influencers, the following screening criteria were selected; the requirement of having a verified Instagram profile, active posting, and a significant follower base. Having a verified badge means that Instagram has confirmed that the profile belongs to a public figure and represents a symbol of status and authenticity (Instagram, 2021; Marwick, 2013). Secondly, the influencers had to be active users on Instagram by posting at least three posts per week and daily stories. The Instagram engine requires this to keep accounts active and show their feed to a maximum number of people. Finally, the influencers selected for the research needed to fulfill the criteria of having at least 500tkr followers. A large follower base is beneficial for achieving followers' trust and engagement (Ohanian, 1990). With these criteria, two influencers were selected, namely Bianca Ingrosso and Angelica Blick, who both have over a million people on their Instagram account. Having 1 million followers is a significant number in Sweden as it represents 10% of the Swedish population, thus indicating their influential reach (scb.se, 2021). Influencers function as opinion leaders that, through their

individuality, affect consumer's generated subjectivities and add additional meaning to promoted brands and items (Spry et al., 2011).

The first chosen case is related to fast fashion brand Nelly.com, in collaboration with Bianca Ingrosso. Although Nelly.com has female and male product lines, the brand only promotes and collaborates with female influencers. It was ultimately considered a factor in selecting a particular social media influencer for this study. Bianca Ingrosso is a 26 years old famous Swedish influencer and TV personality and currently one of Sweden's most influential people, with over 1.2 million followers on her Instagram account. Her posts immediately gain much attention and engagement from her followers, while the products she promotes sell out within a couple of hours. Bianca already successfully collaborated with the brand before. Therefore in 2021, Nelly.com launched a new collection in cooperation with the famous blogger (Nelly.com, 2021). Bianca does not only represent and actively promote the clothing collection but also was involved in its creation. Thus, indicating her personal touch of the "By Bianca" collection. The second company for the case is NA-KD, a Swedish retailer and fast fashion company. The company's product range is presented only for women. Hence, Angelica Blick was chosen as she was the latest influencer that has had a collaboration with the brand at the moment. Angelica Blick is a 31-year-old Swedish influencer and "fashionista from Linköping, who lives now in Stockholm " (angelicablick.se, 2014). Her Instagram page has 1.1 million followers who actively engage with her and support all her endeavors. Angelica is collaborating with many different brands, including NA-KD, with which she launched the clothing collection in 2021. The NA-KD explained their choice and stated that Angelica "has inspired millions of women with her innovative style and daring fashion choices" (NA-KD, 2021).

The influencers picked for the study have a similar number of followers, gender, and age and live in the same country and speak the same language. They both initially operate within Instagram and develop their online personalities aspiring to gain users' trust and influence public opinions. At the same time, they have their differences, such as communication style and values, that will be discovered further in the paper. These similarities and differences between the two influencers will enable us to compare their produced subjectivities and their perception across followers. Angelica Blick and Bianca Ingrosso promote fast fashion brands

on their Instagram profiles and use fast fashion clothes as a tool for content creation. In other words, they help brands market their products through Instagram pages, and based on the influencer's personality, this creates subjectivity for their followers. At the same time, they consume fast fashion clothes and use them as a tool in the content creation process to entertain their followers by becoming fast fashion consumers.

4.4.2 Selection of Online Platform

The selection of a social media platform was based on Kozinets's (2019) five criteria; relevance, activity, interactivity, diversity, and richness. Visual attributes of representation and communication have taken a central role in the social media experience (Kozinets, 2019). Thus, Instagram was selected because of its rich content and visual attractiveness. Moreover, the channel is especially relevant since it is founded on the concept of users utilizing the platform to share visual content (Frommer, 2010). Hence, the platform contains extensive archival data in pictures, text descriptions, and comments to ensure diverse data. Rose (2001) stated that all visual technologies, including photos, suggest a specific view of reality and the world. In other words, they represent the world in visual forms. Therefore, the platform is relevant for this particular study to observe and produce rich empirical material and capture the production of subjectivities. Moreover, Instagram is one of the most fast-growing, popular, and active social media platforms globally (Statista, 2021a). In 2013, the platform was used by 9 million people monthly, while in 2020, it reached a new mark of one billion active monthly users. Moreover, 60% of the engaged Instagram audience are 34 years old and younger, making the platform appealing for fast fashion brands and consumers (Statista, 2021b).

Conducting a netnography on Instagram is favorable to pursue since the social media experience is unique to other platforms' offerings. Additionally, the site is more individualistic than, for example, Facebook, yet with social elements such as messaging features and comments that lead to user interactions. However, the platform is also competitive. The number of followers becomes a competition, which can be related to why Instagram has become the central platform for influencers to grow their commercial profiles (Kozinets, 2019). Platforms such as Instagram allow ordinary people without special education or knowledge to produce

content and acquire the attention of a big audience. Thus, everyone can become an influencer or a celebrity on Instagram and gain attention that before was only possible for "institutionally located professionals" (McCracken 1986; McQuarrie et al., 2013). Instagram enables people to become influencers and monetize their talent, therefore it is a prevalent platform for influencer marketing. Another feature is, therefore, the commercial interest in Instagram, where the site allows companies to monetize social activity by giving room for visual advertising and feature paid content. It tends to be the most engaging platform among others, where the engagement rate for influencers accounts with over 1 million followers is around 1.21%, compared with YouTube that has only 0.37% (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2021). The number of influencers sponsored posts on Instagram rose from 1.26 million in 2016 to 6.12 million in 2020, confirming the effectiveness, relevance, and popularity of Insagram (Statista, 2021b).

4.4.3 Selection of Empirical Material

For this particular study, five Instagram posts from each Influencer were collected and analyzed. Those posts contained different amounts of images, which in total summed up to be 33 photos. The collected Instagram posts per Influencer were considered to entail enough empirical material since it included rich text and visual interpretation. Moreover, the following posts from the campaign were very similar in structure and did not add any additional insight into the findings. Furthermore, the text description of the posts was collected, as well as the comments. The text descriptions were analyzed in accordance with the visual images to capture the broader context, while the images were utilized to discover underlying meanings and motives. Historically, photographs have been used to capture reality, to make an observation of a phenomenon, and capture it in its context. Photos were once taken and seen as evidence of what is truly there, emphasizing their role in how content is consumed, produced, and altered to serve other purposes (Rose, 2001). Moreover, visual images combined with textual description can reveal more about the context in which the images were taken to uncover their purpose, aim, and effects on the viewer. Hence, the text description was utilized to capture meanings that were not visible through the images. Comments from followers were collected to discover the validation of subjectivity and form a perception of how subjectivities are achieved. Moreover, comments supported the text description by adding to the meaning and

helped to understand the context of the analyzed posts and validate the textual implications in the post descriptions. Overall, 60-200 comments per post were studied to reveal how the influencer followers validated or showed resistance from the portrayed discourses. Together, the content collected and transcribed resulted in 40 pages of text and images, which was further limited down by identifying patterns in the collected material into ten pages of text applied in the empirical analysis and the theoretical framework.

4.5 Analytical Framework

The methodology of netnography needs a structured and analytical approach to immersively engaging in qualitative social media research. Thus, through the adoption of netnography, the data will be analyzed and conceptualized through Dean's framework of governmentality (1995, 1999), which has been applied to this research to identify *what* is being subjected (ontology) and *how* these subjectivities are being constructed (ascetics). The aim of the analytical scheme is to explore how subjective ideals are performed and explore their ambitions and their effect. Thus, the discursive practice is analyzed through the methodology of critical discourse analysis with an understanding that social media is a cultural text, a language created of images, texts, and symbols. Hence, through the language on Instagram, social and cultural practices can be revealed in which hidden power structures, ideals, and knowledge is produced (Fairclough, 2003; Kozinets, 2019). While Dean's analytical framework guides the thesis to discovering discursive practices in which subjective ideals are constructed, the framework lacks the immersive tool to collect such data. Therefore, Phillips et al. (2008) conceptualization of critical discourse analysis will be used as a complementary tool to the framework to capture the relation between the social context, discourses, and language use in the form of text and images, which will then be converted into data. Moreover, the analytical framework is utilized to understand and research language usage and its effects on society, humans, and relationships. Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) encourage when analyzing qualitative data to engage with the material in a continuous interplay of different aspects. Thus, utilizing these concepts can facilitate the analysis and result in answers to why certain phenomena occur.

4.5.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis is a theoretical method based on a social constructionist perspective that can be used within social science to study how language usage creates and recreates reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Visual and textual data can thus be analyzed through a 'critical' approach that focuses on language related to power, more specifically, how language is used in a specific context. Critical discourse analysis goes beyond the micro-analysis of conversations and frames visual data to uncover wider discourses that are reflected in the practices and institutions that enable its production. Hence, this study follows the three dimensions by Phillips et al. (2008) model for analyzing, thematizing, and organizing empirical visual data and text to discover novel findings. The model is based on the theory and ideas by Fairclough (1995) critical discourse analysis and divided it into three dimensions, *social context*, *discourse*, and *data*. Thus, the frame is beneficial to explore the creation of discourses and emphasizes revealing aspects of power and persuasion within social constructions, relationships, and as well represented in language.
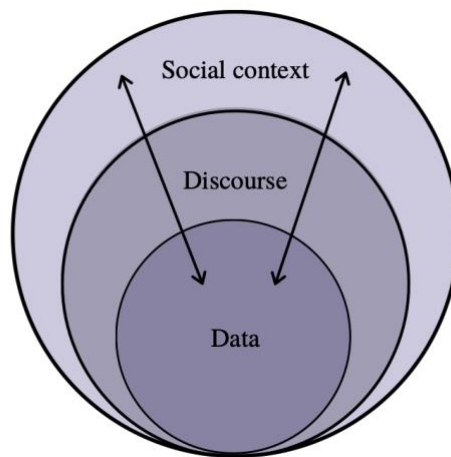
Figure 4 Critical Discourse Analysis.

Image based on Phillips et al., 2008, p 774.

In the first dimension of the social context, subject positions are outlets from different actors that produce texts and meanings, simultaneously affecting discourse. While Phillips et al. (2008) foremost acknowledge text as a form of language used to create discourses, this research

will additionally look at visual data. The dimension is fundamental for exploring the meanings behind the imagery and text and where these meanings have been created (Rose, 2001). The connection between language and the social context is formed through discourse practices (Phillips et al., 2008). The practices establish a frame and form language by influencing how it is produced (Fairclough, 1995). Moreover, the social context identifies how external discourse is based in the socio-cultural sphere. Thus, for this study, the social context entails a discursive practice in which influencers construct and reproduce institutional ideals. Hence, an understanding of the social impact of the influencers' collaboration with the fast fashion brand was established where patterns of similar trends and expression through language could be identified and documented.

In the second dimension, discourses in their own right produce expressions of culture, which sets the foundation for how people view or understand the world. These are considered social constructions that occur through language usage, where discursive acts redefine concepts that are preferable in particular social relations and formed as resources to produce subject positions (Phillips et al., 2008). Here, the research investigates how language is created, what persuasive meanings influencers suggest, and its effect. Thus, influencers engaging in discursive practices produce content that shapes subjective ideals and the perception of truth (Dean, 2010). Moreover, influencers utilize existing discourse to create their subject positions when consuming and interpreting them, thus forwarding institutional subjectivities. In this stage, the empirical data was viewed collectively through the lens of discourse practice that surrounded the data to uncover which subject position they might commonly portray or differentiate. Several patterns could be identified and transcribed into the immersive online journal by identifying their discourse practice and how they unfold.

In the last and third dimensions of data, language and narratives are created to respond to discursive practices' truth effects. Moreover, a linguistic analysis tool was considered to interpret the visual and textual data to uncover the meanings behind language use (Fairclough, 1995). Hence, in this stage, the study applied semiology, an analytical tool to study signs and understand language constructed from different forms of communication and interpretations. Visual appearances such as gender, age, race, body, expressions are examples of study aspects

in semiology. Additionally, through semantics, it can represent activity such as movement or positional communication and props like objects and visual settings (Rose, 2001). The influencers' posts were collected through print screens and collectively organized. At this stage, the study adapted semiology for uncovering patterns of words, expressions, identities, and how it was communicated to the viewer. The process was further thematized into four distinct groups: *positive enforcement*, element of encouragement, *verification*, mirroring of the language use, *personal engagement*, appreciation and admiration, and finally, *negative associations*, the indicated form of consumer resistance to the subject positions.
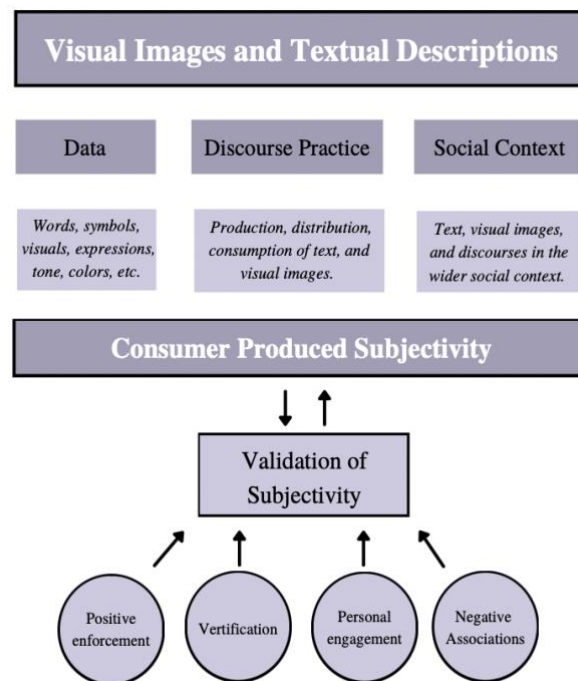
Figure 5 Analytical Tool.

The figure above entails an analytical tool that the researcher conducted through the adaption of Philips et al. (2008) model for analyzing and Rose's (2001) descriptions of interpreting language through visual images. Thus, visual pictures and textual descriptions were interpreted through the three dimensions, where data was collected by analyzing the posts' utilization of words, symbols, expression, tone, and colors. Moreover, in the second dimension, concerning discourse practice, images and text were interpreted by their production, distribution, and consumption. Hence, how the visual and text descriptions are communicated to the viewer and

received by the viewer. Concerning the social context, the third dimension was interpreted through which text and visual images draw from existing discourses from the broader social context and its implications. Together, the process led to the discovery of consumer-produced subjectivity. Moreover, the analytical framework included the process in which comments were drawn from the post and sorted into four categories concerning the validation of the subjectivities, an ongoing validation process that ultimately confirms how subjectivity is perceived. The analytical process was thus formed through the researchers' own interpretation framework.

4.5.2 Reflexivity

The analytical tool was established by adopting a reflexive standpoint in the research. While the analytical framework of Phillips et al. (2008) entails a rich interpretation of the relationship between social context, discourse, and data, it does not include a detailed analytical tool for interpreting and framing qualitative data. Because of the broad spectrum of conducting critical discourse analysis, there is not one overview or template for the method and techniques necessary for utilizing the method. Hence, the research adopted a reflexive standpoint which led to applying the different theories and analytical tools into Figure 5. Reflexivity in research helps understand how linguistic, social, and theoretical elements are woven together when working with empirical material. By adopting a reflexive approach, assessing meaningful and useful findings becomes more accessible, for example, by focusing less on optimizing data collection procedures and instead more on analysis and interpretation of data through reflexivity rather than objectivity. Reflexivity encourages reconsiderations, to think outside the box, avoid inevitable conventional mistakes, and creative thinking. Therefore, a reflexive standpoint can be favorable when linking and analyzing data and valuable for challenging taken-for-granted assumptions (Alvesson, 2008). Additionally, taking a critical standpoint as a researcher can help evaluate and distant oneself when gathering, handling, and analyzing the data. Moreover, a reflexive approach can be applied to netnography to gain a trustworthy interpretation since the informants might present a more careful and favorable self-image online than in real life.

4.6 Quality of Study

There are different concepts of measuring the quality of a study, hence the epistemology and ontological view guide the research and quality measurements (Easterby-Smith et al.,2018). Thus, when conducting observational research and a netnographic research method, it is necessary to establish trustworthiness in the data collection, present factual findings to conclude from, and make analytical interpretations (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). To establish trustworthiness, Guba and Lincoln (1989) acknowledge four quality criteria: *credibility*, with the aim to establish internal validity, *transferability,* construction of external validity, *dependability*, to maintain reliability, and finally, *confirmability*, the aim to achieve objectivity. Credibility was addressed by making multiple revisions of the written text, continually comparing and looking for new ideas and themes. Moreover, to acquire credibility, triangulation was adapted to the study by applying multiple methods and perspectives, including netnography and a case-study approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018; Houghton et al., 2013). Hence, the researchers adopted different methods to gain in-depth knowledge of the phenomena, spent time with the material, which ultimately improved the credibility of the empirical findings. Secondly, transferability refers to the generalization of the empirical results, meaning how applicable the findings are to other contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). The applicability of transferring the study to different scenarios is difficult to determine as it is a relatively small sample. Thus the researchers promote research with similar methods to another context. Doing netnographic work means looking into a specific site or group (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). Hence, for this study, the researchers considered two cases conducted within the leading Swedish fast fashion brands and influencers to entail enough empirical material to investigate the phenomena and the study's limited timeframe.

Dependability was established by clearly describing the choices in the research process to emphasize further consistency and replicability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Since the research followed the guidelines of netnography and adapted available public cases, dependability was achieved in the thesis by giving informative descriptions of the used theories and sources. However, this does not ensure that a replication of the study will generate the same result. Since this study takes a constructionist view, the research adopts the view that there is no single

objective reality to be discovered (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Therefore, Wallendorf and Belk (1989) suggest that these particular research methods can reach dependability by making observations over time. However, since this study has limited time, the researcher further ensured dependability by jointly transcribing and sorting the observed data, providing a common understanding of the interpretation, and revisiting the text on multiple occasions throughout the writing process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Houghton et al., 2013). Finally, the quality of the study can be determined by its confirmability. Since the interpretation of the data was highly influenced by the researchers' analytical ability, an object view was difficult to achieve. Thus, with a constructivist theoretical standpoint, triangulation was adapted to ensure confirmability. Both researchers conducted the data collection by conducting reflexive journals in which the empirical material was transcribed and interpreted. These measurements decreased eventual research bias and led the researchers' taking a reflexive standpoint and openness for novel findings, which improved the confirmability of the research (Houghton et al., 2013).

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical practices are critical for achieving responsible research online (Markham & Buchanan, 2015). When establishing ethical, methodological producers to collect and analyze the data, a netnographic approach can lead to rich data of motivations behind actions, interactions, and relationships. Thus, being transparent of the present study's objective was vital for ensuring trustworthy interpretations. Within online research, there exist perceptions that all published content is public data. However, according to Kozinets (2010), there is a consent gap in online research that concerns publicly available data. It does not necessarily mean that people are aware or granting that their personal data is allowed to be utilized in the study. Online research concerns working with a large amount of personal data, which gives rise to ethical issues since the data usually is publicly available but not given by permission. Although, for archival data, the researcher typically does not need informed consent. Hence, the study, which is mediated through the social media platform Instagram, can be argued for being conducted in the public space where influencers with open accounts are "public figures." However, it is vital to apply moral standards to ensure that the research is conducted respectfully (Burns & Burns, 2008).

Furthermore, the study entails the concerned parties' right to anonymity and confidentiality by including influencers with publicly available profiles. Additionally, all selected comments included in the empirical findings were solely taken from publicly available profiles of social media users, while names and profile pictures are hidden to protect the participants' anonymity. Hence, the research collected concerned only the usernames and comments from the users, thus not collecting any personal data aside from the published data. Moreover, the data regarded the influencers were limited to only entail the criterion necessary to conduct the present study. According to Instagram's use of the term "by displaying or publishing ("posting") any Content on or through the Instagram Services, you hereby grant to Instagram a non-exclusive, fully paid and royalty-free, worldwide, limited license to use, modify, delete from, add to, publicly perform, publicly display, reproduce and translate such content, including without limitation distributing part or all of the Site in any media formats through any media channels, except content not shared publicly ("private") will not be distributed outside the Instagram Services" (Instagram, 2021). Thus, the integrity of all parties concerned was protected.

5.0 Empirical Analysis

The chapter entails the study's empirical analysis, where the collected empirical material is analyzed through Dean's framework to identify the what and how construction of subjectivities. Additionally, the theoretical framework has been applied throughout the empirical analysis for additional depth and the researchers' analytical view for discovering novel findings in the empirical material. The empirical findings are first demonstrated in 5.1 of what consumers' subjectivities were revealed, where the how is represented in 5.2.

5.1 Subjectivity Positions on Offer

By analyzing the influencer's Instagram accounts, there was a clear pattern of the performance of subjective ideals such as beauty standards, fashion ideals, personality traits, and lifestyle. Additionally, the comments of the followers have been adapted to this section to confirm in which subjectivities are seen and validated. Influencers thus conduct themselves in different ways, which create subject positions of ideals and traits and offer them as resources to which

the followers construct their identity. The following section will go through the identities offered by the influencers to which the followers are encouraged to conduct themselves.

5.1.1 The Effortless Beauty

Angelica Blick and Bianca Ingrosso reproduce views set in postmodern society, such as beauty standards and ideals. An ideal woman is portrayed as skinny but healthy-looking, young, with natural beauty without imperfections. Thus, the influencers illustrate the reproduction of traditional views in the posts of what makes a woman beautiful. Commonly, they set the ideal of natural beauty by portraying a natural look while simultaneously wearing a lot of makeup, giving the impression and self-presentation of "effortless beauty" (Goffman, 1956). According to Smart (2003), this can be explained as 'the techniques of the self' where the influencers use specific tactics and their body as a productive way to transmit ideals and how they would like to be perceived by the viewer. However, what is not visible is the production going on behind the images. While these photos may portray natural beauty, there is another production going on in the background, including a team of makeup artists, stylists, and assistance that helps them achieve this look. Thus, while these images portray a frame of how beauty should look, it does not conceive a true reflection but a form of reality through the language communicated through the visual attributes and text (Goffman, 1974; Rose, 2001). Another striking resemblance between the women in creating the ideal of being skinny but healthy represented with the help of tight-fitting clothes that enhance their figure desirably. At the same time, the influencers give contradictory impressions on the meaning of being thin. For example, Bianca communicates through the images as sexy yet feminine, being on the brick too skinny. On the contrary, Angelica shows a more sporty look, which is extreme because she is very well trained but still slim. Thus, they offer different views of being skinny while simultaneously promoting it as ideal. Overall, Bianca's images show a more commercialized ideal of beauty, where the photos have been retouched and not showing any faults. Angelica, however, gives a more natural look where she shows in one of her images in Figure 6 some 'imperfections' with her skin sticking out between the fabrics. Thus, there is an ongoing relationship between social practice and language through visuals and the projection of subject positions (Gee, 1999; Fairclough, 1995).

Figure 6 Contradictory Impressions of Being Thin.

@biancaingrosso on the left poses in her collection together with Nelly.com. On the right is @angelicablick where she is wearing clothes from her collection with NA-KD.

Through their Instagram profiles and content, Angelica and Bianca emphasize, employ, and transmit traditional gender-connected stereotypes and cliches. These stereotypical ideals of being sexually attractive and feminine portray a woman as fragile but captivating, gentle however confident. It is worth noting that they are both posing in their pictures by intentionally utilizing and representing these ideals. The influencers present these views and subjectivities through visuals where particular elements such as body language, facial expressions, garment choice, and text descriptions create such an impression (Rose, 2001; Smart, 2003). In one of the posts, Bianca completes the picture with a text description where she identifies and characterizes herself as "a girl" hence adopting all existing gender-related concepts (see Figure 6). The impression is intensified by her clothes and pose choice, where Bianca wears a costume with a slim-fit that underlines her curves and body, emphasizing her femininity and sexuality. Her pose choice enhances the effect while the facial expression is seductive, where her eyes have a soft-focus, her mouth slightly open, and her hair is in a bit of mess that intensifies the

impression. While both influencers draw upon traditional beauty ideals such as being skinny but healthy, representing natural beauty, be feminine and sexually attractive, there is a clear difference in which gender roles are portrayed and constructed through discursive practice through visual expressions (Goffman, 1956; Smart, 2003). Bianca expresses beauty ideals connected to femininity, altering her body in different ways that promote sexuality. Meanwhile, Angelica also expresses her femininity in the pictures. However, she challenges these stereotypes by altering her body in some images by posing in a masculine manner (see Figure 7). For example, in the figure above, Angelica stands with her legs spread out and in a relaxed posture, making it look more natural and erasing what is characterized as feminine or masculine. Angelica's way of portraying herself can be applied to how gender standards are becoming less apparent, where a suit can just as well be sexy and feminine as when wearing a dress. Thus, there does not necessarily have to be gender classifications in clothes, which is appealing for people from different backgrounds who do not necessarily identify as male or female. The traditional view of an ideal woman draws from femininity, thus masculine traits are usually not present. Hence, by Angelica taking action and showing more masculine qualities, she implies less traditional beauty ideals (Gee, 1999; Foucault, 1977).
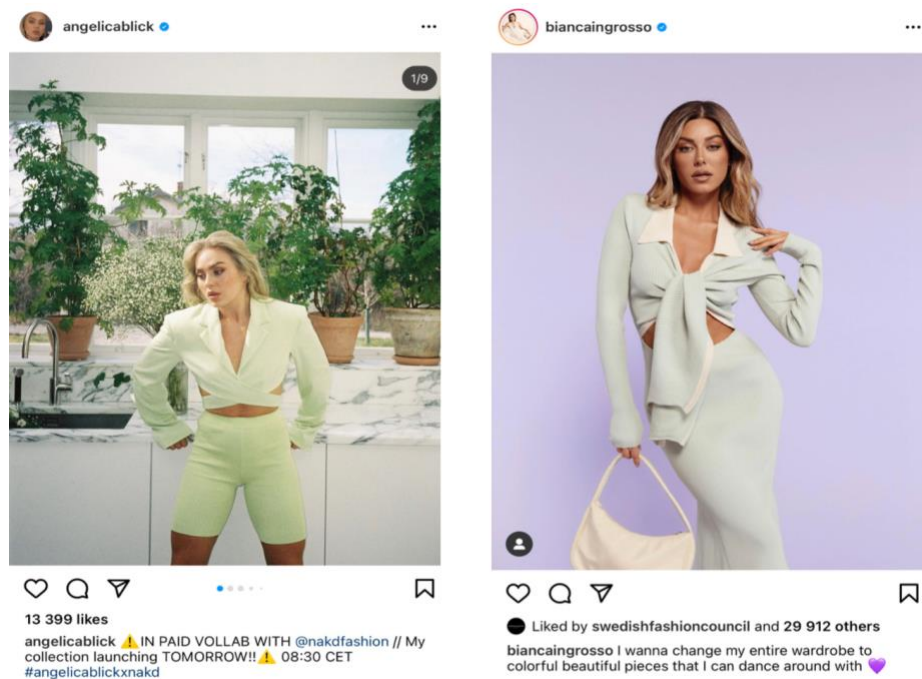
Figure 7 Femininity or Masculinity?

Comparing beauty standards represented by @biancaingrosso and @angelicablick.

By looking at the comments, there is a clear indication that the followers appreciate the visual appeal of both influencers, thus confirming a standard view of what is displayed to be beautiful (Figure 8). In one of the comments, a woman expresses that she idealizes the visual look of Bianca, commenting, "I want that top as well, even if I am 46," which illustrates that there is a relation and connection between beauty and youth that the viewer perceives. Additionally, the comments reflected the same text caption using the same language to communicate back to Bianca. Thus, by allowing them to see through a frame, the influencers present themselves in a way they would like to be seen (Goffman, 1974). While the overall responses to the images were positive, there were also comments which challenged these traditional views. In some of Bianca's posts, people addressed how she portrays an unhealthy beauty standard of being skinny and comparing it to bulimia. Thus, the followers imply that they do not appreciate the subject position that she stands for and question the taken-for-granted beauty standard (Fairclough, 1995). These sorts of comments were absent on Angelica's Instagram posts, which can be argued to be related to her presenting skinny through being fit. Hence, she gives a healthier ideal of what lean looks like, even though there are likely hours spent in the gym to achieve this look. This, however, does not come across through the images and, therefore, might be less visual for the viewers (Goffman, 1956). Therefore, upholding the ideal of being 'effortlessly' beautiful and natural can be argued to be ideal for both genders. Hence, visuals are an essential aspect of different power relations in the society, where the society's claim of a word or production from language is in a brawl of how it should be interpreted (Svensson, 2018).
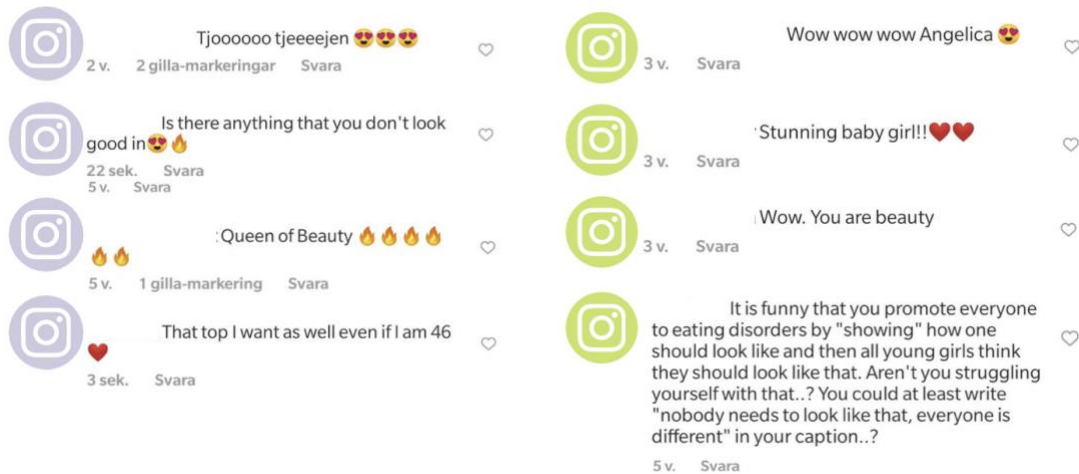
Figure 8 Validation of Beauty Standards.

A selection of followers comments on the influencers posts. On the left side are the comments by @biancaingrosso's followers, and @angelicablick's on the right.

5.1.2 The Natural Born Fashionista

Clothes have become a way for people to express their identity and become who they desire to be. Thus, consumers can create their identity through clothes or based on their clothing choices. The influencers show their clothing collection in a favorable light through the posts and offer fashion identity for others. For example, they are indicating that one can change oneself with clothes, to differentiate with the help of clothes, and to reconstruct oneself (Simmel, 1957). Hence trying out identities as if it was a stylish matter. Niinimäki et al. (2010) acknowledge that people desire to renew themselves by adopting different tools such as clothes to fill their need for social confirmation. The striking of the two influencers' clothing collections is the similarities in style and colors throughout the Instagram posts, which forwards similar meanings and confirmation of trendy clothing items (Fairclough, 1995; Niinimäki et al., 2010). It can further be explained by the modern fast fashion industry itself that aims to produce clothes following the latest trends (Bauman, 2000). What differentiates the clothing lines is the way the clothes are being introduced to the audience. Commonly the influencers engage in different subjective practices, for example, by altering their body to enhance the look of the

clothes by expressing desire, sexuality, and confidence (Smart, 2003). By exposing themselves in this manner, it becomes contradictory because the campaigns are targeted towards a female audience rather than attracting the male gaze. Indirectly, it confirms that women create ideals for women implementing the idea that females follow these ideals, dress up, and look a certain way to be accepted and appreciated by other women rather than men. However, it also gives an impression of a suggested identity and ideal of being expressive, that the consumer will feel just as confident and sexy once wearing the clothes. In Bianca's photos, the only thing that truly changes is her clothes, accessories, and background. Her facial expression is the same and not showing any emotions or particular personality, thus indicating that through clothes, one can truly express themselves (Gee, 1999). However, Angelica's post shows a pattern of authenticity as she poses with little but the outfit and barefoot, thus giving associations to the clothes as comfortable yet fashionable. By demonstrating the collection through its different styles, the influencers show suggestive ways of dressing after mode and personality to create a need for having different outfits (Svensson, 2018). This phenomenon is further acknowledged by Gee (1999) that states that the representation of activity helps to construct who we become. Thus, by wearing different outfits, the influencers suggest the ideal of being different and express it through style and encourage consumers' desires to buy all other garments from the collection to achieve the same playful identity. Moreover, a selection of different pieces of clothing indicates that there is something for everyone and demonstrates consumers' opportunity to exercise choice and set the ideal of being innovative and trendy (Shankar et al., 2006). Simultaneously, the fashion brand and the influencers themselves are the ones who profit from the subjectivity since it encourages people to buy several pieces of the collection. According to Bauman (2010), the followers can be seen as consumers of fashion information to sustain their need and desire of being part of the inclusion that comes from being fashion forward and up to date with the latest trend, while simultaneously expressing their individuality and freedom.
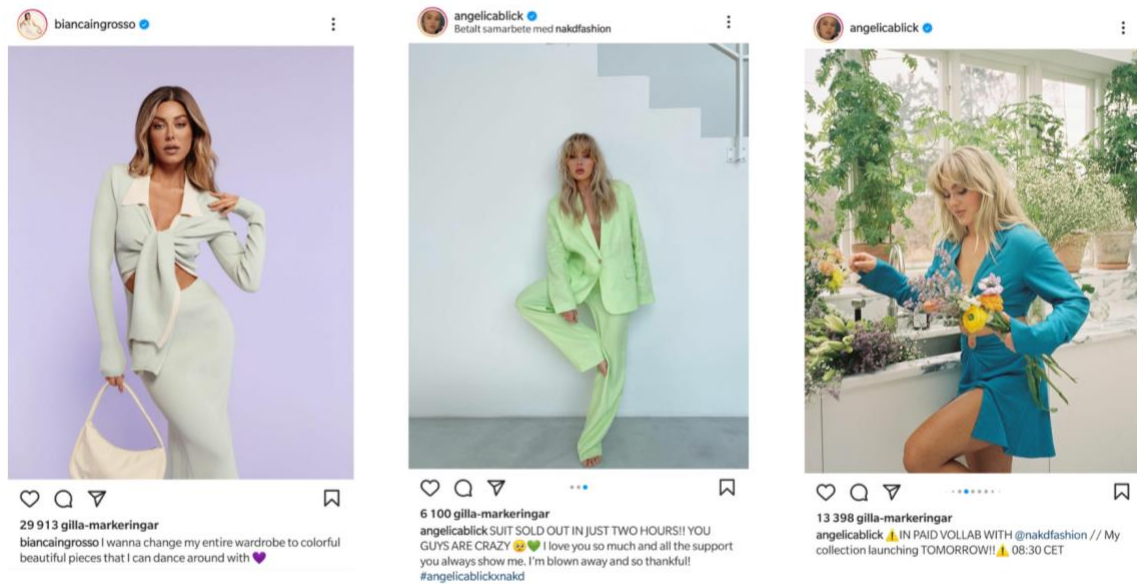
Figure 9 The Devil's in the Details.

The picture on the left shows @biancaingrosso posing in her outfit from Nelly.com, where the other two images on the right are of @angelicablick wearing clothes from her NA-KD collection.

Overall, the influencers' collection shares similarities, and this represents the ideals of being simplistic and clean, trendy and somewhat proactive. The design itself is not extraordinarily different or innovative but presented in unusual colors for Scandinavian style, making it stand out (Goffman, 1974). The chosen materials are thin and light, which underlying the suggestion of being worn during the summer. The quality of the clothes is not possible to see, but the fabric choice creates an impression of garments with a luxury vibe w. In contrast, the way influencers portray the clothes makes them seem attractive, creating a perception of looking good (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Both influencers took part in the design of their collections and willingly wore them themselves by confirming the garments are trendy. Moreover, in both collections, the clothing line is represented through an expensive and spacious background reflecting the vibe of the clothes (Deetz, 1992). The picture's context of the clothing collaboration Nelly.com and Bianca Ingrosso is more commercial and is represented in the staged background with no connection with natural elements but the color of garments. For example, almost all Bianca's pictures are made in a pastel lilac background with props going in the same color (Figure 9),

reflecting the appeal in her clothes. In comparison, Angelica creates a relaxed atmosphere through the connection of clothes and interior design elements. For example, the star of the collection is a green suit emphasized by the green atmosphere where the natural setting gives a clean perception emphasizing nature vibes and focusing on simplicity that directs the eyes to the outfit. The expressive content explores a down-to-earth atmosphere throughout the images and posts of Angelica's collection and creates the ideal of personalization where clothes serve as a tool for self-presentation (Goffman, 1956). Thus, the Instagram posts of Angelica's and Bianca's clothing collections commonly communicate through colors that can be seen as a form of language as it evokes feelings and perceptions of the viewer (Rose, 2001). The photos are also easy to consume from the viewer's point of view, a temporary escape from reality that can be drawn to Instagram users utilizing the platform as a form to explore outside of their current surroundings.

Both collections present the upcoming summer trend with pastel colors and romantic design, encouraging people to try different styles and play with appearances (Fairclough, 1995; Svensson, 2018). For example, in one of Bianca's posts, she wears a light blue dress while in the text description stating she wants to replace her wardrobe with "colorful pieces." This description presents an ideal of being outstanding or visible with the help of clothes but says that she wants to replace her wardrobe with these pieces underlying her favor for the pastel colors and give a clue of the color scheme of the future collection. She also gives indirect direction for a ready-to-go outfit solution for the spring season (Gee, 1999). The comments (see Figure 10) praised presented ideals by the influencer's followers who compliment the color of the outfits, thus confirming it visually appealing. While the overall perception of the collection was positive, some comments addressed the look and stated that it looks 'performed.' Nevertheless, most comments show an eagerness to buy every piece of the collection connected to the influencer's personality and attributes. Goffman (1974) explains this as how an individual's choice depends on how certain information is presented to the viewer—in this case, showing a created desire as a result of being part of the same identity that the influencers display. Hence, indicating that the followers appreciate their style and praise for the presented ideals.
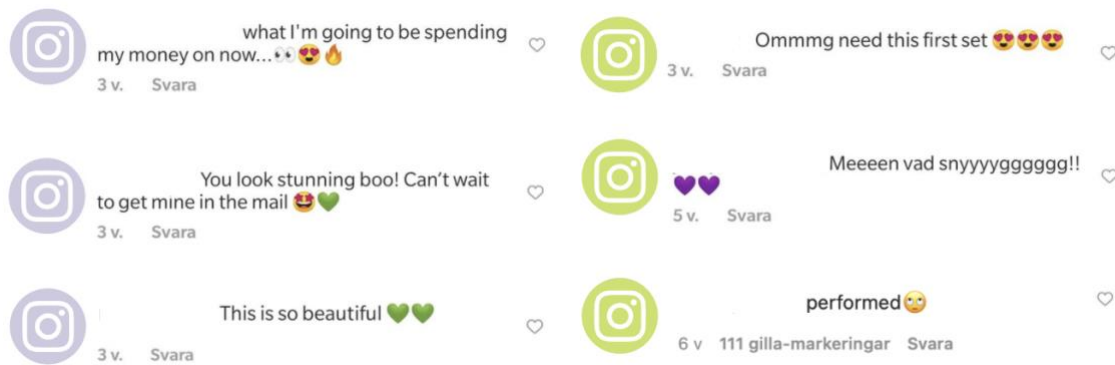
Figure 10 Style is Everything**.**

Pictures and comments on the influencer posts which illustrate how the followers validate the trend and fashion ideals. On the left is comments to @biancaingrosso's post, while on the right @angelicablick.

5.1.3 The Successful Entrepreneur

The observations of Instagram posts (see Figure 11) by Angelica and Bianca show that both influencers are successful and hardworking persons by offering ideals consumers should fit in. Bianca Ingrosso, in her posts, with the help of photos and text descriptions, relentlessly underlines her achievements and creates an ideal of being successful. In one of the posts, the picture portrays her in an outfit suitable for partying, while the text description refers to her desire to be back on the dance floor. In this particular post, Bianca hiddenly refers to her participation in the famous dance show and accenting the followers' attention on her talents and achievements. She creates an impression of a professional who succeeds and develops on Instagram and outside (Goffman, 1974). In another post, Bianca shared the picture made in collaboration with Nelly.com, where a text describes her weekend in one of the leading Scandinavian ski resorts in Åre, Sweden. The description makes the viewer assume that Bianca is in Åre for some business issues. The impression is created through her text, where she expressed gratitude to the people she was working with. However, with a note saying that the top from the picture will be released soon, thus creating the connection between these events. The text here constructs a particular view or context where influencers create an understanding through the language (Skålen et al., 2008; Boje et al., 2004). Angelica also underlines her success and accomplishments through her content, including text and photos. One of her posts

included the selfie picturing the influencer in the mirror reflection during the photoshoot of her collection with NA-KD. The picture itself shows Angelica wearing clothes from her collaboration, while in the text description, she explained that the photographs were taken during the photo shoot. By this, she creates an ideal of being an entrepreneur and confirms it by pointing out her participation in commercial events. She shows herself as a successful entrepreneur, which is evidenced by her collaboration with an extensive and prosperous brand such as NA-KD. The desired impression is achieved through the language in sync with the picture made in an appropriate location (Gee, 1999; Dean, 2010). Another post demonstrates Angelica wearing the green suit that is a part of her collection, while in the description, she said that the pictured items were sold out within two hours. The description inevitably confirms Angelica's success as an influencer who the company picked for collaboration and as a fashionista and opinion leader demonstrated by her commercial success. Both Bianca and Angelica influencers transmit the same message by clearly showing their example that success comes with work (Goffman, 1956).

Figure 11 Humble Bragging.

The following image shows @biancaingrosso and her posts on the left while @angelicablick's post is on the right.

Both influencers carefully build their personal image in their posts by adding specific features to their portraits (see Figure 12). They perform on the "front stage" by showing their desired identity and promote certain values to their followers and viewers (Goffman, 1956). Bianca also refers to the ideal of being a family-oriented person where one of her post descriptions mentions her brother and the family. Expressing that time with her family and friends is a source of energy and support that helps her overcome difficulties, recharge, and get ready for the new work week. Simultaneously, both influencers create an ideal of being a humble person. In one of her posts, Bianca referred to her colleagues and showed her appreciation by calling them "amazing, funny, and inspiring people." The amplifying adjectives intensify the impression and give more meaning to her words. Angelica, in turn, creates an ideal of being a humble and attentive person by expressing gratitude to her followers for being supportive and attentive to her. In one of her posts, she says she is having a hard time but simultaneously thanking all her followers for the support and love she got from them lately. In the same post, she referred to her followers as reliable people that always have her back and are an endless source of support. The positive impression from influencers' gratitude towards other people helps followers recognize them as "real people" who are the same as ordinary individuals who motivate followers' loyalty and sympathy (Gee, 1999). Through the personal engagement with followers, Angelica treats people nicely like her close ones by encouraging and inspiring them to be and behave in a certain way. In a later post, Angelica again thanked her followers and conveyed great gratitude by saying, "I love you so much and all the support you show me. I am blown away and so thankful." She is applying emotionally loaded words validating her followers with significant meaning and influence on people and can be considered a form of power discourse (Foucault, 1977). Both influencers' actions are aligned with standard social frameworks or "guided doings" where they are subject to social standards by being good and attentive individuals through expressing their emotions and gratitude to their family, friends, and followers. By this, influencers show themselves as caring, kind, and grateful people. They gain the admiration of their followers and create a particular image of themselves and promote these values to their followers (Goffman, 1974).

Figure 12 Good People Get More.

The pictures show text description for the posts published by @angelicablick and @biancaingrosso in line with the campaign.

Despite the fact that Angelica and Bianca are celebrities who have many followers, they are not alien to human feelings and earthly problems that ordinary people go through. Telling about their issues humanizes influencers in their followers' eyes and makes their audience endearing and loyal to them. Sharing their own problems supports other people who go through the same problem, which creates the ideal and subject position of being a caring and supportive person (Deetz, 1992; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Even though all analyzed pictures by Angelica were made in collaboration with NA-KD, it is possible to conclude that she shows on her Instagram an authentic version of herself by being sincere with her audience and engaging with them. She openly talks about different things by including her personal experiences and views. In one of her posts, she shared information about her mentally unstable condition that portrays her as a sensitive and fragile human being, thus constructing particular meaning and ideals (Fairclough, 1995). She not only goes through this but, as any other person, needs to be supported and comforted. Bianca, in her posts, expresses less personal feelings about sensitive topics and has very little personal interaction with her followers. However, the context of her pictures and Instagram profile, in general, let people understand she is also fighting mental problems and bulimia. Talking openly about their issues, Angelica and Bianca normalize mental health and encourage people to fight their struggles by showing that even celebrities face the same problems and that it is acceptable to experience them and talk about them. Also, by being vulnerable and sensitive, influencers maintain their place in the power structures (Skålen et al., 2006).

The comments section shows followers' admiration for both bloggers (see Figure 13). Angelica's and Bianca's commitment to success and professionalism causes sympathy of people and elevates them to a new rank of role model in the eyes of their followers, which is evidenced by comments. Moreover, followers confirm and assert influencers' success by congratulating them on their achievements by expressing their belief that influencers deserve what they get. For example, Angelica's followers do not skimp on words of congratulations to her in connection with the collection's release, together with the appreciation of her talent. People also positively react to a show of weakness and need of support from influencers by encouraging them with comments. This is testified by many comments under Angelica's picture reactions to where she is talking about her current mental health issues. Also, the influencers' followers do not leave without paying attention to Angelica's and Bianca's good attitude towards other people, friends, and family. People tend to share these views and values expressed in positive comments, confirming the demonstrated subject positions (Fairclough, 1995).
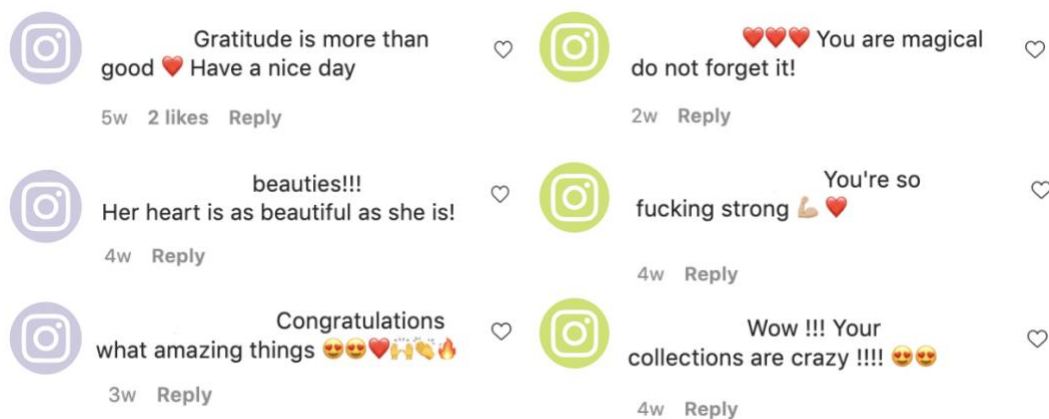
**Figure 13** Birds of a Feather Flock Together.

Validation of @biancaingrosso and @angelicablick personal traits through comments.

5.1.4 The Idolized Lifestyle

The influencers' photos and text descriptions also represent a certain lifestyle that sets particular lifestyle standards for their followers (Figure 14). Both influencers were posting pictures that were taken behind the scenes and referring to their celebrity status. Bianca is one

of her posts showing photos taken during her participation in the Nelly.com commercial photoshoot that is possible to understand from observation of the environment on the picture. The photos were taken by someone else as Bianca does not look at the camera but poses and looks elsewhere. This post opens the veil of mystery and allows followers to look at the celebrity's life for a moment, imagine themselves at her place, and create the ideal of glamour life. Angelica also posted some pictures portraying her at home surrounded by luxurious and spacious interiors, making an ideal of a high standard of living. In one of the photos, she is in a light and roomy bedroom that does not include any furniture but a bed. It makes the viewer assume the house is big enough and has separate rooms for storing things, while most people have them partially located in their bedroom. In other pictures, it is possible to notice some furniture of unusual shape and design that also is different and unusual referring to some luxurious lifestyle of Angelica's. It allows followers to see a bright side of an influencer's routine by creating a particularly positive and alluring image of the lifestyle that includes lots of attention and adoration together with a touch of glamour. Although the posted pictures display the surroundings and create the desired impression, they maintain hidden social power relations communicated through visuality (Rose, 2001). The images produce a particular vision of social difference and make people want to become influencers to afford the same lifestyle. Still, at the same time, it creates the illusion of easy money and the effortlessness of the profession by showing only what is beneficial for influencers (Rose, 2001).
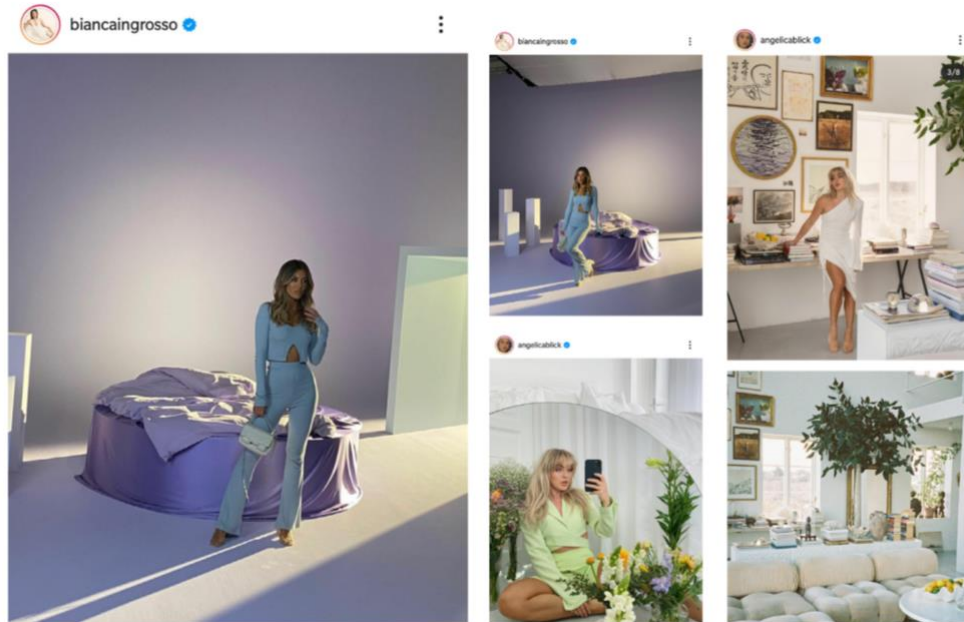
Figure 14 Design of Dreams.

Pictures from @biancaingrosso behind the scenes on the left, and @angelicablick on the right, showing the idealized lifestyle demonstrated through the environment.

Both influencers in their posts present a more feminine appearance and make an impression of living according to feminine gender-related ideals such as glamour life with the high living standards. By perceiving their photos and text, it is possible to evidence that they live a more masculine lifestyle in its traditional understanding. It includes independence, career achievements, and success together with a hard-working standing behind their image (Goffman, 1974). All these combined create a picture of a girl-boss and the ideal of empowered women, who are feminine in their visual appearance but have power, independence, and leading a lifestyle that traditionally belongs to men. Angelica and Bianca both promote independence and empowerment by letting their followers know that it is possible to look like a woman but have several businesses and "work like men." This impression is created by combining their photos where both influencers look a certain way and the description of their collaborations with such big companies like Nelly.com and NA-KD (Rose, 2001). All together, it creates an understanding of the world of success together with an image of a girl-boss leading an entrepreneurial lifestyle (Svensson, 2018).

In her pictures in collaboration with NA-KD, Angelica shows a Scandinavian lifestyle by portraying herself in rooms with minimalistic interiors, clean colors, and soft hues (Figure 14). By this, she is creating an ideal of a Scandinavian style in the interior. The design of the premises looks warm and inviting while demonstrating a form of purity and a relaxed atmosphere, which forms a particular view of reality and thus neutralizing the commercial value (Deetz, 1992). In one of the pictures, Angelica is sitting on the big sofa surrounded by books lying around, giving the impression of something warm and inviting. In another photo, she is pictured sitting on the floor in a completely white bedroom surrounded by vases filled with flowers. The combination of the surroundings with the flowers gives an impression of purity and a relaxed atmosphere that the ideal of Scandinavian style represents. The created overall environment in the pictures creates a specific image of the Scandinavian lifestyle that includes an interior design that emphasizes clean lines and creates a cozy feeling. Here, photos themselves act as discourse creating a symbolic meaning of purity, where Angelica's image is perceived through Scandinavian style, and she is seen as impeccable by her followers (Douglas, 2002; Rose, 2001). However, it indicates other values or subject positions that may be hidden, as this view is constructed to maintain an image that serves the influencers' advantage (Deetz, 1992). The visual appeal of the images can further be emphasized by the comments on the posts (see Figure 15), where the followers appreciate the vibe of the photos and the glamorous lifestyle. One comment on Angelica's post compliments the house and desire to wear the outfit and go there themselves. Thus implying that they share the perception of the influencer living the ideal lifestyle. However, in Bianca's posts, there were no comments that responded to the lifestyle portrayed in the image, which can be related to the somewhat commercialized images that do not show much else than Bianca herself and the staged background. Angelica, on the other hand, displays a more rich environment with multiple elements.

Figure 15 *The Grass is Always Greener.*

A Selection of comments from @angelicablick's post.

5.2 Construction of Subjectivities

In the previous section, we have discovered what ideals and subjectivities the influencers portray through the adoption of fast fashion and Instagram. The next section explores in which way the subjectivity discovered in the earlier section is constructed and envisioned for the consumer. Thus, this section includes the third section of discourse practices, in which subjectivity is created and forwarded (Phillips et al., 2008).

5.2.1 Authority & Legitimacy

The mediation of Instagram facilitates ordinary people to produce, connect, and validate others, making regular customers become recognized experts. A large follower base comes with power in numbers as it creates the legitimacy of the influencer. Moreover, there is a clear indication of how consumers tend to trust influencers over fast fashion brands due to their authentic selves. Thus, influencers' specific way of acting, intervening, and directing particular types of rationality or knowledge, becomes structural conduct in which consumers shape themselves (Smart, 2003; Skålen et al., 2006). Foucault (1977) acknowledges that power is constructed within knowledge claims, which can be related to the influencers having information supremacy of the reality of the produced discourses and thus subjectivities, compared to its audience. Therefore, the relation between the producer of language and the viewer becomes a

way to construct people (Dean 2010). Motivating and encouraging people in their posts towards what they envision is the "ideal way" to be, the influencers reach certain status or power positions. Their knowledge is valued because of their superordinate position, which implies that influencers become trendsetters within fashion. For example, Angelica identifies herself as a fashionista by giving herself a particular status and confirming it with her content. Hence, by the influencers achieving a position of authority, consumers let themselves be guided and consequently gain benefits from not having to find out what is trendy or emerge themselves into research. Rather, they can instead trust the experts and do not necessarily need to think for themselves. Angelica and Bianca establish the ability to influence what is considered real, good or bad, fashionable or pasé (Egan-Wyer, 2019). Foucalt (1977) acknowledges this as 'symbolic power' where expert knowledge is embedded in the class hierarchy, which consumers, in this case, draw upon and rely on when constructing themselves. Thus discourses and subject positions allow people to be free while at the same time controlled by the mechanism that comes with people's willingness to subject themselves through adopted subjectivities (Smart, 2003). Meanwhile, the influencers construct these ideals as natural and therefore making the subject positions irrelevant to question. Hence, while consumers are free to choose for themselves and the information that they absorb, at the same time, they become guided through underlying power structures that guide their choice (Skålen et al., 2006).

Figure 16 *You can't Trust Anyone with Power.*

The picture portrays @angelicablick wearing clothes from her collection in collaboration with NA-KD.

What is evident from how Angelica portrays herself displayed in Figure 16 is how she, through the image, creates an authentic version of herself, where she is not directly looking into the camera or, seeingly, posing in a particular manner. Simultaneously, as she is giving this fashionable yet relaxed look, Angelica is transparent with the commercial motive behind the image, which further strengthens the perception of her authentic persona. Additionally, by including that she is being endorsed for the post, she creates legitimacy as people thus trust her to be a fashion icon since companies also chose to work with her. Moreover, both influencers are recognized for having particular expertise within fast fashion, making them trustworthy by establishing a 'regime of truth' that communicates a certain way of how the world looks (Dean, 2010). Due to social media, people can construct abstract but close relationships through their screens making them open to being exposed to a diversity of influences. Today, people have come to trust influencers as people usually would trust their friends and family. Therefore, by establishing trust, people become less caring to question the subject positions they promote and

trust them to speak the truth. Dean (2010) acknowledges that truth claims are a powerful tool to govern certain behaviors to act in a particular way. Consumers are led by admiration and a great degree of trust towards Angelica's and Bianca's expert opinions about fashion and style. They would like to differentiate from others but be a part of a favorable group through the consumption and utilization of clothes suggested by the influencers (Simmel, 1957). Additionally, people trust influencers to possess particular insights which are difficult for them to achieve. In liquid modernity, structures change so quickly that it becomes hard to follow (Bauman, 2010). Hence, followers bend to a set of guidelines, which become powerful resources that are hard to resist due to the desire to fit in and reach good societal ideals. Truth claims can therefore be harmful since ordinary consumers may not be aware of its consequences and how it depicts the world in a certain way.

5.2.2 Institutional Forces & Corporations

By achieving the trust of followers, as described in the earlier section, the influencers become popular with companies who utilize influencer marketing to reach their target audience that promotes certain ideals and trends to serve their commercial motives (Siegle, 2019). Hence, by the influencers' Instagram page, Angelica and Bianca share pictures of their appearance and encourage fast fashion companies and their products. Thus, influencers set specific standards and understand what can be considered stylish and offer consumers to adopt distinct fashion identities by using clothes from Nelly.com and NA-KD. Influencer relies on the resources and reproduces institutional ideals that companies incorporate to serve their self-interest of selling clothes. Although people usually buy certain clothes to construct their identity through the symbolic meaning of purchased items, the influencer's personality encourages consumers to buy suggested clothes and create or adjust consumers' personalities according to suggested ideals offered by influencers (Deetz, 1992; Simmel, 1957). Thus, the influencers produce subjectivities and identity ideals that support the products and the fashion brands. Influencers become co-creators of a particular type of consumer that fits into the kind of products the brands are selling. Hence, the offered ideals and subjectivity from the influencers set a frame that ultimately has been shaped through the economic interest of the brand where certain ideals are favorable for achieving profits. Therefore, while influencers exercise a form of authority over

their followers, they are also subject to the exercise of other forms of governance (Dean, 2010). Influencers adopt specific tactics, tools, language, and expertise of knowledge over others. At the same time, the fast fashion brands Nelly.com and NA-KD may utilize the same tools and techniques to subject influencers into certain discourse practices. For example, fast fashion brands require customers to buy their items frequently and update their wardrobes every season to follow trends, which leads to the offer of particular ideals for the consumer.

There is evidence of standardized views of beauty that promote being skinny, sexual, and faultless in the fast fashion campaigns while simultaneously looking natural by not wearing any colorful forms of makeup. By performing certain norms and ideals, these social practices of producing subjectivities become manifested into society and intervene in the influencers' follower base (Foucault, 1977; Dean, 2010). The descriptions entailed in the text, and visual images of the campaign have a political effect of different kinds where it affects individuals and groups able to be free from any institutional constraints and views what is considered the ideal identity, the ideal woman. Thus, the influencers create suggestions of whom we should become and conduct ourselves by promoting specific ways to look and personality traits necessary to become successful individuals. Fashion influencers' main content is connected with fashion, where they show their outfit style by inspiring others and informing on the latest fashion updates. In that case, Angelica and Bianca depend on fast fashion companies as their content is based on discourses created by companies like Nelly.com and NA-KD. Influencers are the leading fast fashion consumers themselves, and to be able to show in their profile how to style clothes, they have to follow trends for producing their content and stay experts within the field to uphold their status (Smart, 2003). However, what is evident in the contrasting view of Angelica and Bianca's post, is that Angelica puts more emphasis on adding her personality to the post, thus making them seem less commercialized. Bianca relies on the resource more, evident by her heavily commercialized content and profile on Instagram. Therefore, suggested outfit solutions from Bianca and Angelica are the joint product created by fast fashion companies and influencers.

Figure 17 Different Face of Natural Beauty.

Image on the left shows @biancaingrosso wearing a blouse and pants from her collection with Nelly.com. While the other images show @angelicablick in a dress from her collection with NA-KD.

The photo of Bianca's appearance confirms traditional ideals of being naturally beautiful, skinny, feminine, gentle yet captivating, which captures institutional views on women's preferable look (see Figure 17). Her outfit choice creates a particular embodiment of women's feminine beauty represented in a romantic blouse symbolizing her gentle and slim-fit pants that commodify her body and transmit her sexuality. The pose she is sitting in seems uncomfortable, but there are no signs expressed in her body language or facial expression. The reality she produces represents the woman with an attractive and perfect appearance without showing its effort. Meanwhile, the image of Angelica (see Figure 17) shows a more relaxed and natural atmosphere. Hence, by representing themselves in these different manners, they both communicate how the world looks, which affects and limits the way people think, feel about themselves and others (Fairclough, 1997). However, both are manipulative by constructing different discourses of how the clothes are represented. Meanwhile, in the posts' text descriptions, Bianca communicates a different view of what is seen in the image but ends the text with "Ps: Top coming soon," showing the commercial message. Angelica, however, is

more transparent in that the economic interest is embedded. Thus, the posts demonstrate the power of the influencers, where they both produce institutional structures and commercial motives, disguised as natural for the followers that ultimately are the receivers and validators of the subjectivity.

5.2.3 Narratives & Storylines

Through narratives and storylines, the influencers convey and forward ideals to become accessible to consumers. A pattern of subjectivity construction could both be visually displayed by the influencers' choice of language and creation of specific narratives, which form a particular perception of reality, and hence how the subjectivities are being developed. In both collections, the influencer builds up an atmosphere around the clothes to become more appealing. For example, Angelica shows a storyline by reinforcing the impression through creation consisting of several images that commonly give an impression of her moving around in her home, where flowers and green elements are displayed in the background, enhancing the qualities in the clothes. Moreover, by expressing that there is a limited amount of clothes, she further quickened up the decision process by her followers to not waste any time buying the collection. In reaction, several comments expressed that they wanted to buy the clothing collection, waiting for a restock, and showed signs of sadness that the clothes had sold out. For example, in Figure 18, Angelica is answering one of the comments ''I need a restock on this and the purple one'', "Yes, unfortunately, there will not be a restock." Thus, the influencer can create certain narratives, such as product scarcity, generate anxiety and desires by the followers (Holt, 2004).

Figure 18 Anxiety as the Driver of Sale.

@angelicablick is responding to one of her followers' comments regarding restocking of the clothing products from the campaign with NA-KD.

Another common technique adopted by the influencers is to hide the commercial meaning of the posts. The images and caption together produce other motivations that do not aim the conversation towards the clothes, as one might otherwise predict. Thus, the posted images by the influencers show a mixture of acknowledging the collaboration with the fast fashion brand and personal experience. For example, in Figure 19 below, Bianca illustrates a commercial image of herself, however, combined with a text where she talks about her and walks in the sunlight, listening to mush from her famous brother and having a nice dinner with friends. She finishes by asking her followers how their weekend was. Thus, she is forwarding types of ideals that address glamour, exercise, and relaxation and having an ideal life. At the same time, it is known that she is frequently feeling ill and struggling with bulimia which becomes contradictory from the reality and dream life that she illustrates. In another post, Angelica shares her mental health struggles while simultaneously showing her in a flattering surrounding and outfit. Thus, through narratives, everything can be commercialized, incorporating harmful subject positions where the motive behind may be hidden for the viewer. Therefore through Instagram, while the media does not control consumers what to think, the influencers utilize the platform as a mediate device to influence their followers on what to think about (Goffman, 1974).
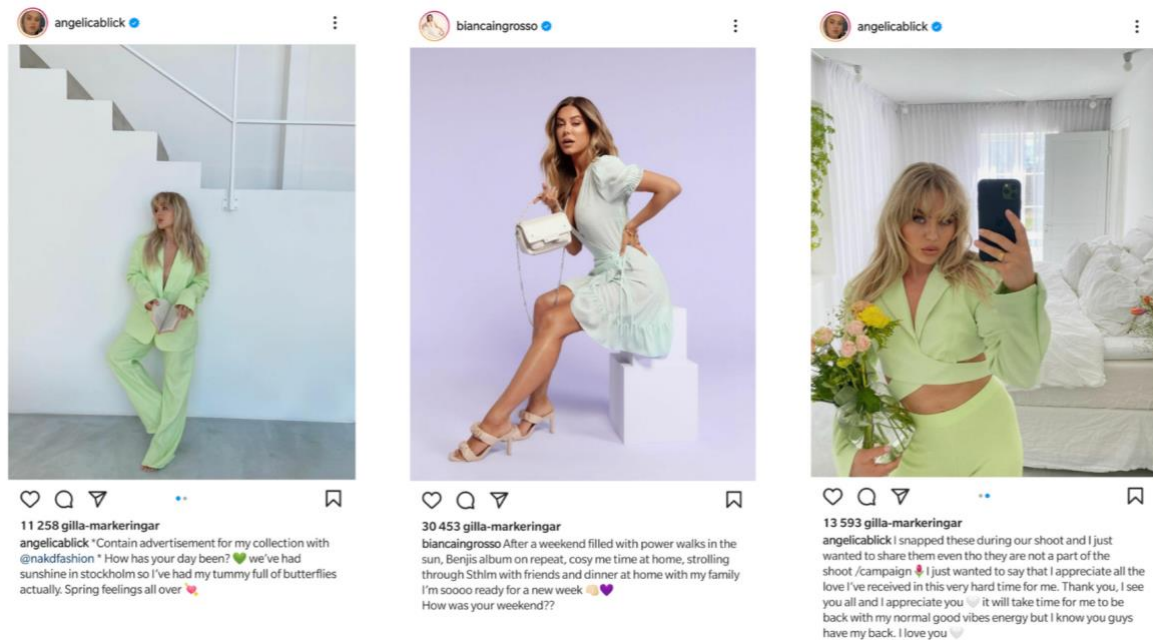
Figure 19 Product of the Social Effect.

The post in the middle shows an image of @biancaingrosso wearing a dress from her collection with Nelly.com, while the image on the sides shows @angelicablick in outfits from NA-KD.

By narrating their lives, certain ideals such as being skinny, beautiful, successful, humble, and so on came forward and constituted the subjectivities. However, how trustworthy the reality of the influencers or true their authentic self is questionable. Looking more deeply into the images in Figure 19 above, the subject position of being natural gets lost in translation. For example, how the visual background of the pictures is carefully set up and altered to reflect and strengthen the visuality of the clothes. Rose (2001) acknowledges how visuals can act as discourses, where a specific visual can make some particular meanings seen while others are covered. Makeup alone is utilized to enhance the face or to hide imperfections. Hence the reality represented by the influencers becomes a vital part of the realness of the visual images. This occurs hidden in the background of the subjectivity that is being produced (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, subjectivity will be created and reproduced within a particular discourse, and the more powerful discourse, the more productive the social effect (Foucault, 1977). In both influencers' posts, there is an ongoing storyline that the influencers communicate. For example, Angelica soothes the visual impression by creating a calm and casual environment with relaxed

and natural poses that finalize the appearance. This allows the viewer to consider every detail and immerse themselves in the atmosphere. Bianca, in her turn, represents more worldwide clothing trends preferring not to underline her origins. Her style is catchy because of the undisguised and more direct sexuality expressed in the garment's choice that highlights her body in all possible ways. Thus, the different posts are used to create a specific regime of truth or perception of reality. Foucault (1977) views power as a form of discipline since the active production within discourses makes subject positions of thinking, seeing, being, and acting. Hence, it produces human subjects and affects people's self-image. At the same time, behind the picture, there is another production going on where makeup is retouched and images are taken from flattering positions. The clothes are given a more luxurious look due to the staged environment. Hence, the viewer only sees what the viewer is allowed to see, and truth claims become subjective and utilized to serve the influencer's self-interest (Deetz, 1992; Dean, 2010). In conclusion, how the influencers represent themselves through their everyday language usage, conceptions, and knowledge contributes to maintaining power and dominance relation within their social context.

6.0 Discussion

In the present chapter, a summary of the empirical findings is illustrated and themes after the subjectivity and ideals. Moreover, the present chapter discusses the empirical analysis and its findings in relation to prior research presented in the literature review.

6.1 Empirical Findings

In the previous chapter were presented what ideals lead consumers, or influencers, are constructed through the adoption of fast fashion through the mediation of Instagram. Following themes and sub-themes were identified:

Themes	Sub-themes
Consumer Subjectivity	**The Effortless Beauty**
What ideals and consumer subjectivities are influencers representing	*Natural Beauty*
	Skinny
	Feminine
	Sexually Attractive
	The Natural Born Fashionista
	Trendy
	Expressive
	Different
	Innovative
	Outstanding
	Proactive
	Playful
	The Successful Entrepreneur
	Successful
	Entrepreneur
	Family Oriented
	Humble & Attentive
	Caring & Supportive
	The Idolized Lifestyle
	Glamour Life
	High Living Standard
	Empowered Woman
	Scandinavian Style
Construction of Subjectivities	**Authority & Legitimacy**
How are influencers constructing ideals and consumer subjectivities	**Institutional Forces**
	Narrative & Storylines

Figure 20 Construction of the Ideals.

Theme of what and how consumer ideals are constructed.

The table demonstrates the themes that were found in the empirical material. The ideals and consumer subjectivities could be identified in the first theme concerning beauty standards, fashion ideals, personality traits, and lifestyle. The subjectivity of *the effortless beauty* could be placed in the influencers reproducing traditional views of a beautiful woman, identified and portrayed as natural, skinny, feminine, and sexually attractive. However, some resistance was indicated when the followers challenged the influencers' ideals, for example, the promotion of being skinny or beautiful without any imperfections. Additionally, the influencers constructed

gender-connected stereotypes that portray women as captivating yet fragile and how beauty is connected to femininity and sexuality. However, Angelica also challenges these stereotypical views by posing in a masculine manner. *The natural born fashionista* could be identified and constructed from ideals that entailed similar styles and colors, thus suggesting the upcoming trend for the summer. Moreover, the ideals promoted consumers to be trendy, outstanding and express themselves through style underlying their difference. Consumers also were suggested to reinvent themselves through fashion, thus subjecting and encouraging them to adopt the same playful and proactive identity. *The successful entrepreneur* subjectivity position could be identified in promoting favorable ideals, characteristics of being a humble yet attentive and successful entrepreneur, and family-oriented while caring and supportive. Finally, *the idolized lifestyle* commonly was constructed and forwarded by the influencers portraying a desirable lifestyle that comes with their celebrity status. Thus, the influencers construct desires by allowing followers to see what it looks like in a celebrity's life for a second and imagine themselves in the same shoes. Moreover, the influencers represent and forward ideals of a glamour life with a high living standard and an ideal of hard-working empowered women standing behind their successful lifestyle.

Through the analysis, there were identified three key areas of subjectivity construction, which the influencers rely on when producing and offering ideals to their followers. The first concerns *authority and legitimacy*, which allows the influencers to gain the status of being trendsetters and their followers' trust. Second comes *institutional forces and corporations*, where the influencers co-create together with the fast fashion brand to establish ideals that ultimately benefit the product marketed and resources for the influencers to build on. Ultimately, these two discourse practices open up the way for *narratives and storylines*, where the influencers create a particular image of the world to influence their followers, thus making the storylines more trustworthy and believable. These findings will be discussed in the next section in comparison to the literature review.

6.2 Contribution to Prior Research

This present paper entails a theoretical contribution to the field of consumer-produced subjectivities in the fast fashion context mediated through Instagram, where influencers are viewed as lead consumers and the dominant source of constructing subjectivities. Commonly to earlier findings in the literature review, Foucault's theoretical contribution of governmentality lays as a foundation to understand discursive practices in which different modes of subjection occur and where language is used as a tool to create reality (Skålen et al., 2008; Zwick et al., 2008; Giesler & Veresiu, 2014). Furthermore, the holistic and open research approach enabled the researchers to identify the subjective positions discussed above and the ideals that construct them. By earning the status of fashion trendsetters, ordinary consumers become lead consumers, influencers, which entails the power to construct ideals through Instagram and forward subjective positions according to which other consumers can mold themselves into.

In today's society, people form social practices and adapt particular sets of rules and norms to search for the truth of conducting themselves. Giesler and Veresiue (2014) stated that the market holds consumers as moral subjects that are free yet controlled and thus influence various consumer subjectivity from existing cultural conditions. However, the present study contributes to the implications that influencers become a guide for consumers for their ethical consumption decisions. Consumers rely on influencers and appoint them to be responsible for filtering what is good or bad. Thus, consumers regulate themselves while at the same time governing and following influencers. Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) acknowledge the concept of brand public, where consumers form online communities to create social norms and cultural experiences. In contrast, this study's findings further contribute by illustrating that Instagram can be viewed as a platform for consumer subjectivity creation where the consumer mobilizes around the influencer through their own personal network. Thus, consumers interact with influencers and rely on the relationship to tell them the right way to be. Consequently, consumers willingly construct themselves to the various influencers offered ideals.

While the consumer is recognized as a free individual, capable of making their own choices, it is evident that the influencers, through their achieved status and authority, influence behavior and followers' preferences. Through text and images, people make interpretations and replicate how things are, thus forming reality. These aspects have been demonstrated in previous literature (Skålen et al., 2008; Foucault, 1977), however, in the broader spectrum of marketing discourses. The empirical findings contribute by further extending influencers as a growing force within marketing discourses that drive consumer orientation. The phenomenon gives a realistic view of how corporations seek to govern through influencer marketing. The thesis illustrates how subjectivities are created and laid as the foreground of selling certain products promoted to consumers as a necessary means to live up to the subjectivity conveyed. Thus in comparison to Giesler and Versiu (2014) P.A.C.T model, that consumer needs to live up to the 'responsible consumer' and therefore companies sell them resources to achieve the identity, fast fashion brands become resources for consumers to reach the ideal life or effortless beauty that the influencers convey. By influencers constructing these ideal subjectivities, it enables and lays the foreground for certain products to be sold and offered to the followers. Thus, the fast fashion brands 'recruit' influencers to help them deal with this to reach their target audience.

In previous literature, Zwick et al. (2008) stated that modern corporate power no longer wants to openly control and discipline consumers but instead shape consumers' actions and govern them through liberation instead of enforcement. Thus, the research shows that influencers become co-creators of a typical type of consumer that fits the kind of products that the fast fashion brands are selling. However, these subjectivities do not happen by chance. By collaborating with fast fashion brands, influencers forward consumer subjectivities that lead to consumers become exploited by the market and its institutional forces. Hence, consumers are being encouraged by the influencers that they need the products from Nelly.com and NA-KD to live up to the same ideals, thus becoming glamorous fashionistas or successful entrepreneurs. Thus, the influencers construct a particular consumer to be able to sell certain products. Also, the control over consumers is performed through the provided platforms for consumer practice that companies manage. Thus, the present study suggests that Instagram in general and influencers' profiles can be considered a managed platform for consumer practice that

corporations and influencers govern through certain narratives and storylines (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). The development of Instagram and the appearance of influencers make consumers rely on influencers and their opinion as lead consumers rather than on regular consumers. This, in comparison to Shankar (2006), makes consumers less empowered and more controlled by corporations and influencers who forwarded subjectivities and ideals influenced by corporations. Therefore, producing subjectivities can be viewed as a form of power exercise where subjectivities support the consumption of products where the market is supplied with ready-made identities.

In complement to Skålen et al. (2006), the empirical findings support the author's claim of how power is embedded in language and knowledge claims and thus conducts control. Hence, similarities could be found in how governing people by subjecting certain rationals or mentalities could be seen from the practice of the influencers' ideals. The influencers are mobilized by the fast fashion brands and together form certain rationals to serve their self-interest. Influencers can turn their fame to produce value for the clothing collection by adding their name to it. Hence, by building a follower base over time, they have already created a particular type of followers that likes what they represent and thus 'prepared' them for appreciating the products promoted. Consumers are therefore becoming victims of pre-identified identities without knowing that they are being influenced. Moreover, consumers would like to participate in product development and collaborate in defining the products they will be offered by becoming co-creators (Cova & Cova, 2009; Chartsis et al., 2018). Their collaboration is performed through the validation of subjectivity and ideals that are forwarded by influencers. Thus, companies and influencers create the ideal of the successful fashionista that the consumer thinks is fun to voluntarily become a part of companies production to invent the companies products without expecting any pay. Hence, subjective positions lead to consumers taking potential identity positions that people want to adopt that enable firms to achieve a free labor force to develop the branch of their products, thus becoming exploitative. While language and fashion resources allow the followers to freely conduct themselves (Skålen et al., 2006; Thompson and Haytko, 1997), it also creates the mode of exploitation by constraining consumers' imagery of the world.

7.0 Conclusion

The final chapter of the present study entails the general conclusion of the empirical findings in relation to the research purpose to answer the research question. A revision of the research paper is made, as well an outline of the theoretical contributions is revealed and discussed in relation to the new conceptual framework. Finally, limitations of the study are presented followed by recommendation for future research.

7.1 Research Purpose

The present study research purpose entailed to investigate what ideals that influencers produce and aim to advance prior literature knowledge of the production of consumer subjectivites. Thus, the study entails under which circumstances consumer produced subjectivities are created, formed, and forward, making it possible to come to a conclusion and answer the research question, *what ideals are lead consumers producing through the construction of subjectivity?*

The findings reveal consumer subjectivity and ideals that the influencers foremost promoted through their fashion collaboration concerning beauty standards, fashion ideals, personal traits, and lifestyle. Moreover, these ideals are constructed by the influencers achieving specific authority and legitimacy, thus becoming trendsetters within fashion. The position was acquired by the influencers gaining particular expertise, which was enabled by their collaboration with fast fashion brands. Thus, the subjective positions resulted from influencers reproducing and forwarding institutional ideals while simultaneously utilizing the discourses as resources to produce new subject positions, reflected from their personality traits and displayed lifestyle. Through the collaboration with fast fashion brands, the authority and the resources of corporations lead to the influencer constructing narratives and storylines, where the influencers constructed particular consumer ideals to fit the products promoted by the fast fashion brands. The study's findings thus reveal and contextualize the phenomenon's social impact, thus increasing the knowledge and fundamental understanding of how consumers are affected by subjective positions that form particular consumer ideals and therefore become victims and limited to a specific perception of the world. Hence, the research purpose of the study was to

lead to the understanding of consumption and thus become aware of the ongoing discursive practices and subjective ideals produced in society. Therefore, demonstration of the influencers' creation of subjective ideals through Instagram will lead to a greater understanding of how the language we use constructs society as a whole.

7.2 Theoretical Contribution
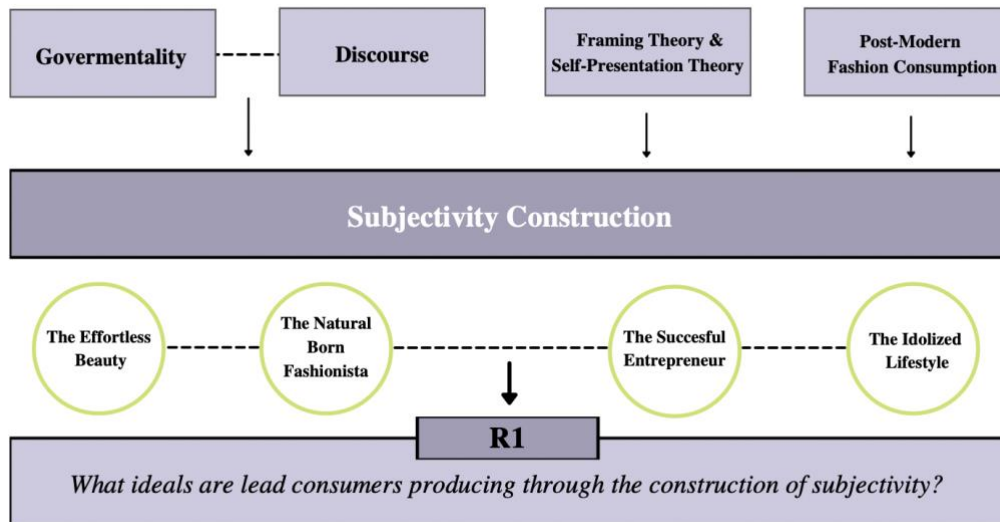
Figure 21 New conceptual framework.

Based on the results of the thesis produced by the writers.

The revisited conceptual framework demonstrates how the theoretical foundation consisting of theory and prior research leads to the identification of subjectivity construction. Moreover, through the result of the study, the model was further developed to entail the four subjectivities that influencers' construction of ideals and subject positions lead to consumers taking the roles of *the effortless beauty, the natural born fashionista*, *the successful entrepreneur*, and finally, *the idolized lifestyle*. Together, they portray the construction of the effortless, successful fashionista.

Regarding how influencers construct ideals and consumer subjectivity, the present study found that influencers reproduce as well forward ideals that followers base their consumption experience on, which ultimately leads to becoming resources for the fast fashion brand. Thus,

influencer becomes the 'in-betweeners' that facilitates companies to reach their target audience, while simultaneously providing consumers with additional value by personalizing the consumption experience. By collaborating with the fast fashion brands, influencers forward consumer subjectivities and conform to those subjectivities, the consumer needs the promoted products by Nelly.com and NA-KD. Therefore, by influencers producing text and visuals, they construct their followers' worldview while at the same time redirecting the focus from the economic conditions that are implied and other aspects that remain hidden from the viewer. Influencers thus produce subjectivities and identity ideals that support the products of brands and corporations. Moreover, the research defines that consumers' actions and intentions are shaped by influencers creating subjectivities and ideals forwarded by corporations and influencers that consumers willingly follow and co-create through validation or resistance practice. Additionally, this particular research has shown consumers the desire to reinvent themselves through fashion and admiration for influencers and subject themselves to specific positions to become part of their world image.

7.3 Limitations and Future Research

While studying the text and visual images can illustrate how subjectivities are performed, we cannot say much about how consumers genuinely follow through on those subjective perceptions and how they interpret those suggested subject positions or identities. However, this study aims not to capture how consumers are internalizing and expressing the suggested subjectivities in their everyday life, but rather to see how they validate lead consumers, influencers, and representation of certain subject positions. Moreover, the gender aspect became more evident and significant than initially anticipated, which can be explained by selecting two female influencers. Moreover, looking at influencers historically and going back years of their published photos and videos could give a deeper understanding of the subject and fundamental underlying of the social discourses that give rise to consumer-produced subjectivities. However, due to the limited amount of time, the approach taken was more suitable for this study and captured snapshots of reality in which subjective ideals are constantly being produced.

From a constructivist standpoint, there is a present element of research bias that must be acknowledged, affecting the study's outcome. Additionally, since the study applies critical discourse analysis for interpreting the empirical material, there is no exact method for what it should look like. Hence, the result is affected by the researcher's knowledge and interpretations of the subject. However, by adapting triangulation in the research, the potential bias concerns were reduced. Moreover, through the reflexive standpoint, it also led to the researchers contributing to research further by establishing an analytical tool to analyze visual and text through a critical perspective which is significant for understanding how language constructs the world and society.

While this study focuses on exploring subjective ideals produced by influencers within the Swedish fast fashion industry, a proposition for future research is to see what forms of subjections within other contexts. Moreover, since this study focused on lead consumers, it would be further valuable to answer if consumers truly follow these subjective ideals and positions that the influencers offer and how they interpret them to form their identities. Thus, it could be beneficial to research how consumers internalize these envisioned subjectivities in their daily life. Additionally, as touched upon in the discussion, there is an interaction between the consumers and the production of goods. Thus, it could further be beneficial to research how particular types of consumers are being produced to buy certain products that companies sell. Moreover, since this study found that female ideals were evident by selecting two female influencers, it could be valuable to research the gender aspect further with existing literature and conduct the study, including female and male influencers. Finally, while this study explored how language through visual images and text produced by the influencers construct subject ideals, conducting interviews with the influencers and consumers of how they regard this could further provide insight and contribution into the research field.

Reference List

@angelicablick. (2020). @angelicablick [Instagram], Available from: https://www.instagram.com/angelicablick/ [Accessed 3 March 2021].

@biancaingrosso. (2020). @biancaingrosso [Instagram], Available from: https://www.instagram.com/biancaingrosso/[Accessed 3 March 2021].

Alvesson, M. (2008). Reflecting on Reflexivity: Reflexive Textual Practices in Organization and Management Theory, *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3, pp.480-501.

Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2009). Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research, SAGE.

Angelica Blick. (2014). About. Available Online: https://angelicablick.se/about/ [Accessed 2 May 2021].

Aragoncillo, L., & Orus, C. (2018). Impulse buying behaviour: an online-offline comparative and the impact of social media, *Spanish Journal of Marketing*, vol. 22, no.1, pp. 42-62.

Arnould, E. J., & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp.868–882.

Arvidsson, A., & Caliandro, A. (2016). Brand Public, Journal of Consumer Research2, [e-journal] vol. 5, no. 1, pp.727–748, Available Online: https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucv053.

Bauman, Z. (2000). Liquid modernity. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2010). Perpetuum Mobile, *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty,* vol. 1, no. 1, pp.55– 63.

Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of consumer research*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp.139-168.

Belk, R.W., Ger, G., & Askegaard, S. (2003). The fire of desire: a multisited inquiry into consumer passion, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 30, pp. 326-51.

Bertilsson, J., & Rennstam, J. (2018). The Destructive Side of Branding: A Heuristic Model for Analyzing the Value of Branding Practice, *Organization*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp.260–281.

Boje, D., Oswick, C., & Ford, J. (2004). Language and Organization: The Doing of Discourse, *Academy of Management Review,* vol. 29, no. 4, pp.571-577.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, London: Routledge.

Brown, R. C. (2013). Moral Responsibility for (Un)Healthy Behaviour, *Journal of Medical Ethics*, vol. 39, pp.695–698.

Burn, R., & Burn, R. (2008). Business Research Methods and Statistics Using SPSS, London: SAGE.

Cao, D., Meadows, M., Wong, D., Xia, S. (2020). Understanding consumers' social media engagement behaviour: An examination of the moderation effect of social media context, *Journal of business research,* vol. 122, pp.835-846.

Casaló, L., Flavián, C., Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2020) Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership, *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 117, pp.510-519.

Charitsis, V., Fyrberg Yngfalk, A., & Skålén, P. (2018). 'Made to run': Biopolitical marketing and the making of the self-quantified runner, *Marketing Theory*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp.347–366.

Cova, B., & Cova, V. (2009). Faces of the New Consumer: A Genesis of Consumer Governmentality, *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp.81–99.

Dean, M. (1999). Governmentality: Power and rule in modern society. London: SAGE Publications.

Dean, M. (2010). Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society, 2nd edn., London: SAGE Publications.

Deetz, S. (1992). Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization: Developments in Communication and the Politics of Everyday Life. London: SAGE Publications.

Devinney, T., Auger, P., & Eckhardt, G. (2010). The Myth of the Ethical Consumer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Douglas, M. (1984). Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo, London: Routledge.

Driel, L., & Dumitrica, D. (2020) Selling brands while staying "Authentic": The professionalization of Instagram influencers. *The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies,* vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 66–84.

Dubois, A., & Gadde, L.E. (2002) Systematic combining: an abductive approach to case research. *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 55, no. 7, pp. 553-560.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. (2018). Management and business research, 6.edn., London: SAGE Publications.

EcommerceDB. (2019). Store Ranking & Overview, Available online: https://ecommercedb.com/en/ranking/ww/all?search=nakd [Accessed 22 May 2021].

Egan-Wyer, C. (2019). The Sellable Self: Exploring endurance running as an extraordinary consumption experience. Lund University (Media-Tryck).

Eisenhardt, M. (1989). Building Theories from Case Study Research, *Management Review*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp.532-550.

Elliot, R., & Wattanasuwan, K. (1998). Brands as Symbolic resources for the construction of identity. *International Journal of Advertising,* vol. 17, pp.131-44.

Facebook IQ. (2018). Instagram shopping: to sell products online, Available online: https://www.facebook.com/business/instagram/shopping?_ga=2.73224273.355811064.16129 437 [Accessed 1 March 2021].

Fairclough, N. (1995). Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language. London: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (2003). Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research. London: Routledge

Faurschou, G. (1987). Fashion and the Cultural Logic of Postmodernity, Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory, vol. 11, no.1-2, pp.51-82.

Fırat, A. F. (1991). The Consumer in Postmodernity, *Advances in Consumer Research Volume,* vol. 18, Pages 70-76.

Firat, A.F., & Nikhilesh, D. (2006). Theoretical and philosophical implications of postmodern debates: some challenges to modern marketing, *Marketing Theory,* vol.6, no. 2, pp.123-162.

Foucault, M. (1977). Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison, New York : Pantheon Books.

Frommer, D. (2010). Here's how to use Instagram. Available online: http://www.businessinsider.com/instagram-2010-11?op1⁄41   [Accessed 1 May 2021].

Gee, P. J. (1999). *An introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*. 2nd edn., London: Routledge

Giesler, M., & Veresiu, M. (2014). Creating the Responsible Consumer: Moralistic Governance Regimes and Consumer Subjectivity, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 41, no. 3, pp.840-857.

Goffman, E. (1956). The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.

Goffman, E. (1974). Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience, New York: Harper and Row.

Gordon, C. (1991). Governmental Rationality: An Introduction, in G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (eds), The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Gretzel, U. (2017). Social Media Activism in Tourism. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp.1-14.

Guba E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth Generation Evaluation.* Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Gunnilstam, J. (2021). NA-KD had sales of 2 billion: "Near break-even", Available online: https://www.ehandel.se/na-kd-omsatte-2-miljarder-nara-break-even [Accessed 20 March 2021].

Holt, D. B. (2004). *How Brands Become Icons.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Houghton, C., Casey, D., Murphy, D. (2013). Rigour in qualitative case-study research. *Nurse Researcher.* vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 12-7.

Influencer Marketing Hub. (2021). The State of Influencer Marketing 2021: Benchmark Report, Available Online: https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report-2021/ [Accessed 1 May 2021].

Instagram. (2021). Terms of Use, Available Online: https://www.instagram.com/about/legal/terms/before-january-19-2013/ [Accessed 10 May 2021].

Jameson, F. (1991). Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Kozinets, R. (2002). The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities, *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol.39, pp. 61-72.

Kozinets, R. (2010). Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online. London: SAGE Publications.

Kozinets, R. (2019). Netnography: The Essential Guide to Qualitative Social Media Research. London: SAGE Publications.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics. London: Verso.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Postpositivism and the Naturalist Paradigm, Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp.14–46.

Locke, K. (2012). Abduction. In Mills, A. J., Durepos, G. & Wiebe, E. (eds.) Encyclopedia of Case Study Research. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Markham, A., & Buchanan, E. (2015). Ethical considerations in digital research contexts, in: James D. Wright (eds), International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2nd edn., vol 12. Oxford: Elsevier.

Marwick A.E. (2013). Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age. New Haven: Yale University Press.

MediaKix (n.d.) How much time do we spend on social media? Available online: https://mediakix.com/blog/how-much-time-is-spent-on-social-media-lifetime/ [Accessed 5 March 2021].

McCracken, G. (1986). Culture and consumption a theoretical account of the structure and movement of the meaning of consumer goods. *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol.13, pp. 71– 84.

McQuarrie, E., Edward, F., Miller, J., and Barbara J.Phillips. (2013). The Megaphone Effect: Taste and Audience in Fashion Blogging, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp.136–158.

Miller, P., & Rose, N. (1990). Governing economic life, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, pp.1-31.

Miller, P., & Rose, N. (2008). Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Morgan, S.J., Pullon, S.R.H., Macdonald, L.M., McKinlay, E.M., Gray, B.V. (2016). Case Study Observational Research: A Framework for Conducting Case Study Research Where Observation Data Are the Focus. *Qualitative Health Research.* vol. 27, no.7, pp.1060–1068.

NA-KD. (2021). Angelica Blick, Available online: https://www.na-kd.com/sv/kampanjer/angelica-blick-x-na-kd-pt3 [Accessed 27 March 2021].

Nelly. com. (2021). After last year's success - Nelly.com and Bianca Ingrosso in a new collaboration for 2021, Available online: https://www.mynewsdesk.com/se/nelly/pressreleases/efter-foerra-aarets-succe-nelly-punkt-com-och-bianca-ingrosso-i-nytt-samarbete-foer-2021-3069025 [Accessed 23 March 2021].

Nellygroup.com (2021). The Nelly Brand, Available online: https://www.nellygroup.com/en/brand/nelly-brand/ [Accessed 27 March 2021].

Niinimäki, K. (2010). Eco-clothing, consumer identity and ideology, *Sustainable Development*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp.150-162.

Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp.39-52.

O'hear, S. (2018). Swedish fashion e-commerce company NA-KD raises $45 M series B, Available online: https://techcrunch.com/2018/01/15/na-kd/?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAADm-FR3OHtW3hhel7t7RBi3Iq-FYxYijLQqcpnwIOl5ataIQgS3SHo5X8URI3OgYaeRu1FjaLOk437-Oprg1l2HOXiNZ54M4VIqIUaaIwzNArmWI4w7QcmUPGxd9Ik4Urek4FUNKXgR22qeRoJ4pMZADBrJuBDQ7baWgfMN3xm5G&guccounter=2 [Accessed 2 May 2021].

Phillips, N., Sewell, G., Jaynes, S. (2008). Applying critical discourse analysis in strategic management research. *Organizational Research Methods*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp.1-19.

Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1998). Welcome to the Experience Economy, *Harvard business review*, vol. 76, no. 4, pp.97–105.

Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2000). Co-Opting Customer Competence, *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 78, no. 1, pp.79–87.

Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-Creation Experiences: The Next Practice in Value Creation, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp.5–14.

Rennstam, J., & Wästerfors, D. (2018). Analyze! Crafting you data in qualitative research, Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Rocamora, A. (2002). Fields of Fashion: Critical Insights into Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp.341–362.

Roper, S., Caruana, R., Medway, D., Murphy, P. (2013). Constructing luxury brands:exploring the role of consumer discourse, *European Journal of Marketing,* vol. 47, no. 3-4, pp.375-400.

Rose, G. (2001). Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials, London: SAGE Publications.

Rose, N. (1999). Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schmitt, B. (1999). Experiential Marketing, *Journal of Marketing Management*, [e- journal] vol. 15, no. 1–3, pp.53–67, Available Online: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1362/026725799784870496, [Accessed 3 May 2021]

SCB. (2021). Population Statistics. Available Online: https://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population/population-composition/population-statistics/ [Accessed 13 May 2021].

Shamir, R. (2008). The Age of Responsibilization: On Mar- ket-Embedded Morality, *Economy and Society*, vol. 37, no.1, pp.1– 19.

Shankar, A., Cherrier, H., & Canniford, R. (2006). Consumer Empowerment: A Foucauldian Interpretation, *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 40, no. 9-10, pp.1013–1030.

Siegle, L. (2019). How Instagram Influencers Fuel Our Destructive Addiction To Fast Fashion, Available online: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/fast-fashion-influencers-instagram-fashion-nova-waste-climate-change_n_5c5ae8ffe4b0871047598750. [Accessed 1 March 2021].

Simmel, G. (1957). Fashion. *American Journal of Sociology,* vol. 62, pp. 541–558.

Skålen, P., Fellesson, M., & Fougère, M. (2006). The Governmentality of Marketing Discourse, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, vol. 22, pp.275–291.

Skålén, P., Fougère, M., & Fellesson, M. (2008). Marketing Discourse: A Critical Perspective, London: Routledge.

Skeldon, P. (2019). Social influencers have led to the rise in fast fashion, with 30% of shoppers using Instagram for inspiration, Available Online: https://internetretailing.net/mobile-theme/mobile-theme/social-influencers-have-led-to-the-rise-in-fast-fashion-with-30-of-shoppers-using-instagram-for-inspiration-20388 [Accessed 1 March 2021].

Smart, B. (2003). Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments, New York, NY: Routledge.

Spry, A., Pappu, R., & Bettina Cornwell, T. (2011). Celebrity endorsement, brand credibility and brand equity. *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 45, no.6, pp.882-909.

Statista. (2021a). Distribution of Instagram users worldwide as of January 2021, by age group, Available online: https://www.statista.com/statistics/325587/instagram-global-age-group/ [Accessed 7 May 2021].

Statista. (2021b). Influencer marketing market size worldwide from 2016 to 2021, by age group, Available online: https://www.statista.com/statistics/325587/instagram-global-age-group/ [Accessed 7 May 2021].

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Svensson, (2018). Discourse analysis - apprehensible method, trans. Cecilia Hallgren, Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.

Thompson, C. J. (2014). The Politics of Consumer Identity Work. *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 40, no. 5, pp. 3-7.

Thompson, C., & Haytko, D. (1997). Speaking of Fashion: Consumers' Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 24, no.1, pp. 15-42.

Vargo, S.L., & Lusch, R.F. (2008), Service-Dominant Logic Continuing the Evolution, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 68, No. 1, pp. 1-17.

Wallendorf, M., & Belk, R. (1989). Assessing trustworthiness in naturalistic consumer research, *Interpretive Consumer Research*, pp. 69-84.

Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. 5th edn., Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Zwick, D., Bonsu, S. K., & Darmody, A. (2008). Putting Consumers to Work 'Co- Creation' and New Marketing Govern-Mentality, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp.163–196.