

Master's Thesis

A CALL FOR REPRESENTATION

Investigating Inclusive Marketing through Multimodal Discourse
Analysis and the Notion of Stereotypes

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Author: Martina Sindalsen

Supervisor: Bent Sørensen

Department of Culture and Learning



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the field of inclusive marketing in western culture. The aim of the thesis is therefore to investigate what characterises the marketing efforts in a number of examples where brands are perceived as successful in regard to employing an inclusive marketing strategy. The examples of marketing efforts are ASOS' advertisement *Collusion "For the Coming Age"* from 2018 as well as excerpts from ASOS' Instagram profile, Aerie's presentation video *Your 2020 #AerieREAL Role Models* from 2020 as well as excerpts from Aerie's Instagram profile, AXE's advertisement *AXE "Find Your Magic"* from 2016, and the Google Pixel 2 advertisement *The Picture Perfect Life* from 2018. The theoretical framework used to analyse the examples involve the notion of stereotypes as well as knowledge about the use of stereotypes in advertising. Moreover, this is supported by perspectives on inclusive marketing that offers insight into what inclusive marketing entails. The analysis is conducted through the use of multimodal discourse analysis and social semiotics, which aid in locating and interpreting the characteristics of the brands' inclusive marketing efforts. The findings conclude that presenting diverse models and communicating an inclusive, positive and empowering message that targets many types of people generally characterises the brands' inclusive marketing efforts. Thereby, the brands represent and communicate to a wide range of different people. The findings also reveal that few of the examples exhibit complete inclusivity, as some brands fail to represent some people of marginalised or underrepresented groups. Furthermore, the findings lead to a discussion about whether it is possible to employ an inclusive marketing strategy without connecting the message to a positive outlook on the matter.

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Introduction

Every day we are exposed to a lot of information through the media; a large amount of information, opinions and different kinds of products are thrown at us. Many children and people of the younger generation are frequent users of social media platforms, through which they are heavily exposed to that information, those opinions and products. However, through social media, they are also able to interact with the senders of these messages and products, and thereby they can also react to the information, opinions and products that are shown to them through advertising. Thus, consumers have the power to determine the success of the brands' marketing efforts.

Traditionally, brands have been marketing themselves and their products to the idea of their very specific target audiences, which means that they have been communicating to conventional stereotypes. However, stereotypes do not necessarily reflect reality. Research on the topic of stereotypes in advertising has concluded that very rigid representations of what is male and female, what is beautiful, and what is normal can cause mental health issues and seem offensive to the consumers that do not feel that they are represented by the depicted stereotypes.

In recent times, attention has been brought to the topic of inclusive marketing, suggesting that consumers appreciate diversity in advertising and marketing in general. Maybe as a result of that, some brands have moved towards a more inclusive marketing strategy. This includes the British online fashion and cosmetics retailer ASOS, the American tech giant Google, and other brands like AXE and Aerie that promote items that are traditionally thought to be for specific stereotypes, like masculine men and slim women. All of these brands are praised by social media users for having adopted and employed a more inclusive and diverse depiction of their target audiences in their marketing efforts – either as a result of a specific advertisement or their presence on online platforms. Across advertisements and online platforms, these brands include people of various ethnicities, people with different styles, people with disabilities, people with mental health issues, and people with various body types in their marketing and branding. Therefore, it is interesting to consider what characterises the marketing efforts and advertisements of those brands who successfully focus on inclusive marketing.

The purpose of this thesis will therefore be to investigate what characterises the marketing efforts in a number of examples where brands successfully employ a more inclusive marketing strategy in regard to their advertisements and their general visual representation on social media platforms. Those specific examples are ASOS' advertisement for their Collusion clothing brand

called *Collusion "For the Coming Age"* from 2018 as well as excerpts of ASOS' Instagram profile, Aerie's presentation video of their brand ambassadors of 2020 called *Your 2020 #AerieREAL Role Models* from 2020 as well as excerpts of Aerie's Instagram profile, AXE's advertisement *AXE "Find Your Magic"* from 2016, and the Google Pixel 2 advertisement *The Picture Perfect Life* from 2018.

In order to investigate the specific advertisements and marketing efforts on social media, the term stereotypes will be clarified along with perspectives on the use of stereotypes in advertising. In relation to these perspectives, the subjects of gender, ethnicity, body types, disabilities and mental health will be taken into consideration. Moreover, the notion of inclusive marketing will be clarified by the use of different investigations conducted within the field. The specific examples will furthermore be analysed by the use of multimodal discourse analysis, where the notion of social semiotics as defined by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen will also be used as a tool for analysis. The findings of the analysis will clarify what characterises the different examples of successfully inclusive marketing efforts, and they may be able to answer the question of why these specific brands have been praised for their efforts within inclusive marketing.

Methodology

The examples of inclusive marketing efforts that have been chosen for this thesis, provided by ASOS, Aerie, AXE and Google, have been selected because of the positive reception from consumers. The success of all of the examples is visible across online platforms in the comment sections, where viewers praise them for their inclusive styles. This will become clearer in the analyses of the advertisements and Instagram profiles. Furthermore, the examples were selected because of their relevance in regard to their age; investigating a new movement within marketing requires modern and up-to-date examples of marketing efforts. Moreover, these examples were chosen because the brands originate from the western world and communicate to an audience placed in western culture, wherein the inclusive marketing trend moves.

The theoretical framework of this thesis will include the notion of stereotypes, as it is important to know what the inclusive marketing trend may be moving away from. Therefore, clarifications of stereotypes and their traditional use in advertising will serve as an element of comparison to the objects of analysis in regard to their representation of different types of people. Furthermore, perspectives on inclusive marketing will be explained in order to be able to understand if and why the objects of analysis can in fact be considered inclusive.

When dealing with complex objects of analysis that are comprised of several elements, such as text, audio and pictures, a method that allows for several different aspects to be considered simultaneously is required. Furthermore, it is expected that elements that indicate inclusivity can be visible through different effects. Therefore, the method of multimodal discourse analysis has been chosen as a tool for analysis, as it is compatible with the purpose of this thesis in the way that it enables for different modes to be considered at the same time. The practical tool within multimodal discourse analysis, multimodal transcription, will be used to convert the examples into readable objects of analysis that will reveal the significant features of them. Multimodal discourse analysis is closely connected to semiotics, and through the theory of social semiotics, it is possible to register and collect different semiotic resources that will ultimately assist in the investigation of what characterises the examples of marketing efforts in regard to inclusivity. Through multimodal discourse analysis and social semiotics, the different elements of the marketing styles can thus be brought to light as well as examined and interpreted.

Throughout the presentation of the theoretical framework regarding stereotypes, the introduction to the method of multimodal discourse analysis and the analysis, additional methodological considerations will appear.

Theoretical Framework

Stereotypes

People use stereotypes as a navigation tool in everyday life. Dividing people into categories is an automatic and unconscious action for many people, and the categories are often based on stereotypes. Stereotypes can be defined as “organized sets of beliefs about characteristics of a particular group” (Golombok & Fivush 17), which means that people form ideas about how certain types or groups of people are; how they behave, how they look, what their interests are, how successful they are and much more. These stereotypes play an important role in how people see themselves as well as how they perceive other people (Golombok & Fivush 16-17).

Stereotypes are not a result of personal fabrication and opinions, rather they arise from common and culturally shared beliefs about how certain types of groups are. Golombok and Fivush furthermore make the point that “The way in which we assign psychological meaning to specific behaviors can partly determine how positively or negatively these behaviors are seen” (20). Thus, it can be determined that both positive and negative stereotypes exist, and how the characteristics tied to a specific stereotype are perceived and valued depends on the meaning people in society assign them; it depends on the current discourse. As previously mentioned, stereotypes are significant factors in relation to how people view themselves and other people. Together with the fact that some stereotypes are thought of as positive and some as negative, this may have the effect that people do not wish to be associated with some stereotypes, and highly wish to be associated with some others. However, it is important to note that stereotypes are not necessarily a reflection of reality, and therefore not all people look like or behave like the stereotypes they may be associated with (Golombok & Fivush 18-20).

As our shared sets of beliefs about what characterises certain people and groups are based on the current discourse, it is natural to also include the media and its role in relation to stereotypes, as the media impacts the current discourse. Golombok and Fivush argue that “The mass media – television, music, newspapers, magazines, and books – both reflect and form the cultural stereotypes” (30). Thus, this point suggests that advertising both shows depictions of stereotypes and also takes part in creating stereotypes. Today, some of the most prominent media platforms are online platforms and social media, and these platforms are frequently used for advertising and branding. As it is commonly known that stereotypes are heavily used in advertising, it is relevant to look into how stereotypes have been used and still occur in brands’ marketing efforts.

Stereotypes in Advertising

Explained in a comprised way, brands attempt to convince consumers to buy their products by being relatable to their target audiences, which entails speaking directly to their beliefs and values and providing products that are relevant to their lifestyles and needs. Therefore, brands often communicate to stereotypes and the shared sets of beliefs about what certain groups of people need, appreciate and want to buy (Ruggs et al. 319). Some stereotypes are more common and touched upon than others. When people meet for the first time, initially they will probably try to place the new person in a category, and the first category that comes into mind will likely be that of gender (Golombok & Fivush 17). Similarly, when brands wish to brand themselves and advertise their products, one of the first things they will consider about their target audience may be which gender they typically are.

Gender Stereotypes

When stereotypes are defined as culturally shared sets of beliefs about what characterises certain groups of people, gender stereotypes may be defined as “a set of beliefs about what it means to be female or male” (Golombok & Fivush 17). Like with the general categorising of people, it is natural and automatic for people to place other people in categories based on their gender. Further unwrapped, the gender stereotypes include “information about physical appearance, attitudes and interests, psychological traits, social relations and occupations” (Golombok & Fivush 17). Thereby, each gender has certain characteristics ascribed to it, which stems from our culturally shared beliefs.

The male and female gender stereotypes dominated marketing and were relatively stable from around the 1950's to the 1990's. The two traditional stereotypes are connected in the way that a female is described as someone who is dependent on someone else, often a man, while the male is active and acts on his own. The characteristics that are ascribed to the female gender stereotype are furthermore, among other things, that she has a soft voice, she is delicate, graceful, weak and emotional. Moreover, she is nurturant and performs activities like childcare, cooking and keeping a home. The male gender stereotype is somewhat opposite, he is strong, independent and a risktaker (Golombok & Fivush 18). In the book *Gender Advertisements* by Erving Goffman, he explains his study of gender stereotypes in advertising and elucidates the notions of gender and gender display, “If gender is defined as the culturally established correlates of sex (whether in consequence of biology or learning) then gender display refers to conventionalized portrayals of those correlates” (Goffman

1). Thus, he highlights the ways in which the female and male stereotypes often perform in advertising.

In the connection between the female and male stereotypes, the body plays a prominent part. As an example, Goffman clarifies the topic of relative size and explains how “the male’s usual superiority over the female will often be expressible in his greater girth and height” (Goffman 28). The male will thus almost always appear bigger in size than the woman, e.g. taller and maybe more muscular, when pictured together. The only exception seems to be when a woman is depicted in an image with a male servant or worker, or a male otherwise subordinated in social class status. Furthermore, Goffman states that the difference in size is relational to the difference in “social weight”, meaning that the male is superior in social situations (Goffman 28). The ritual of subordination is one of the main topics in Goffman’s study, and female subordination to the male is also seen in body positioning. Men are often portrayed as standing tall and upright, which symbolises confidence and superiority (Goffman 40). Furthermore, women are often pictured lying down, and Goffman explains that “lying on the floor or on a sofa or bed seems to also be a conventionalized expression of sexual availability” (Goffman 41). In addition to the focus on sexual availability, lying down may symbolise insecurity and passiveness, as it has just been established that the opposite, an upright position, symbolises confidence and power. In relation to the focus on the body, Goffman also discusses the feminine touch and how women are often shown touching themselves, “readable as conveying a sense of one’s body being a delicate and precious thing” (Goffman 31).

Other dominant themes within gender display are authority, occupation and emotions. When men and women are pictured together, the men possess executive roles, both in relation to occupation and in other aspects of life. This means that men often have positions like doctors and businessmen, while women will possess the roles of nurses and secretaries. In the home, women have more active roles; they care for children, they cook, and they clean. When men are pictured at home, they rarely participate actively in those activities (Goffman 36). Lastly, it is also relevant to focus on Goffman’s point about how it is mostly women who show emotions in advertisements. Emotion is mostly shown in facial expressions and with hands that cover a part of the face – and the emotions shown can range from happiness to sadness (Goffman 57).

Another notable aspect of gender stereotypes is that the male characteristics are often regarded as more positive than the female characteristics. This is evident in the fact that the picture that is painted of the female stereotype in advertising suggests that she is subordinate to and dependant on

the man, while the picture painted of the male stereotype suggests that he is independent, active and strong-minded (Golombok & Fivush 19).

In relation to the descriptions of these gender stereotypes, Golombok and Fivush make an important point,

It is important to keep in mind that what we believe about gender differences may or may not be true. Still, culturally prescribed stereotypes do express those characteristics that are considered socially desirable for women and men to possess. Individuals who deviate too much from the stereotyped views of masculinity and femininity are seen somewhat negatively.

Golombok & Fivush 19

From this point it is possible to argue that people define themselves and others so much in relation to stereotypes that those stereotypes determine what appropriate behaviour is and what kinds of traits they should possess. Furthermore, this means that stereotypes, in a sense, dictate the picture of how people should be; a woman should be delicate, subordinate and passive, while a man should be strong, authoritative and active. However, as it was also just established, this is not always a reflection of reality; not all men and women identify with those traditional stereotypes.

As previously mentioned, there are some stereotypes that are more discussed than others, and while gender stereotypes is one of the most prominent ones, people do not only understand other people from one category. Factors like body type, skin colour and also abilities or disabilities are relevant topics to consider in relation to stereotypes. When more stereotypes and factors are considered, the beliefs about how people look and behave become more complex (Golombok & Fivush 19).

Further Perspectives on Stereotypes in Advertising

Body types in advertising has also been a much-discussed topic. Traditionally, women are objectified and depicted as sex objects with extremely thin bodies. Investigations have shown how especially young women react to those images of thin, sexy women with dissatisfaction of their own bodies, which sometimes leads to eating disorders (Murnen 427-238). Furthermore, it has also been discussed how men are objectified in advertising images, “Rather than a thin, sexy object that someone else can “consume”, the image of men emphasizes muscularity” (Murnen 428). Some young men also respond negatively to the stereotype of a muscular man, and some resort to steroids in order to obtain a more

muscular body (Murnen 428). This shows how stereotypes are able to negatively impact the audience of the advertising.

Another discussed topic within the field of stereotypes in advertising is the topic of minorities in relation to race and ethnicity. An example is the discussion of and focus on representation of African Americans in advertising in the USA, and while more brands use racially diverse models, the percentage of black models stays under the percentage of white models used in advertising. In her article “Skin Tone as the Signifier of Race: The Effect of Consumer Ethnicity on Targeted Marketing” from the *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, Yuvay Jeanine Meyers states that even though an increasing number of black models is seen in advertising, brands lack a focus on difference in skin colours, and they fail to exhibit how skin colours vary within races (77-79). Thereby, advertisers may end up enforcing very narrow depictions of certain groups; they use black or minority stereotypes. Meyers explains how a notable factor within marketing is ethnic identity, which she defines as “the way a person sees themselves as a member of a group that is subset of the larger society” (Meyers 79), which means how much a person identifies with their background and ethnic social group. In her study she finds that African American people with a strong ethnic identity are more positive towards black models in advertisements than they are towards lighter-skinned models, while African American people with a weak ethnic identification are more positive towards models with lighter skin colours. She furthermore explains that “the rationale for these findings is based upon whether the Black consumer identified more closely with their ethnic identity or identified more closely with the dominant American culture” (Meyers 80). This shows how the aspect of racial stereotypes is complex; whether a minority feels represented or not depends on visual representation as well as cultural membership or affiliation.

The last stereotype to be touched upon in this part is the stereotype of disabled people. Historically, disabled models have primarily been used in advertisements for charities, and up until the 1980's, people with disabilities have roughly been categorised as people who should be pitied and looked after. When disabled people and models began performing in commercial advertising in the late 1980's, the most popular displays of disabilities were deaf people and people who need wheelchairs (Haller & Ralph 1-4). Thus, the most prominent stereotype of a disabled person is one using sign language or one sitting in a wheelchair. However, research has disclosed that some disabled consumers feel that “advertising promotes a specific “acceptable physical appearance”” and that “These advertising images tell society who is acceptable in terms of appearance and that transfers to who is acceptable to employ, associate with, communicate with, and value” (Haller & Ralph 6).

Thereby, the narrow stereotypes of disabled people appear to have consequences for some disabled people in their everyday lives, as they feel that the rigid stereotypes in advertising takes part in creating an image of disabled people as non-acceptable in terms of appearance.

These stereotypes have in common that they are able to have negative effects on consumers. Much like some young women and men react negatively to the body stereotypes, others may react in similar ways if they do not feel that they are represented in advertising. Some men and women do not see themselves in the gender stereotypes, not all dark-skinned people feel represented by a black model, and not all disabled people relate to a deaf person or a person in a wheelchair – and therefore they may feel that they are excluded for not conforming to a stereotype. Research on the topic of gender stereotypes has in fact revealed that “Just because an individual subscribes to some traditionally feminine traits does not necessarily mean that she subscribes to all traditionally feminine traits, nor even that she does not subscribe to some traditionally male traits” (Golombok & Fivush 20).

Research on representation in advertising has concluded that “stereotypes become problematic when they lead to expectations about one social category over another or restrict opportunities for one social category over another” (Grau et al. 661). This means that stereotypes in advertising become problematic when the consumers feel that an advertisement dictates how they should be and look and highlights some groups of people as better than others. As has already been established, consumers are more likely to be persuaded into buying brands’ products when the brands communicate to their values and way of life, but when brands misrepresent or exclude some of their target audience because of rigid stereotypes, they lose customers. This may also be the reason why some brands have recently moved towards a more inclusive marketing strategy. Recent studies of stereotypes in advertising has noted that “brands and marketers have recently used advertising that shatters long-held stereotypes – not just to break through and drive interest but to speak to evolving customs and new, growing cohorts of potential consumers” (Ruggs et al. 320). This leads to the question of what more inclusive marketing efforts entail.

Inclusive Marketing

Consumers expect engagement from brands today; it is no longer enough for brands to simply communicate their messages, i.e. show their products, they have to be relevant to their target audiences and be part of their everyday conversation. The western world is increasingly becoming more globalised and multicultural, and therefore the everyday conversation is expanding, and

minority groups grow and become more visible. As a result of this, some advertisers use models and people with different backgrounds in their campaigns, and furthermore:

some brands are using their advertising platform to promote positive messages about traditionally unrepresented groups that actively counter negative stereotypes about these groups. In hopes of attracting socially liberal consumers, these ads do not merely reflect societal changes already in place – they reflect consumers’ desire that brands effect change and move society forward.

Ruggs et al. 320

Thus, it can be argued that this move towards inclusive marketing may be a natural change as an effect of societal changes. The shift towards more inclusive marketing efforts may therefore stem from the brands themselves and their wish to be more inclusive and progressive, while it is also possible to state that the change may come from a consumer demand; a demand that entails moving away from narrow and negative stereotypes. In that case, brands thus need to listen to the consumers if they wish to catch their attention and sell their products to them (Ruggs et al. 320).

In relation to this, it is also relevant to mention ‘purchase activism’, a term that carries the meaning that consumers are more likely to purchase a brand’s products if the brand clearly represents their values and beliefs. Consumers are able to decide whether brands embody their values from certain cues that they may identify with, and “These cues may include factors like age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or culturally relevant situations. These cues are intended to trigger schemas aligned with the target consumer’s characteristics and experiences” (Ruggs et al. 321). A schema is a kind of framework consisting of some knowledge about what characterises a certain topic or group, and when brands depict schemas that are recognisable and relatable to their target audience, the consumer is more likely to identify with the brand (Ruggs et al. 321). Therefore, when brands expand their idea of their target audiences, instead of relying on rigid stereotypes, more people may identify with them.

However, if brands present cues and schemas that are not consistent with the target audience’s schemas, the response may be negative as opposed to positive. An example of this may be using a model with light skin while showcasing cultural cues related to African American culture, which may not be consistent with existing schemas and furthermore possibly offensive to some consumers. This can be explained by the issue of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation refers to the way in

which cultural markers – like language, style, behaviour, etc. – of one group is used by someone outside of that group (Matthes 1004). In an overall perspective, there are roughly two different positions to cultural appropriation, where one has a positive view and the other a negative one. “At one extreme is *universal entitlement*: the view that anybody may appropriate anything they like from other cultures within the boundaries of property law, including musical styles, hair styles, and religious dress” (Nguyen & Strohl 982). This positive outlook on cultural appropriation argues that cultural interchange is beneficial and that the opposite may suppress speech and be harmful to art and culture. “On the other extreme is *universal restrictiveness*: the view that cultural appropriation from marginalized groups is impermissible” (Nguyen & Strohl 982). This negative outlook on cultural appropriation argues how the cultural interchange is often only beneficial to dominant groups, and it focuses on how cultural appropriation demonstrates and amplifies inequality and imbalances of power (Matthes 1003).

Brands may furthermore also violate the consumers’ existing schemas by portraying the consumers in degrading ways. A study on how the makers of advertisements perceive their use of stereotypes in advertisements revealed that, according to their experience, stereotypes in advertising are inappropriate when they are used to reinforce negative depictions of certain groups or types of people (Windels 879). The majority of people do not appreciate being depicted as subordinate, weak or unintelligent, and this kind of depiction will most likely be inconsistent with the consumers’ self-perceptions, and thus this will violate their existing schemas (Windels 879-880).

Therefore, when brands use non-traditional models or people from marginalised groups in their branding, they may only be successful if they consider the historical and cultural context of possible negative depictions of them. When they do not, it may come across as offensive to some (Ruggs et al. 330-331). Furthermore, some advertisers use ‘coded representation’, which means that some cues may not be intercepted by others than the intended group of people. An example is how some brands show specific cues that only people from the LGBTQ community will interpret as ‘gay’. This kind of strategy is used when brands are afraid that they will alienate consumers that do not identify with those cues, in this case heterosexual people (Grau et al. 768).

A study conducted on the topic of inclusive marketing concluded that using non-traditional models does have an effect on consumers, but also that a “one-size fits all approach should not be used when deciding how to best portray non-traditional models” (Ruggs et al. 331). The most important thing in relation to inclusive marketing may thus be that the consumers’ schemas are not violated, and if the consumers demand more diversity in advertising and branding, the schemas

depicted in advertising should reflect that. Another study on socially inclusive marketing argues that brands may also benefit from avoiding to mainly rely on specific cultural markers, and instead perceive consumers as “whole persons whose cultural or ethnic background is only part, if any, of her or his sense of selves” (Licsandru & Cui 333). This approach thus focuses on depicting complex people with multiple traits. Based on these different studies it is possible to argue that the most important thing to note may be that inclusive marketing is successful when it moves away from rigid stereotypes and view people as complex beings that should not be defined by only a few of their characteristics.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Existing stereotypes are heavily influenced by the current discourse, while discourse is also affected by stereotypes. Semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen define discourses as “socially constructed knowledges of (some aspect of) reality” (Kress & Van Leeuwen 4), but discourse can furthermore be described as “a system of language use and other meaning-making practices (e.g. behaviour, dress and customary practices/habits) that form ways of talking about social reality” (Jewitt 27). Discourse is thus a shared knowledge about how things are, and discourse frames the way we talk about topics in everyday life. As discourse is social, discourses contain general opinions and agreements of norms, which is closely connected to stereotypes, as it has been established that stereotypes are shared sets of beliefs about the characteristics of a certain group. As stereotypes are connected with discourse, it seems obvious to look into the use of stereotypes in advertisements and brands’ marketing efforts through discourse analysis. Advertisements and online presence across different media platforms consist of several different means of communication that communicate at the same time. There may be speech, music, pictures, moving images and much more that simultaneously communicate a message to the consumers. When dealing with analysis objects that are complex and composed of different ways of communicating, an apparent approach to analysis is multimodal discourse analysis.

Multimodality can be defined as “the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product” (Kress & Van Leeuwen 20). A semiotic product may be defined as a text, which in multimodal discourse analysis is described as a semiotic entity with two or more dimensions. Furthermore, a text is a product of its maker’s interest and intention with the text (Kress 2012 36), and “The meanings of the maker of a text as a whole reside in the meanings made jointly by all the modes in a text” (Kress 2012 37). An advertisement or a post on a social media website can be

considered as a semiotic product or a text, because, as has already been established, they consist of several different forms of communication, and because there will always be a certain intent with an advertisement or a website. Thus, the different forms of communication seen in advertisements and general online presence can be defined as modes.

Modes are resources for making meaning, and language is only one of those resources. In fact, in a multimodal approach, language is not considered as the only notable, or the most important, way of communication, and thus other communication modes, e.g. movement, gaze and sound, also contribute to the meaning of a semiotic product (Jewitt 15). Actually, within a multimodal approach, all modes are perceived to potentially carry equal amounts of meaning, and therefore all modes are, potentially, equally important (Kress 2012 38). Furthermore, according to Kress, “Mode is a socially shaped and culturally given resource for making meaning. *Image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, soundtrack* are examples of modes used in representation and communication” (Kress 2014 60). Therefore, multimodal discourse analysis allows the different modes of a text to be analysed as equally important parts, and furthermore defines the modes as socially constructed and reconstructed. This implies that the use of different modes is culturally and socially determined. Van Leeuwen and Kress respectively speak of a mode’s meaning potential or modal affordance, by which they mean “the material and cultural aspects of modes” and “what is possible to express and represent easily with a mode” (Jewitt 27). The meaning potential or modal affordance is influenced and fashioned by the previous use of a mode, the common perception of what kind of meaning the mode offers, and the social understanding of how a mode works in a specific context (Jewitt 27). Thus, the way modes are used is strongly linked with culture and social practices, and therefore modes may represent different things in different cultures (Kress 2012 45).

The next step into multimodal discourse analysis contains the notion of semiotic resources, which all modes consist of (Jewitt 2). The term semiotic resource comes from social semiotics, which semioticians argue should not be regarded as a theory on its own. They argue that social semiotics becomes a theory when applied to a specific issue, and that the social part of social semiotics “can only become into its own when social semiotics fully engages with social theory” (Van Leeuwen 3), which in the case of this thesis is theory about stereotypes. Another central part of semiotics is how semiotics is regarded as an activity you do, where 1) you “collect, document and systematically catalogue semiotic resources” (Van Leeuwen 3), 2) you examine and consider how the semiotic resources are used in a specific context, and 3) you take part in discovering and developing new ways of using semiotic resources (Van Leeuwen 3).

The term semiotic resource derives from Halliday's argument that "the grammar of a language is not a code, not a set of rules for producing correct sentences, but a 'resource for making meanings'" (Van Leeuwen 3). Van Leeuwen extends Halliday's thought about the grammar of a language and transfers the idea to other communication modes. He defines semiotic resources as "the actions and artefacts we use to communicate" (Van Leeuwen 3), and furthermore explains how they can appear as anything from sounds and spoken words to certain facial expressions and specific gestures or pieces of clothing or certain colours. Thus, semiotic resources are used to communicate the meaning or meanings of a semiotic product, as they are the 'grammar' of a certain mode. When looking closely at Halliday's argument with grammar, it becomes clear how he suggested that grammar is a resource for making multiple meanings, and this indicates that semiotic resources do not have fixed meanings and that there may be several meanings communicated through a semiotic product.

Semiotic resources are what traditional semiotics, as defined by Ferdinand de Saussure, calls signs, which are the union of a signifier – an observable object, action or form – and the signified – the meaning of it. Some examples of signs are how a frown as the signifier can mean disapproval, and how a red sign can mean stop (Van Leeuwen 3). In social semiotics however, the term semiotic resource is preferred over the term sign, because "it avoids the impression that 'what a sign stands for' is somehow pre-given, and not affected by its use" (Van Leeuwen 3). While traditional semiotics as defined by Saussure is a structuralist and formalist approach, social semiotics is rather a dynamic and communicative approach. In social semiotics, semiotic resources are therefore said to be affected by their use, which means that they, like modes, are shaped by cultural practices. This argument is made with the example that just like a dictionary will not be able to tell you the meaning of a word in a specific context, "so other kinds of semiotic resources cannot predict the meaning which a given facial expression – for example, a frown – or colour – for example, red – or style of walking will have in a specific context" (Kress & Van Leeuwen 4). Therefore, it is not possible to be certain of what specific semiotic resources offer, but the process of interpretation is also not completely free.

Van Leeuwen argues how semiotic resources have semiotic potential; "potential for making meaning" (Van Leeuwen 4). In practice, when semiotic resources are found and collected, it then becomes possible to consider their possible meanings in the context they are found in. In relation to this, Van Leeuwen notes that there are two different ways of describing the potential meaning of a semiotic resource, "the term 'meaning potential' focuses on meanings that have already been introduced into society [...], whereas 'affordance' also brings in meanings that have not yet been recognized" (Van Leeuwen 5). Thereby it becomes evident that semiotic resources do not have fixed

meanings, as their potential is dynamic, however there are boundaries to what meanings they offer, as the meanings depend on the specific context. Thus, the use of semiotic resources is shaped within the different modes, social culture and thereby also discourses are what shape which modes are usually used in specific contexts, and therefore discourses also affect which semiotic resources are available in certain contexts (Jewitt 24).

Another aspect that is particular for social semiotics is the emphasis and focus on the sign-maker and how sign-making is defined as a social process (Jewitt 33). The sender of a message is free to choose which of the semiotic resources available to them they wish to use to express their desired meaning, but their choice will be made within the discursive framework. Thus, discourses provide some kinds of rules for the use of semiotic resources, which are socially constructed and reconstructed through social interaction (Jewitt 24). The semiotic resources that the sign-maker chooses are also references to their interest, as they will have an intention with what they wish to communicate (Jewitt 34). The motivation behind their choice of semiotic resources will thus be based on the discourse and its social 'rules' as well as their own belief about what is critical for them to express. The interpretation of those selected modes and semiotic resources may however not look exactly like the intended message. A reader of a text creates their own version of the text through their interpretation, and their way of interpreting the text depends on their personal opinions about the topic and thus also the discourse, which will have been a part of the forming of the personal viewpoint (Kress 2012 36).

As Kress states, "Multimodality and social semiotics, together, make it possible to ask questions around meaning and meaning-making" (Kress 2012 38). Therefore, multimodal discourse analysis provides tools for analysing the meanings of a multimodal entity and allows for the meanings to be considered as a product of the maker's interest as well as a product of social practices and discourse. Multimodal discourse analysis can thus be used to look into the specific modes of a semiotic product, which in the case of this thesis will be an advertisement, a section of a website or a section of a social media page. Furthermore, multimodal discourse analysis makes it possible to investigate how semiotic resources are used in particular contexts for specific purposes.

This approach demands a tool for analysis that can be used in practice, and that tool can be multimodal transcription. Traditional transcriptions are typically used to convert audio into text, by the use of an approach like Gail Jefferson's transcription conventions (Sacks et al.), but multimodal transcriptions can be fashioned to convert any mode into written text. However, it is important to note that all transcriptions must be considered as minimized and more narrow versions of the real products,

as some aspects of the modes and semiotic resources may not be easily translated into text (Flewitt et al. 50). As an approach for analysis, multimodal discourse analysis can thus be used to consider several aspects of semiotic products simultaneously, and the multimodal transcriptions will make it possible to closely examine the different modes and semiotic resources showcased in the semiotic products.

As has been established, social semiotics focuses on how semiotic resources do not carry fixed meanings, which offers the possibility that multimodal discourse analysis allows the investigation of new ways of using semiotic resources (Jewitt 25). Thus, this approach makes it possible to consider new uses and meanings of semiotic resources. Thereby, this may be a fitting tool for analysing a new direction within marketing, such as inclusive marketing, where brands showcase some stereotypes in new contexts and some untraditional representations in established contexts. The approach to investigating what characterises the marketing efforts of those brands who have successfully adopted a more inclusive marketing strategy will thus be multimodal discourse analysis.

Analysis

The examples of inclusive marketing efforts that will be examined in this thesis are found at the British online beauty and fashion retailer ASOS, the American lingerie brand Aerie, the global tech giant Google and Axe, a brand of male grooming products that is part of the major British-Dutch company Unilever. In the following analysis, examples of advertisements and excerpts from social media profiles will be analysed through multimodal discourse analysis based on the presented knowledge about different perspectives on stereotypes in advertising and the theory of inclusive marketing. Multimodal transcriptions and different selections of the brands' social media profiles will serve as the objects of analysis.

The Inclusive Marketing Efforts of ASOS

On their website, ASOS states that they “exist to give you the confidence to be whoever you want to be” (“About Us | ASOS”). The brand advocates that everyone should have the freedom to be who they are and thus wear what they want. Some of the key topics in the brand's presentation of themselves on their website are their involvement in LGBTQ activism, their encouragement of body positivity, and their partnership with the British Paralympic Association. These key topics become visible through their products in the way that ASOS carries a gender-neutral clothing line, they offer clothing in different styles and in 30 different sizes, and their clothing is modelled by people with different body types and sizes, as to represent their audience. They also state that they do not retouch their models. They have furthermore worked together with people who have disabilities to adapt and design active wear that fits a range of different needs (“About Us | ASOS”). ASOS' success is partly visible on social media. At the time of writing, ASOS has 10.3 million followers on Instagram, and the comment sections in their posts predominantly have positive comments (“MORE THAN FASHION (@Asos)”).

“A Portrait of a Generation”: Analysis of Collusion “For the Coming Age”

Collusion “For the Coming Age” is an advertisement from 2018 that introduces ASOS' clothing brand Collusion. The brand has gender-fluid and size-inclusive clothing that has been designed in collaboration with Uncommon Creative Studio and six British teenagers. In the advertisement, a group of British teenagers that all turn 18 in 2018 are asked the question of what they wish for in the year that they will come of age. Throughout the advertisement, they all answer or comment on the question, while different visual images support the stories that the young adults are telling. All of the

young adults in the advertisement will go through the same thing, they will all turn 18 in the same year, but throughout the advertisement it becomes clear how different the soon-to-be 18-year-olds look and how they have different outlooks on life (Emmerson & ASOS). Throughout this analysis, references to the advertisement will be made with frame numbers, as they appear in the multimodal transcription that has been provided for the advertisement in Appendix I.

The advertisement utilizes how different modes can work together to communicate a message, and in this analysis, focus is primarily on the modes of speech, sound, appearance – e.g. skin colour, hair colour and clothing – movement, actions and facial expressions. These modes are represented in the multimodal transcription under the categories: speech, sound, action and visual elements, characteristics and effects. Within the modes, or across the modes, it is possible to identify the different semiotic resources that offer potential meanings or affordances. These potential meanings will assist in the interpretation of the advertisement and in the search of the intended message.

In the first frame of the advertisement, the modes of writing and colour work together to introduce the viewers to the name of the clothing brand. Black writing on a white screen says, “COLLUSION presents”, and this semiotic resource supports the fact that the Collusion clothing line is gender-fluid. The black and white colours afford the possible interpretation that the brand is gender-neutral in the way that no colours indicate a certain stereotype of a gender. There are no pink or blue colours that might suggest that the clothing is intended for either females or males.

Throughout the advertisement, white screens with black writing appear with different messages. Frames 12, 22, 30, 42, 50 and 60 show the viewers some facts about the advertisement or the clothing line. Facts like the brand presenting “a portrait of a generation” and that the clothing line tells “100 stories”. These small pieces of writing carry the affordance that the brand ASOS and the Collusion clothing line in particular are for everyone, and that ASOS addresses various types of people. This point is substantiated by the frames that include different types of people, which will be analysed in the following part of this analysis. All of the screens are white with black writing, which, as has already been established, further supports the idea of a gender-neutral and inclusive product.

In frame 2, a group of young people are walking in a field in the evening, and while it is dark, it is still possible to see that the young people have various skin colours and that they are wearing clothes in different colours. In this frame, the first speaker begins to speak, and the speaker continues into the next frame, where the camera focuses on a young, fair, blonde, slim woman. The first speaker reveals, through the mode of speech, that he is both scared and excited to grow up. The words of the

first speaker set the tone for the rest of the advertisement, where different opinions and states of mind are presented.



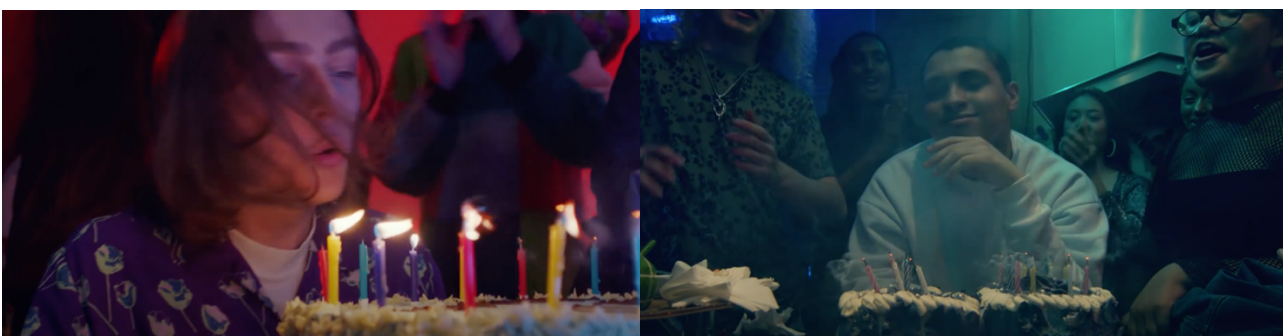
In frame 4, another young woman emerges to the sound of a group of people singing “happy birthday”, and she has dark skin and is wearing a hijab. The semiotic resource of the woman’s headscarf carries the affordance that she is a Muslim, and thus part of a marginalised group that has not historically been represented much in advertising. This woman therefore strays from the stereotype of a woman that is most commonly seen in advertising. The young woman is moreover carrying a birthday cake while singing happy birthday. It is a common fact that not all believers of the religion Islam celebrate birthdays, and not celebrating birthdays may violate the schemas of many people in western culture. Therefore, the headscarf, the birthday cake in her hands and the fact that she is singing happy birthday afford the possible interpretation that she is a Muslim that has adapted to western culture, which makes the woman a positive stereotype. Her short appearance does not offer any insight to whether she is an immigrant or born in England, but the birthday celebration does offer the affordance that she is well-integrated or that she is able to balance the different cultures that are part of her life.

Throughout the advertisement, numbers are used to establish that the people in the advertisement are born in the year 2000 and that they are turning 18. This is explicitly shown in frame 5, 7 and 8 that display the numbers 18 and 2000 in various ways; with balloons, with some sort of numbers wrapped in plastic and with writing in chalk. In frames 4 and 5 it is established how speaker 2 does not think much of coming of age, as the person says, “To me it’s just a number”. The speaker puts emphasis on the word ‘number’, and thereby the modes of speech and visual effects work together to state that this person does not ascribe much value to this event in their life. The young people in the advertisement have different opinions on the matter, which becomes evident already in the following frame.

In frame 6, a young, fair, brown haired man is getting a haircut, and speaker 3, possibly the young man in the frame, says that he needs to “start getting things going”, which may offer the

meaning that he has to find out what he wants to do in his life. While the speaker says the words, the young man getting a haircut turns towards the camera with a frown on his face, and the frown is a semiotic resource that offers the meaning that he is worried. Thus, the modes of speech and facial expressions work together to communicate that this young person thinks of coming of age as a serious, important and possibly worrying matter. The next speaker, speaker 4, appears to agree with speaker 3 that this event in their lives is significant, as she states that they “can’t go back now” and that they are now adults. These words are spoken while an image of a curvy woman with dark skin and long black hair appears. Speaker 4 may be this girl, who also has a serious expression on her face.

From these first few frames it possible to argue that a pattern is beginning to form. None of the people in these frames look similar to each other. Representations of the stereotypes of men and women traditionally used in advertising are present, but ASOS also displays people who stray from those traditional definitions. This pattern continues. Frames 10 and 11 both show a young man sitting with a birthday cake in front of him. The young man in frame 10 has light skin, brown hair down to his shoulders and is wearing multicoloured clothing. The other young man in frame 11 has dark skin, short black hair and is wearing a white or cream jumper. Even though the images are similar they are also very different. The modes of lighting and colour play an important part in setting the tone of the frames. Frame 10 has warm lighting and many different bright colours, while frame 11 has cold lighting and mostly white, green and dark, washed out shades. In frame 11, the birthday cake is furthermore surrounded by some clothing and rubbish. The two frames afford different interpretations; frame 10 has a warm, light and fun feeling to it, while frame 11 has a more serious, cold and raw feeling.



Across both frames, speaker 5 says “my mom still calls me her baby”. The combination of the spoken words and the visual features of the two frames offer the affordance that both of the young men are called baby by their mothers, and thus these two young men have something in common, even though they look different and appear to have different circumstances in life. Furthermore, both of the young men are being celebrated, even though it happens in different settings. The message may

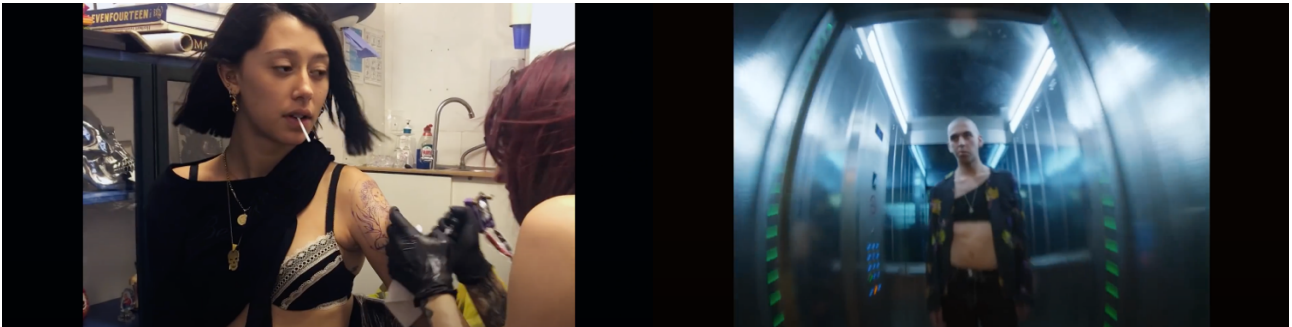
therefore be dual; two young people that go through the same thing, e.g. coming of age, may be very different, and two very different people may still have several things in common, e.g. being called baby by their mothers. Thus, it is possible to argue how these frames offer the meaning that there is no definition of how an 18-year-old should look and be, and a stranger or something unknown may be more familiar than expected.

In frames 13, 14, 15 and 16, five different young people are shown, and all of them appear to be women, however, it is not possible to establish with complete certainty. The first woman in frame 13 has light skin and light brown hair, and she is sitting casually on a row of seats in some sort of movie theatre or the like. The woman is furthermore posing for the camera while taking a selfie. In frame 14, a young, slim person with dark skin and short, black hair is standing in the midst of a number of dress forms. In frame 15, two women with brown skin and long dark hair are rope skipping. The person in frame 16 has blonde, curly hair and light skin, and she is running away from the camera. All of the women thus have very different appearances.

Across these frames, speaker 6 talks about how social media is like a cloud and not real. In these frames, different modes work together to display different kinds of social interaction or the lack thereof. The woman in frame 13 is sitting alone with a phone, and she is thus distanced from other people in reality, while she may be connecting with them via social media. The woman in frame 14 is standing completely alone but with dress forms around her, and thus they may represent a kind of company that does not interact with her. An interpretation of the dress forms could be that they are a symbol of the people that the woman wishes were there, or they may represent people that are distant while using social media. The women in frame 15 perform a physical activity together, and the woman in frame 16 also appears to be together with the someone that she is running from. Together with the words about social media not being reality, these semiotic resources carry the affordances that social media and social interaction is something that is difficult to navigate, and that people do it in different ways.

Across frames 17 to 21, speaker 7 says that “the world sees something different, and they find different as scary”. The speaker puts emphasis on the word ‘different’, and while she speaks the word, a woman with fair skin and short black hair appears. The young woman is sucking on a lollipop, and she only has her top halfway on so that her bra is exposed, as she is getting a tattoo on her arm. The woman is furthermore wearing a necklace with a skull on it. All of these observations made of her appearance are semiotic resources, and they work together with another semiotic resource, the word ‘different’, to tell the viewer that this young woman may be perceived as different by some. Normally,

lollipops are thought of as candy for small children, while getting tattoos is typically something that adults do. Thus, her actions contradict, which may offer the affordance that she is confident and does what she wants. The skull necklace offers connotations to death and scariness, and thus contradicts the delicateness and finesse of the stereotypic woman. This young woman therefore differs from the stereotype of a woman that is traditionally seen in advertising, as the stereotype is not free-willed, a risktaker, confident or edgy, which this woman seems to be.



The speaker puts emphasis on several words, and another one of those words is ‘scary’. While she speaks the word, a young person, presumably a man, appears in frame 21. The young person has fair skin, is bald and is wearing a crop top underneath an open shirt. The light in this frame has blue and cold tones. All of these observations are semiotic resources that have different meaning potentials and affordances. A crop top is usually thought of as women’s wear, however the crop top and the open shirt make it possible for viewers to see that the body resembles that of a man. This makes the young person deviate from the stereotype of a man that is typically used in advertising. The fact that this young person is different and strays from the norm is also emphasized with the word ‘scary’, as this word suggests that this man is different and therefore scary for some people. The scariness is furthermore underlined by the cold, blue tones in the frame, which give a gloomy feeling. The man in this frame therefore most likely violates the schemas of some people, however, he contributes to the message of how people that go through the same experience may be very different.

In frames 23, 24 and 25, three different young men are shown, while speaker 8 says “I fit my own mould of a man. I don’t need someone to tell me, oh you’re too weak, you’re too emotional”. As stated, the three young men look different, the young man in frame 23 has brown skin, short dark hair and a wide body. The young man in frame 24 has fair skin and light brown hair, and he is slim. The young man in frame 25 has fair skin, light brown hair, and he is muscular. He is strength training, so the muscles on his arms are visible. The young man in frame 23 fits the stereotypic depiction of a man in advertising in the way that he appears to be superior of the elderly woman, as she is sitting down, and he is standing. However, he has dark skin, which means that he is part of a marginalised

group that, historically, is underrepresented in advertising. In addition to having fair skin and being slim, the young man in frame 24 has a sad expression on his face. The stereotype of a man in advertising does not show emotion, and the traditional stereotype is furthermore strong and visually takes up a lot of space, and therefore the young man in frame 24 does not resemble the stereotype. The young man in frame 25 is closest to the traditional depiction of a man in advertising, as he is presented as strong and active. The speaker's words along with the frames with these three different young men suggest the meaning that all types of men are real men.

Through frames 27, 28 and 29, speaker 9 says "People always ask me where I'm from. What they really mean is where is your family from. It makes me feel alienated, when I've actually grown up here". In these frames, the mode of speech once again works together with other modes of visual elements, such as colours and movement, and one young woman is presented in each frame. All of the three women appear to be alone in some way; the woman in frame 27 is sitting down in the middle of a party, and she is looking directly at the camera. She has light skin and black hair, and she could be of Asian descent. She seems to be alone in the way that she is the only person in the room that is not partying, rather she is sitting still, which makes her stand out from the people around her. The woman in frame 28 has light skin and brown hair, she is getting her hair washed, presumably at a hair salon, and she has a blank expression on her face. This woman appears to be alone in the way that she does not interact with the person washing her hair. Her blank expression furthermore suggests that she is sad. The woman in frame 29 has brown skin and dark dreadlocks, and she is standing alone as the camera moves away from her; an effect that makes her appear small and secluded. This effect may also be a symbol of other people avoiding her. The observations about the women's appearances and surroundings are all semiotic resources that work together with the speaker's words about feeling alienated. The speaker could be any of those girls, and thus even though they are different, they all seem to share the feeling of being alienated, secluded and alone. This section of the advertisement is furthermore a very direct comment on how some people feel excluded or different because of other people's reactions to their descent.

In the next part of the advertisement, speaker 10 says "No I do not feel like I'm represented properly", while three frames with different women appear. In frame 31, a woman with dark skin and dark curly hair is getting her nails done while she blows bubbles with her chewing gum. In the next frame, speaker 10's mouth is shown in a closeup as she speaks, and it becomes clear that she has dark skin. In frame 33, another woman with dark skin and dark hair is seen standing in a window with bars in it. In these few frames, the semiotic resources appear to be commenting on prejudice against

people, and maybe especially women, with dark skin. The bars in the window is also a semiotic resource that carries the affordance that women of colour are trapped within a negative stereotype or at least kept away from certain platforms, like advertisements. In these frames, the women and the speaker directly comment on this issue, which historically has not been a common thing to do in advertising.

Through frames 34 to 44, focus is on 11 different people, and the brief glimpses that are shown of them reveal how they all look different. In frame 34, a young man with light skin is skateboarding inside, in frame 35, a fair young woman with long red hair is standing alone in the wind and smiling, in frame 36, a young man with dark skin is standing on a go-cart race track waving a flag, and in frame 36, a woman with dark skin and dark dreadlocks is jumping and dancing in the middle of a crowd. In the following frame, a man with brown skin and dark curly hair is playing a game, in frame 39, a woman with fair skin and blonde and greenish hair is sitting in a car with a sad expression on her face, in frame 40, a young man with light brown skin, dark brown hair and different piercings is standing behind floating flower petals, and in frame 41, two young people, presumably males, are running. In frame 43, a fair woman with blonde and green long hair is jumping, and in frame 44, a group of people are dancing.

These observations about the young people's appearances and actions are semiotic resources, and they work to show how different the soon-to-be 18-year-olds look and behave. Like in the other parts of the advertisement, the different skin colours suggest that the young people come from different backgrounds, and the various hair colours show how some young people keep their natural looks while some alter them, and thus maybe wish to change who they are. The different activities they do indicate that they are in different states of mind, and thus proves that even though they are going through similar things, reactions to the change of becoming an adult may differ.

Speaker 11 says, "I like to live life on the edge. But like with a harness, so it's like, you can always be brought back up, if you're going too far" across frames 35 to 41. These words are also semiotic resources placed within the mode of speech, and once again, several different modes work together to afford potential meanings. The speaker's words along with the visual effects in these frames suggest how the young people in this advertisement try to find out who they are and what they can do in different ways. Some may take the opportunity to do fun activities that they were not able to do on their own before, and some may experience how becoming an adult can result in new emotions that they have not experienced before. The semiotic resources within these frames also afford the interpretation that the young people will both experience good things and be successful,

while they will also make mistakes and experience sad situations. The fact that not all of the young people are happy also carries the affordance that the search of finding out who you are can be both painful and joyful.



Through frames 45 to 47, speaker 12 says, “I’m gonna finally become the person that I’ve always felt like I am”. Frame 45 shows a young man, and frame 46 shows a young woman, and they are both doing a physical activity, while speaker 12 is revealed in frame 47. Speaker 12 has light brown skin, dark and pink short hair, and the person is wearing a striped t-shirt. The speaker furthermore has a medium to deep voice. All of these observations are semiotic resources that have the meaning potential that this person is transgender, or in the process of becoming transgender. The words and the speaker’s voice along with their physical appearance carries the affordance that this person may be in the process of transforming into another gender, as the petite figure and the delicate features along with the somewhat deep voice and the clothing suggest that this person was born as a girl and is now transforming into a young man. A person cannot receive hormone replacement therapy until they are 18 years old, and therefore this may be the reason why the young person feels that they can be who they are now. If this person is transgender, or about to become transgender, this person also strays completely from the stereotypes of men and women traditionally used in advertising.

The remaining frames in the advertisement show even more young people that look different from each other and perform different activities. An example is the two young men in frame 53 who sit closely and embrace each other. Both of them have light skin, and both of them are smiling. Typically, the stereotype of a man does not show emotion, so these two men stray from that norm by

embracing each other. Another example is the young woman with light brown skin and dark hair in frame 54. She is boxing, and she is thus being active, which the stereotype of a woman in advertising is not, and furthermore, boxing is generally thought of as a man's sport. Thus, this woman also deviates from the advertising norm.

At the end of the advertisement, the frames 57, 58 and 59 show fireworks and people with smiling faces. These semiotic resources thus afford a positive atmosphere, which is the lasting feeling the advertisement gives. This happiness and positivity become attached to the general message of the advertisement. In this advertisement, ASOS makes it clear what their stance on inclusivity is, and their opinion is that all types of people are real and should be accepted.

ASOS shows different representations of men and women, and far from all of them look like the typical depiction of a man or a woman used in advertising. ASOS does not omit the muscular man or the slim, fair woman – the traditional stereotypes – they simply extend the definitions by including other types of men and women. Other than the traditional stereotypes, they include people with various sizes, like curvy women and petite men. They furthermore present both men and women with long as well as short hair, and there are many different hair colours and styles present. They also display people with various skin colours in the advertisement, and thus ASOS does not stick to showing one black person along with several people with fair skin; there are people with various types of dark, medium and light skin. Moreover, there are people with different styles of clothing, and there are examples of both men and women who wear clothing that traditionally is thought of as being for the other gender. Additionally, there is an example of someone who may be a transgender person, which is not often seen in advertising. Lastly, not only men are active, as there are multiple examples of women being active, while there are also examples of men being emotional; which the stereotypical male in advertising is not.

Through this advertisement, ASOS connects different people and states how all people, even though they may be different, most likely share something; they may share an opinion, a circumstance or some other thing in their lives. In that way, ASOS attempts to unify people, and they state that they accept all types of people, and that all people have equal worth – and thereby they utilize stereotypes in a positive way. Because ASOS presents a large variety of people in their advertisement, they are also able to target a lot of people. Consumers who feel represented in an advertisement are more likely to identify with the brand than people who do not feel represented, and when ASOS includes so many different types of people, chances are that many young people do feel represented by ASOS.

Furthermore, as ASOS' target audience is the young generation, it makes sense that they advocate inclusivity, because especially the young generation appreciates it.

More than Fashion: Analysis of ASOS' Instagram

ASOS' inclusive efforts are also visible on their social media, especially on their Instagram profile. Their handle is @asos, their name is "MORE THAN FASHION", and their description says, "Your daily dose of style, fresh drops and what's trending... Judgement-free zone" ("MORE THAN FASHION (@asos)"). Their name and description are semiotic resources within the mode of writing, and together they offer the meaning potential that ASOS focuses on topics that extend beyond fashion. By exclaiming that they are a judgement-free zone, they indicate that their clothing is for everyone who wishes to wear it, regardless of any expectations or traditional usage. In the following part of the analysis, it will be investigated whether and how the pictures in their Instagram posts substantiate this initial message.

An Instagram post can be examined as a multimodal text, as a post consists of both a picture or video, a caption, a comment section and a number of how many people have liked the post. In an attempt to take a stand against bullying, Instagram are hiding likes for some users in some countries (Mansell). However, as the likes are visible on the selections of posts from ASOS' Instagram profile that have been chosen for Appendix II, the likes will be considered in the following analysis. On their Instagram, ASOS posts pictures of their products that are either worn by models or people on Instagram who tag ASOS in their pictures. Thereby, information about the people they show on their posts is only a click away, as the people are always tagged. Thus, it is also possible to find out whether these people have certain key issues or some prominent opinions that support ASOS' general message.

From looking at a few examples of ASOS' posts, it is clear how the inclusive and open-minded feeling from the Collusion advertisement is also present on their social media platform. In Appendix II, selections of their Instagram posts have been chosen to show examples of the style in their feed, and this excerpt of their feed will serve as the object of analysis in this section. In an overall perspective, ASOS shows various types of people with different skin colours, hair colours, styles, body shapes and generally different appearances. The choices they have made in regard to the representation of different types of people is very similar to what they chose to show in the Collusion advertisement. However, there are also some additional aspects that differ from the findings of the analysis of the advertisement that are relevant to point out.

In a post from March 15th 2020, a slim, blonde and tan woman wearing makeup is sitting in a restaurant with a pasta dish in front of her. Some of the pasta is on her fork, and it seems that she is about to eat. This young woman looks very similar to the stereotype of a woman that has commonly been used in advertising, however, women have not often been pictured eating. One of the arguments for why stereotypes can be harmful is that some young people develop eating disorders, and it may therefore seem positive for some consumers that this slim woman is pictured with food. However, this image may also be inconsistent with some people's schemas, as being slim is not usually connected to eating meals that are rich in carbs.

Another notable picture from ASOS' Instagram feed is from February 19th 2020, where they posted a picture of a tan, blonde, young woman in a wheelchair. The woman is wearing makeup, and overall conforms to the traditional stereotype of a woman in advertising, however, the notable object is the wheelchair. The wheelchair offers the meaning potential that this woman has a disability that requires her to use a wheelchair. This picture thus adds an extra dimension to ASOS' inclusive efforts, as there were no people in the Collusion advertisement that had an obvious disability. As has already been stated, people with disabilities have not been well-represented in advertising. Furthermore, when people with disabilities are shown in advertising, most often it is a person in a wheelchair or a person using sign language. Thus, this woman is an example of an established stereotype within the representation of disabled people in advertising.

On February 9th 2020, ASOS posted a picture of a slim man with brown skin, dark brown hair and stubble. The man is wearing a silky set of pyjamas and gold jewellery, and he has a soft expression on his face. These different aspects of his appearance are semiotic resources that carry some potential meanings and affordances. Usually, jewellery is believed to be something that women wear, and the silky fabric that the pyjamas is made of is also typically fabric that is used in women's clothing like dresses. Therefore, the semiotic resources in this image suggest that the man is feminine. Moreover, the man is sitting down and has a crooked posture, and thus he does not resemble the strong, tall stereotype of a man that is most often found in advertising. This post is the one with the least amount of likes out of the selection chosen for Appendix II, and this suggests that this man may be inconsistent with some of the consumers' schemas about what a man looks like. The comment section on this post is, however, full of positive comments and heart emojis.

The comments are very similar on all of the posts chosen as examples in Appendix II; most of them applaud and praise the people, their styles and ASOS' choice to show these different types of people with words like "Killa", "Loveee" and "Awesome" or with various emojis of hearts and fire.

The comments and likes are a way for consumers to interact with the brand, and from the selections of posts in Appendix II, it is possible to see that generally there is a positive tone in the comments, while the likes reveal that it is possible that not all consumers appreciate the diversity of the models. As was stated in the previous part of this analysis, the feminine man received the least amount of likes out of the selections chosen, a little more than 5000 likes, and the post with the largest number of likes is the photo from March 15th 2020 with the stereotypic woman, who is about to eat. This post received over 30.000 likes. Another post with many likes is the one of the woman in the wheelchair. This post received over 24.000 likes, and a post from February 24th 2020 that shows a picture of a thin, blonde woman, who may be of Asian descent, wearing jeans and a bra received more than 22.000 likes. There are also several posts that have received from 6000 to 10.000 likes, and these posts include pictures of curvy women, as in the posts from February 8th 2020 and January 3rd 2020, a tan man with hair down to his shoulders, and a woman with brown skin that is wearing a hijab.

The most liked posts out of the selections chosen for Appendix II thus involve pictures of people who conform to the traditional stereotypes in some ways. The women in those pictures are all slim, however they also stray from the stereotype in various ways; by eating, by being disabled and by being of Asian descent. The posts that have not received as many likes include pictures of people who stray heavily from the traditional stereotypes. The curvy woman in the picture from February 8th has brown skin and black curly hair, while the woman in the picture from January 3rd has fair skin, blonde hair and might be considered obese. The woman in the post from March 3rd has brown skin and wears a hijab, which suggests that she is a Muslim. These women do therefore not conform to the stereotype of a woman used in advertising; they are rather opposites to it. The fact that the men in these selected posts do not receive thousands of likes may be explained by the fact that they stray heavily from the traditional stereotype of a man, but it may also be that these pictures have been posted on the general ASOS Instagram, as there also is a separate ASOS Man Instagram page, where they might receive more likes.

The conclusion on this examination of ASOS' inclusive efforts on their Instagram profile is that they attempt to show a diverse picture of who their target audience is, and these efforts are generally appreciated by their followers. The fact that all of the posts have positive comments in the comment sections indicates that ASOS is able to communicate to their audience in a successful way, and that the values ASOS exhibits are consistent with the values of their target audience. However, the amount of likes on the posts reveal how some of the diverse representations of people most likely violate

some consumers' schemas, as it is still the people who resemble the traditional stereotypes the most who receive most likes.

The Inclusive Marketing Efforts of Aerie

Aerie is part of the American fashion retailer American Eagle Outfitters, and it is a sub-brand that primarily focuses on lingerie but also activewear, loungewear and sleepwear for young women. American Eagle Outfitters present themselves as an “inclusive, optimistic and empowering company that celebrates the individuality of [their] customers and associates” (“AEO Inc.”). The Aerie brand furthermore advocates unretouched bodies through their hashtag #AerieREAL, as they donate 1 dollar to a non-profit organization that supports people with eating disorders for every Instagram post that is shared with the hashtag and their tag @aerie (“Aerie”). Aerie is popular amongst young women on Instagram, and at the time of writing, the brand has 1.3 million followers, and the comments on their posts are highly positive (“Aerie (@Aerie”).

Role Models: Analysis of Aerie's Presentation Your 2020 #AerieREAL Role Models

On January 23rd 2020, Aerie released the introduction of their role models of 2020 in a video titled *Your 2020 #AerieREAL Role Models*. The introduction video presents 13 brand ambassadors, which Aerie labels as role models, who market Aerie's clothes and values. These 13 role models are all women, and they are all well-known or famous for their initiatives or occupations. Therefore, some viewers of this presentation video will know the women and the key issues that they stand for. Through this analysis, some knowledge about the women and their key issues will therefore be considered in collaboration with the advertisement. In the presentation video, all of the role models are introduced one by one, while they are also shown together in various groups (Aerie). In the following section, an analysis of an excerpt of the presentation video, 1:01 minutes out of the full video of 1:45 minutes, will be conducted, and references to the presentation video, or advertisement, will be made with frame numbers, as they appear in the multimodal transcription that has been provided for the advertisement in Appendix III.

In frames 1 and 2, the role models are presented. Four of the women can be seen in frame 1, where they each appear in a square frame with a coloured filter. In frame 2, all of the women are shown, some of them appear two times, and they all have a different coloured filter across their individual frames.



The coloured filters give the effect that hair colours and skin colours are blurred. This semiotic resource may afford the interpretation that the skin and hair colours do not matter, as these women have other things to offer. This point will become clearer near the end of this analysis.

In frames 3, 20, 34 and 38, Ali Stroker appears as a central part of the frames. In these frames it is revealed that she uses a wheelchair, that she has fair skin and that she has blonde curly hair. Furthermore, she is smiling or laughing in all of the frames. In frame 39, which is covered by a blue filter, Ali Stroker is presented as a Tony Award winning actor. As has already been established, Ali Stroker uses a wheelchair, and she was in fact the first person using a wheelchair to ever perform on Broadway. On Aerie's website, it is stated that Ali Stroker is passionate about being a role model for disabled people, who she wishes to encourage to pursue their dreams ("Ali Stroker, Tony Award Winning Actor"). In this frame, she also says, "Be the role model you need" in a voiceover. Through these words, she encourages other people with disabilities to do what she has done; to represent a group of people who has not traditionally been represented in certain positions. She is an actor in spite of her reduced mobility, and thereby she may be an inspiration for other people who need wheelchairs, who also wish to become actors or try other types of active occupations. In this way, Aerie becomes connected to Ali Stroker's message, and through her they communicate to a large group of people who are not often seen in advertising in a positive setting.

The next role model to be presented is Lana Condor, and she appears as a central part of the frame in frames 4, 14, 29, 33 and 47. From these frames it is possible to see that she has light skin

and dark hair and that she is petite. Furthermore, she looks like she could be of Asian descent. In frame 47, it is revealed that she is an actor. On Aerie's website they write about Lana Condor that she was born in Vietnam and adopted by an American family. Her key issue is education, as she believes that she was lucky to receive a good education in the United States; something that the women in Vietnam cannot be sure to experience. Therefore, she works with the Asia Foundation to provide scholarships and school supplies to girls in Vietnam ("Lana Condor, Actor"). In frame 47, Lana Condor says "Empower through education" in a voiceover, and these words are semiotic resources that offer the potential meaning that education is important and can be empowering. Through her words and her key issue, Aerie becomes an advocate for education. Furthermore, they become an inclusive brand through the fact that they use an Asian woman as one of their role models, as people of Asian descent has not traditionally been displayed in advertising. Furthermore, Aerie also raises attention to the matter of adoption, and thereby they become connected to three good causes through Lana Condor.

The next woman presented in the advertisement is Tiff McFierce, who appears as the central part of frames 5, 23, 24, 32 and 45. She has brown skin, short, dark curly hair and she is curvy, possibly overweight. Across these frames, she is dancing and jumping, and frame 45 shows her smiling, while the screen is covered by a purple filter. In this frame, she is presented as a DJ and wellness advocate. On their website, Aerie writes that Tiff McFierce was the first female DJ to play for the Knicks at Madison Square garden. She furthermore has a wellness series called "Look IN vs. Lookin'", through which she wishes to connect people and teach them how happiness lies within themselves ("Tiff McFierce, DJ & Wellness Advocate").

In frame 45, Tiff McFierce says "Look in" in her voiceover, and she puts emphasis on both words. These words are semiotic resources that afford the meaning that people should look within themselves, and this utterance also works as a reference to her wellness series which advocates that people should in fact look in, as opposed to look out at other people, when they search for happiness. Moreover, it is possible to interpret these messages in the way that they indicate that a person will not find happiness by comparing themselves to other people. Through Tiff McFierce, Aerie thus becomes an advocate for psychological health and confidence. Moreover, Aerie shows a woman with dark skin in a powerful position, as she has an occupation that is traditionally thought of as a man's job. This adds an extra dimension to their already inclusive and diverse profile.

The next woman to claim attention in the advertisement is Hari Nef. She is the centre of attention in frames 6, 18, 25, 35 and 39, and she has light skin and long brown hair. In frame 39, she

appears on a screen with a green filter, where she is presented as an actor and writer. On their website, Aerie writes that she is concerned with making a change for and helping the people in her community. She encourages people to always question and always consider if they can help the people around them (“Hari Nef, Actor & Writer”). In frame 39, in her voiceover, she also speaks the words “Always question”, which substantiates the fact that she encourages people to question the things they see and always seek to find out if anyone needs their help. Thereby, the semiotic resource of her words along with the knowledge about her indicate that Aerie advocates good deeds. Through Hari Nef, they encourage people to help others and thereby create a feeling of community.



In frames 7, 28 and 41, Molly Burke is introduced. She has fair skin and purple hair, and in frames 7 and 28, she is sitting on the floor with a brown Labrador, who she is embracing. Her close contact with the dog suggests that this dog is very important to her. In frame 41 it is revealed that she is a Youtuber and a motivational speaker, and in a presentation of Molly Burke on Aerie’s website, Aerie explains that she is blind. Thus, the brown Labrador must be her guide dog, which explains the close relationship she seems to have with it. Molly Burke’s key issue is diversity in the representation of disabilities in mainstream media, as she explains how she has been bullied because of her disability. She openly shares her struggles with being blind on her social media platforms and hopes to help other young people who struggle to cope with their disabilities. She furthermore wishes to change the stereotyped notions of how disabled people look and behave (“Molly Burke, Youtuber & Motivational Speaker”).

In frame 41 Molly Burke says, “See all the good” in her voiceover. These words along with the fact that she is blind afford the possible interpretation that you should remember to see the good things in life. Furthermore, the fact that she chooses to say the word ‘see’ even though she is blind offers the meaning that when she can ‘see’ the good in any situation, all other people, also those who are not blind, should be able to do the same. Thereby, it is also indicated that even though Molly Burke is blind, she still seeks to focus on the happy and positive things in life. By choosing Molly Burke as one of their role models, Aerie once again establishes their inclusive style, as they show a woman with a disability in a way that has not often been seen in advertising. Thereby, they target a group of people who do not necessarily feel that they are represented properly in the media. Furthermore, they benefit from Molly Burke’s positive outlook on life, and they moreover become connected with her mission to break free of a negative stereotype that defines disabled people as weak and helpless.

In frames 8, 31 and 42, Beanie Feldstein plays the prominent part, and she is a curvy, possibly overweight, woman with fair skin and brown hair. Frame 42 has a blue filter, and in this frame, she is presented as an actor. On Aerie’s website, they write that Beanie Feldstein selects her acting roles carefully, as she makes a point of wanting to tell important stories with positive messages about empowerment, success and friendship. Furthermore, she wishes to bring stories to life from people who have not traditionally been allowed or able to tell their stories (“Beanie Feldstein, Actor”). In frame 42 she says, “Tell stories that matter”, and these words are semiotic resources that offer the affordances that people can choose which stories they wish to tell, and that they should choose to focus on stories that can mean something to other people. Together with the knowledge provided on Aerie’s website, these words afford the meaning that she encourages people and media platforms to tell stories that focus on the experiences of people from underrepresented groups. According to these words, those kinds of stories can be significant and have a positive impact on the lives of people who see themselves in those stories.

The next woman that the advertisement focuses on is Aly Raisman, who has a prominent role in frames 10 and 43. She has light brown skin and brown hair. In frame 43, she is presented as a gold medal gymnast and advocate. On Aerie’s website, they write how Aly Raisman uses her own experience to empower others, as she is open about the fact that she is a victim of sexual abuse. Her main message is that you have to take care of yourself and make sure that you are okay before you can help others (“Aly Raisman, Gold Medal Gymnast & Advocate”). In frame 43 Aly says, “Speak your truth” in a voiceover, and she puts emphasis on the word ‘your’. These words suggest the

meaning that people should speak up and talk about their experiences in their own words, and that no one other than themselves can know the truth about their story. Together with the information about her personal experiences with sexual abuse, these words offer the meaning that people should not be ashamed or afraid to talk about sexual abuse, and that it is important to know about those kinds of experiences.

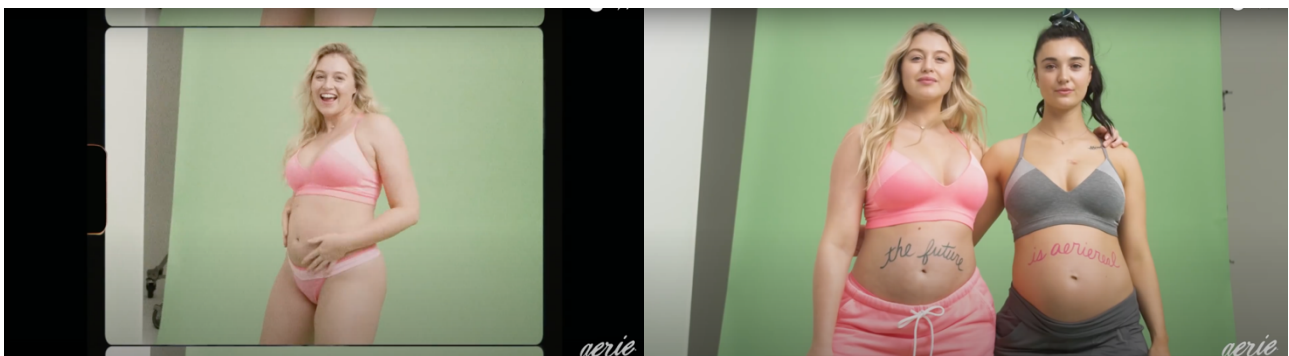
Through Aly Raisman, Aerie becomes an advocate for sexual abuse awareness. They benefit from her personal story and the initiatives she has taken to help others, and thereby they add another layer to their inclusive style. Again, Aerie expands its target audience and embraces a group of people who may feel alone with their experiences. In that way, that group of people will be represented in a new and positive way. Furthermore, the fact that Aly Raisman is a gold medal gymnast serves as a semiotic resource that offers the meaning potential that Aerie supports active and determined women. This kind of woman has also not traditionally been represented in advertising. Moreover, Aly Raisman has light brown skin, and so she is an example of how Aerie shows a diverse range of skin colours.

In frames 15, 16, 17 and 46, a woman named Iskra is the main focus, and she has fair skin, long blonde hair and she is curvy. Iskra is furthermore pregnant, and this is made visible in the way that she rests her hands on the pump on her lower stomach in frame 16 while she is dancing and smiling. In frame 17, she appears again next to another woman who is also pregnant, and they both have writing on their stomachs which says, “the future is aeriereal”, thus indicating that they will teach their future children about the values this advertisement embodies. In frame 46, which has a blue filter, she is presented as a self-care activist. On their website, Aerie writes that Iskra is their original role model, who has been a brand ambassador from the early days of Aerie. They furthermore establish that she is in fact pregnant. Aerie also clarifies that Iskra is a self-care activist in the way that she advocates mental health and mental wellness, and she wishes to inspire people to learn to love themselves (“Iskra, Self-Care Activist”).

In frame 46 Iskra says, “Rock that body” in a singing voice with emphasis on every word. These words are semiotic resources that embody her key issues. On their own, the words afford the meaning that people should be confident in their bodies. Together with the information about her on the website and the fact that she is curvy, this suggests how Iskra wishes to communicate that all bodies are real and beautiful bodies, regardless of size, and that having curves is not a negative thing. Through Iskra, Aerie thus becomes an advocate for body-positivity, as they become connected to her message. The fact that Iskra was their original role model and brand ambassador also suggests that Aerie was

interested in communicating that they are inclusive from the beginning, as Iskra strays from the stereotype of a woman that has traditionally been used in marketing.

Through Iskra, Aerie targets several groups of people; they target those who see themselves in her fair skin and blonde hair, they target the people who see themselves in Iskra's curvy body, and they target pregnant women. It is not unusual to see blonde women with fair skin in advertising, as those are characteristics that are tied to the stereotype of a woman traditionally used in advertising. However, curvy women have not been well-represented, as the stereotype of a woman is slim and petite. As mentioned previously in this section, Iskra is dancing, and thereby Aerie shows an image of a curvy, pregnant woman who is active. This may violate some people's schemas, as curvy women are not usually believed to be active. Thereby, Aerie dissociates themselves from the negative stereotype of a curvy woman as someone who is unhealthy. Furthermore, it is also not common to see a curvy, pregnant women in advertising, and this image of a curvy, pregnant woman suggests the message that pregnant women can also have different appearances.



The other pregnant woman is Brenna Huckaby, who appears as a central part of frames 17 and 48. She has light to tan skin, dark hair and she appears to be further in her pregnancy than Iskra, as her stomach is bigger than Iskra's. In frame 48, which has a pink filter, she is presented as a gold medal Paralympic snowboarder. The fact that she is a Paralympic athlete offers the meaning that she has a disability, as only people with disabilities can compete in the Paralympic Games. In her presentation on Aerie's website, it is revealed that she lost her leg to cancer when she was 14 years old and that she now has a prosthetic leg, and her key message for everyone is that nothing is impossible. She became a successful professional athlete after losing one of her legs, and thus her message is that everyone can do anything what they set their mind to. She furthermore supports the move towards a more inclusive world ("Brenna Huckaby, Gold Medal Paralympic Snowboarder").

Through Brenna Huckaby, Aerie broadens their representation of people with disabilities. Not only do they show a woman in a wheelchair and a blind woman, they also include a woman with a prosthetic leg, who has achieved a successful career of being a professional athlete. The fact that

Brenna Huckaby is a professional athlete means that she leads a very active life, and thus she deviates strongly from the stereotype of a disabled person as well as the stereotype of a woman traditionally presented in advertising, as both stereotypes are passive and dependent on other people. With the choice of Brenna Huckaby as one of their role models, Aerie further adds an additional layer to their message about body positivity, as they once again state how all kinds of bodies are real and accepted. Moreover, it is revealed on Aerie's website that she is a mother, and so Brenna Huckaby is a soon-to-be mother of two who has a disability and a career in sports. She thereby strays from the traditional stereotype of a woman in several aspects.

In frames 19 and 40, Keiana Cavé plays the prominent part, and she is petite, has brown skin and dark hair. In frame 19, she is smiling and sitting in front of a background with flowers and greenery that offers connotations to a tropical scenery. The background together with her brown skin and dark hair afford the possible interpretation that she is an exotic woman. In frame 40, which has a yellow filter, she is presented as a scientist and CEO. On their website, Aerie writes that she is 21 years old and a successful scientist who has done research on the connection between oil spill and cancer-causing molecules. She now has her own company that works on creating a hormone-free birth control pill. She is furthermore presented as a trailblazer and changemaker who encourages other people to push themselves out of their comfort zones and pursue their talents and interests ("Keiana Cavé, Scientist & CEO").



The tropical and exotic elements and the fact that Keiana Cavé is a scientist and CEO work together as semiotic resources to afford the meaning that all people have potential to fulfil their dreams and achieve their goals – also people that are not traditionally thought of as being capable of having an academic career. The stereotype of a woman used in advertising is dependent on others, insecure and weak, and she furthermore has light skin and light hair, and thus Keiana Cavé deviates from the traditional stereotype of a woman with her brown skin and bright mind, and so she may violate some peoples' schemas, however, while doing so she becomes a positive stereotype. In her voiceover in frame 40 she says, "Be a trailblazer", and she thereby encourages other people to work for what they want to achieve, even though it may be something that deviates from the norm. Keiana Cavé moreover represents several groups of people who has generally not been represented in advertising; people who have brown skin tones and women who have careers within the field of science. Through Keiana Cavé, Aerie thus establishes their inclusivity further, and becomes an advocate for women in academics and science as well as they encourage young, determined women to fulfil their dreams.

Frames 22 and 44 show Manuela Barón, who is petite, has light skin and brown curly hair. In frame 44 she is presented as a sustainability activist, and the screen has a green filter. The colour green has often been connected to environmental matters, such as the recycling symbol and images of the world, and thus the colour works to support the fact that she is a sustainability activist. On Aerie's website, they present her as a determined woman who encourages people to take any step they can in relation to stopping the pollution of the world, which she does by sharing her own tips for a more sustainable way of life ("Manuela Barón, Sustainability Activist"). In frame 44 Manuela Barón says, "Live with less" which, together with the information about her being a sustainability activist, offers the interpretation that people can live more sustainable lives if they live with less material things and consider how often they need to buy new things. Through Manuela Barón, Aerie shows their concern for the environment and encourages people to take care of it and make sustainable choices. Thereby, Aerie benefits from the positive initiatives she has taken and the change that she has made. Aerie furthermore enters into another kind of conversation that differs from the previous subjects in this advertisement, as this topic has nothing to do with looks or appearance.

In frames 26 and 37, Dre Thomas is the woman in focus, and she has brown skin and dark brown hair. In frame 37, she is presented as the founder of Smile On Me, as she appears on the screen, which has a purple filter on it. Smile On Me is an organisation that helps young women through transitions in their lives, such as entering puberty. The organisation provides those in need with

hygiene products, educates young women on hygiene and sexual health, and it also empowers young women raised in poor environments and urges them to realise their full potential (“Dre Thomas, Founder Of Smile On Me”). Dre Thomas and her organisation can be considered as semiotic resources that afford the potential meaning that Aerie, like Dre Thomas, wishes to support young women and help them awaken to their potential of breaking free from their negative social heritage and also educate women about sexual health. In this frame, Dre Thomas speaks the following words in a voice over, “Smile and take care”. These words are semiotic resources and can be interpreted as a shortened version of the message her organisation sends; that young women should protect themselves and stay healthy. The word ‘smile’ furthermore offers the meaning that the women will be happy if they take care of themselves, and this is also a reference to the name of the foundation. Together, Dre Thomas’ organisation and her words becomes a positive symbol for women’s empowerment that Aerie is now connected to.

The last role model is Jenna Kutcher, who appears as a central part of frames 30 and 49. She has light skin and blonde hair, and she is curvy. In frame 30 she is holding a young child who also has light skin and blonde hair, and this indicates that it could be her child. In frame 49, which has a yellow filter, she is presented as an entrepreneur and podcaster. On Aerie’s website, it is furthermore revealed that her podcast is called “The Goal Digger Podcast”, she has an online course, and she moreover has success with sharing her life on her Instagram profile. She encourages and challenges women to pursue their dreams, and she shows those women how it is possible to have both a successful career and family life (“Jenna Kutcher, Entrepreneur & Podcaster”). In frame 49 Jenna Kutcher says, “Embrace the real you”, which offers the meaning that she encourages people to be who they are. Together with the knowledge presented on Aerie’s website, this also affords the potential meaning that people should pursue their dreams regardless of what they are, even though those dreams may differ from what is expected of them. By choosing Jenna Kutcher as one of their role models, Aerie thus becomes connected to her message and also becomes an advocate for following your dreams, and they furthermore state that it is acceptable to stray from the norm.

In the remaining frames of the advertisement, frames 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 21, 27 and 36, the women appear together in groups, either in one big group that shows all of them or in various smaller groups. Common for all of the frames is that the women are either laughing or smiling, which offers the potential meaning that they are all happy. The music throughout the advertisement is very upbeat and also indicates a positive and happy atmosphere. Across frames 24 to 36, singing is added to the music, and the song turns out to be a version of Sister Sledge’s “We are Family”, and the lyrics sung are,

We are family
 I got all my sisters with me
 We are family
 Get up everybody and sing

Frames 24-36

These lyrics suggest the meaning that all of the women in the advertisement are connected in some way, they are some kind of family. The happy vibe of the presentation video, which is apparent from all of the smiling, laughing and dancing, furthermore indicates that this feeling of being connected is a positive thing. The diversity of Aerie's role models along with the happy vibe of the presentation video and these lyrics thus afford the possible meaning that even though all of the women are different – they look different from each other, they have various occupations, and they have different circumstances in life – they still share something.

From the previous analysis it is possible to argue that the thing these women share is that they are all successful and that they all have an important message they wish to share. These messages are about body positivity, believing in yourself in regard to intelligence and abilities, having or obtaining confidence, helping others and pursuing dreams. In general, their messages encourage women to pursue their dreams, whatever they may be, and be themselves while doing it, even though they may differ from expectations and traditional norms. Through these women, Aerie thus comes to embody the same values, and they become an advocate for female empowerment.

The family metaphor presented through the song lyrics also carries another affordance. The concept of a family is something that everyone recognises, and many people may recognise it as something positive, and thus Aerie still remains inside of established schemas, even though all of the women likely violate some people's schemas in various ways. The concept of family can be viewed as a stereotype in itself, as a family will consist of a heterosexual couple with children in most people's schemas, while for some, a family will be something other than that. In this advertisement, the women are part of a family of sisterhood, and thus they become a different kind of family, while they still benefit from the positive and well-known connotations that many people have to the concept of family.

The fact that Aerie has chosen to call their brand ambassadors role models substantiates the fact that all of the women have empowering and important messages to share. Furthermore, the term role

model is also interesting to consider alongside the fact that the role models are so different. By showing role models that have various skin colours, various body types and sizes, different kinds of disabilities and different kinds of mental issues they deal with, Aerie speaks to a very broad target audience, and they become inclusive in a way that has not often been seen before. Aerie thus markets their products without focusing on them, by contrast they almost solely focus on their role models and audience, and thereby their products, which are worn by the role models in the advertisement, benefit from the positive associations of the inclusive message, which they are now part of. Lastly, it is important to note that the coloured filters in frames 37 to 49 work to show how these women are more than their appearances, as the filters wash out skin colours and hair colours. Thus, emphasis lies on the fact that the women are complex and possess various traits, and furthermore on the women's empowering messages which has also become Aerie's messages.

#AerieREAL: Analysis of Aerie's Instagram

The empowering messages and inclusive vibe that are present in the advertisement *Your 2020 #AerieREAL Role Models* are also visible on Aerie's Instagram profile. Their handle is @aerie, and their name is also simply Aerie. In their biography they state that, "The #AerieREAL mission is to empower all women to love their real selves", and they furthermore establish that they have not retouched their models since 2014 ("Aerie (@Aerie)"). From this presentation it is therefore possible to state that their inclusive message also comes across on their Instagram profile. In the following analysis, it will be investigated whether and how this message is also present on their posts. In Appendix IV, selections of the posts on Aerie's Instagram profile have been chosen as the objects of analysis, and in the following analysis, the posts will be examined as multimodal texts that consist of several modes. Therefore, both the photos or video stills, the captions, the tagged people, the comment sections and the number of how many people have liked the photos will be examined.

On their Instagram profile, Aerie posts photos and videos of their role models as well as other people who tag Aerie in their own posts. Therefore, like it was the case with ASOS' Instagram, it is possible to obtain more information about the people in the photos, as they are always tagged. In general, the comments on Aerie's posts are highly positive, and people praise the brand for having a wide range of different types of people model their products, and for showing different body shapes. On a post from March 27th 2020, where Aerie posted a picture of a woman with tan skin and curly dark hair who is standing in a way that shows off her stretch marks and a roll on her stomach, an Instagram user wrote a comment wherein she explains how she loves Aerie for showing a woman

who is being herself and smiling. These praises and positive comments recur in all of the comment sections.

As already mentioned, Aerie shows a wide range of different types of women on their Instagram profile. On a post from April 17th 2020, they show their role model Brenna Huckaby, who has a prosthetic leg, along with her child. In the caption Aerie writes that she will do a live workout on their profile the following day, and the photo furthermore shows her and her daughter doing some stretches, and thus Brenna Huckaby must be an active person. It was revealed in the advertisement that she is a gold medal Paralympic snowboarder, which Aerie's followers likely know. Thereby, like in the advertisement, Aerie shows a woman who highly differs from the stereotype of a woman most commonly used in advertising, as she is both disabled and also active, which traditionally only men were. In this picture, Aerie furthermore shows a disabled, active woman who is a mother, which adds an extra dimension to their inclusive efforts, as this affords that mothers can be disabled as well as active.

In addition to showing that people can be active in their clothing, Aerie furthermore shows that that their clothing can be worn by pregnant women, as they posted a picture of their role model Iskra with her pregnant stomach on April 16th 2020. In the caption it says that Iskra has worn Aerie throughout her pregnancy, and this affords the potential meaning that their clothing is stretchy and comfortable. Another post that exhibits Aerie's clothing as being comfortable was posted on March 22nd 2020. In this post, a woman is taking her own picture in a mirror while she is wearing Aerie underwear and smiling, and the woman has light skin, long brown hair and she is curvy. In the caption, Aerie encourages other women to post pictures of their real selves and share their "feel-good home looks" while tagging them as well as using the hashtag #MyAerie. The woman's smile and the fact that she is only wearing underwear afford the possible interpretation that she is happy with what she sees in the mirror. This woman strays from the slim stereotype of a woman, and through the fact that she is happy with herself, even though she looks different from that stereotype, Aerie becomes an advocate for body positivity. From this photo and the caption, it is evident that Aerie sends the message that all bodies are real and acceptable. Furthermore, both the photo and the caption afford the possible meaning that the clothing is comfortable and will make you feel good and happy, and so Aerie's products become closely connected to the positive and inclusive message.

Aerie also touches upon the topic of food on their Instagram. On a post from April 14th 2020, they show a picture of their role model Lana Condor, who is sitting on a kitchen counter with a young man. The caption states that the man is her boyfriend, and that the pair will go live on Aerie's

Instagram profile the following day, where they will cook a meal. As it was revealed in the advertisement, Lana Condor is of Asian descent, she has light skin and black hair, and she is petite. Lana Condor strays from the stereotype of a woman who exists in some people's schemas, as being slim and eating is not often connected in advertising, and thereby Aerie shows how all women eat. Lana Condor and her boyfriend's smiles furthermore afford the meaning that cooking food and eating is a good thing, and thus Aerie encourages people to be healthy and eat through this post.

Another positive message is found on a post from February 9th 2020. This post holds a picture of a skinny woman with brown skin and curly dark hair, and the woman is wearing a bathing suit while she is smiling. The caption in this post reveals that the bathing suit is made of recycled fibres from plastic bottles, and thus this post suggests that Aerie cares for the environment. The woman's smile furthermore implies that this is a positive message, which is also acknowledged in the comment section, where an Instagram user praises Aerie for their sustainable efforts.

The majority of the selections of posts shown in Appendix IV have around 9000 to 13.000 likes, and only one of the selected posts stands out in regard to likes. The post with most likes is the one from March 22nd that shows the curvy woman in her underwear – this picture has around 18.000 likes. The picture with the fewest likes out of the selections of posts is the post from February 9th of the dark-skinned woman in the bathing suit that is made out of recycled materials – this picture has around 9000 likes. The women in these two pictures have different body types and different skin colours, but they also have something in common, which can be seen from their personal Instagram profiles that can be found via their tags. They both have large platforms on their personal Instagram profiles, however, the slim woman with dark skin, whose name is Milan Dixon, has over 33.000 followers ("Milan Dixon (@Modelomilano)"), while the curvy woman with light skin, whose name is Jenelle, has around 1500 followers ("JENELLE | Design & Styling (@Burknco)"). Thus, there is a vast difference between the number of followers they each have. Moreover, the posts hold different messages. Jenelle is part of a post that encourages body positivity, and Milan Dixon is part of a post that advocates sustainability. Thus, both of the women resemble and differ from the traditional stereotype of a woman in different ways, and therefore it is not possible to determine whether the Instagram users prefer a non-traditional model or a stereotypic one from these examples. However, the likes indicate that Instagram users prefer posts that revolve around body positivity over posts that advocate sustainability.

From these selections of Instagram posts from Aerie's Instagram profile it is possible to conclude that Aerie exhibits an inclusive style and a positive vibe through showing various types of

women as well as through sharing different messages about body positivity, health and sustainability. The women in their Instagram posts have different skin colours, body types and general appearances, some have disabilities and most of them advocate or encourage different positive messages. Through these women, Aerie thus represents and speaks to a very wide target group.

Additional Aspects within Inclusive Marketing

In the previous analyses, focus has been on inclusive marketing in relation to representation of different types of people; people who have traditionally been represented in advertising, but also types of people who have not traditionally been used as models in advertising. ASOS includes both men and women in their advertising, however, Aerie only features women in their advertising, as they sell products that fit a female body shape. Therefore, another example of inclusive marketing efforts that involves a more inclusive representation of men will be examined in the following analysis, in order to further explore the subject of inclusive representation of men. This analysis will therefore investigate how AXE shows different representations of men in their advertisement from 2016 called *AXE "Find Your Magic"*.

Moreover, in the previous analyses, a main focus has been representation in terms of appearance, even though other topics were also brought up. However, being body positive and praising diversity in regard to looks and abilities is only one way of being inclusive; there are also brands who have been acknowledged for being inclusive in other ways. Therefore, the following section will also contain an analysis of an advertisement for Google Pixel 2 called *The Picture Perfect Life* that focuses on mental health, in order to investigate a field within inclusive marketing that was not the main focus in the previous examples of inclusive marketing efforts.

All Men Are Real Men: Analysis of AXE "Find Your Magic"

In 2016, AXE released their advertisement *AXE "Find Your Magic"*, which focuses on different types of men, who perform different actions, and the advertisement marked a shift in the brand's marketing style (Rousselet & AXE). Some media sources note how the brand was previously connected to a rigid representation of men that centred around the traditional stereotype. With this advertisement, the brand moved towards a more inclusive marketing style, as their definition of what it means to be a man was made wider. The brand itself and the creators of the advertisement stated that it needs to be clear that there is not one definition of what it means to be a man, which they wish to show through

this advertisement. A shorter version of this advertisement was shown at the Super Bowl 50, and the advertisement raised brand awareness as well as sales (Marzilli).

In the following section, an excerpt of the advertisement, 0:51 seconds out of the full video of 1:00 minute, will serve as the object of analysis. References to the advertisement will be made with frame numbers, as they appear in the multimodal transcription that has been provided for the advertisement in Appendix V.

The first frame of the advertisement shows two billboards that each present respectively an image and a video of a muscular man. The man in the video furthermore has fire behind him. Throughout the advertisement, speech is provided by a male narrator, and in frame 1 he says, “Come on, a six pack?” with an ironic tone of voice. The semiotic resources of this first frame, the images with the muscular men and the speech, afford the possible meaning that it is not necessary to have a six pack or be muscular. This is furthermore established in frame 2, where the speaker continues to say, “Who needs a six pack, when you got the nose”. While the speaker says these words, the camera pans down to a young man sitting in a car. Frame 2 is black and white; however, it is still possible to determine that the man must have light skin. The young man furthermore has a prominent nose. These words suggest the meaning that all men do not need to look the same, and that when you have one thing that makes you special, you do not need to conform to other opinions about how you should look. Thus, already in the first few seconds of the advertisement, it is established that AXE moves away from only representing the stereotype of a man, who looks and behaves a certain way. These first two frames set the tone for the rest of the advertisement.

The entire advertisement consists of frames involving different types of men, who have some trait or characteristic that makes them special. The men have different hair colours, different body types, different circumstances in life and different interests, and thus AXE shows a very broad representation of what it means to be a man. An example of a man who completely deviates from the traditional stereotype of a man is shown in frame 6. This frame shows a man who is dancing fiercely. The man has dark skin, short dark hair and he is wearing high heels, hot pants and an open, multicoloured shirt. Furthermore, the signs with numbers in this frame indicate that he is taking part in some kind of competition. The man’s movements are moreover very fast, and he is very flexible.

The man’s appearance may be perceived as feminine by some, as the clothes he is wearing resembles clothing that is most often seen on a woman’s body, i.e. the hot pants and the high heels. Furthermore, men have not often been seen dancing in advertising, as it is usually women who show off their bodies. Thus, this man probably violates some people’s schemas, as he predominantly

exhibits female characteristics, and thereby he strays from the traditional stereotype of a man. This affords the possible meaning that AXE encourages men to be who they are, regardless of what expectations they may defy. Through this man, AXE furthermore represents a group of people who have not traditionally been represented in advertising; men who enjoy dancing, wearing heels or generally exploring their feminine sides.

Another example of a type of man that has not often been seen in advertising is found in frame 7. In this frame, a man with fair skin, broad shoulders and a beard is sitting in a wheelchair with a woman on top of him. They are spinning around and dancing, and they appear to be at a party. The man resembles the traditional stereotype of a man in the way that he appears to be muscular. His beard furthermore offers connotations to something wild and rough, which is also consistent with the traditional stereotype of a man. Nevertheless, he deviates from the traditional stereotype as he is sitting in a wheelchair, and typically, men have not been shown sitting down, as this does not depict a powerful position. The fact that he is sitting in a wheelchair furthermore suggests that he has a disability, which also contradicts the traditional notion of what a powerful man is. However, he does seem to be in a powerful position in some ways, which is illustrated by the fact that he is holding a woman and controlling the way that they are spinning. The man in frame 7 thus represents a group of men that has not usually been seen in advertising; disabled men who are not weak and not dependant on other people.

In addition to showing different types of men, the advertisement also shows sexuality in different ways. There are several frames where men and women interact in ways that can be perceived as romantic or sexual, like in frame 13, where the man opens the car door for the woman, and in frame 16, where a sexual act is demonstrated through the woman, who is sweaty while she is smiling and gasping, and the speech which says, “The touch”, which implies that a man is touching her. Thus, these frames show heterosexual relationships, which are consistent with traditional depictions of sexuality. The advertisement, however, also indicates homosexual interaction.

In frames 8 to 11, two young men are standing opposite from each other in some sort of shop, and they are both looking at records when they lock eyes. The fact that two men lock eyes may not be enough to indicate a homosexual connection, but there are also other indications. The man who is presented in frame 8 is holding a record with an image of a gorilla on it, while the other man, who is first presented in frame 9, holds a record with an image of a banana on it along with some words that say “The power of the banana”. The two images match in the way that gorillas are believed to enjoy

eating bananas, and thus there is a natural connection between the two objects. Furthermore, the banana may be a phallus symbol, and therefore these frames have a sexual undertone.



If this meeting between the two young men is an example of homosexuality, this is one of the ways in which the advertisement employs a broad definition of what it means to be a man, as the stereotype of a man traditionally used in advertising is heterosexual. Therefore, these two men will possibly violate some people's schemas of what it means to be a man. However, a large group of people who have not traditionally been represented in advertising, or in AXE's marketing efforts, will thus be represented, and thereby AXE becomes more inclusive than they reportedly have been.

Throughout the advertisement, the speaker continues to ask things such as, "Who needs looks, when you got the books. Or books, when you got some balls. And who needs all that, when you get the door. When you get the dough, the brains, the touch" (Appendix V, frames 10-16). This substantiates the possible interpretation that was made from the first two frames; that AXE states that there are multiple ways of being a real man. At the end of the advertisement, this message is further established. Across frames 18 to 20 the speaker says, "That's right. Who needs some other thing, when you got your thing? Now work on it". Thus, the message of the advertisement is that all men have something that makes them special, and they should cherish that thing and make it work for them, even if it means diverging from expectations.

The advertisement furthermore makes use of humour throughout the advertisement. The humorous atmosphere is already established in frame 1, where the utterance "Come on, a six pack?" is spoken with an ironic tone of voice. Furthermore, there are several humorous elements present in the advertisement, like in frame 17, where a man with a long, full and bushy beard is sitting with two kittens. This frame has an element of humour in it because of the fact that a stereotypical manly man is sitting with two small cats. Furthermore, the speaker also contributes to the funny atmosphere with his speech. This frame comes after the part of the speech that says, "When you get the dough, the brains, the touch" and the speaker continues to say, "The aaw", thus indicating that the kittens are cute. These words, or rather the lack of one word, also offer another possible interpretation, namely

that the kittens are a symbol of a word often used to describe the female sexual organ. Thereby, the frame carries a dual message which is created through humour.

The conclusion to this analysis of the *AXE “Find Your Magic”* advertisement is that the brand shows different types of men; both some that resemble the traditional stereotype and some that deviate from it. Furthermore, the men are presented in a happy and humorous atmosphere. Thereby, AXE communicates to a large group of people, and their target audience is therefore also wide. Thus, through these inclusive representations of men, AXE spreads the message that a man does not have to be powerful, tall, muscular, masculine and heterosexual in order to be a real man. He can be, but he does not have to be.

Mental Health Awareness: Analysis of Google Pixel 2 The Picture Perfect Life

In January 2018, Google released an advertisement for their product Google Pixel 2 called *The Picture Perfect Life*. Google Pixel 2 is a phone, and one of the highlighted features of it was its camera. Google presented the advertising with a description which says that sometimes you cannot see the whole story from a picture, and that people should question their lenses (Google). This presentation and the name of the advertisement suggest that one can expect that the advertisement will focus on what lies behind pictures that seemingly show perfect lives. In the presentation, Google also reveals that the American rapper Logic is the narrator in the advertisement, and that his Grammy-nominated song “1-800-273-8255” will be featured in the video. The song helped raise awareness of suicide and depression, and the title of the song is the phone number for the American suicide prevention lifeline (Google). Throughout the following analysis, references to the advertisement will be made with frame numbers, as they appear in the multimodal transcription that has been provided for the advertisement in Appendix VI.

The advertisement generally does not focus much on the product being advertised, as it is only directly shown in frames 33 and 34. However, one of the main features of the product is shown implicitly throughout the advertisement through the fact that the video mainly consists of still pictures. There are only few frames wherein there are video recordings and actual movement, and these frames are 12, 19, 24 and 32. However, in some frames, the still pictures are shown so quickly after each other that this creates the illusion of movement. This is the case in frames such as 9, 17 and 31. Thereby, the otherwise very stationary frames become dynamic.

Throughout the advertisement, eight different people are the main actors, they each look different from each other, and they are each presented doing something that seems to bring them joy.

Nick, who appears in frames 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 42, has dark skin and dark hair, and he is pushing a girl on a swing. The girl's name is Sofia, and through the speech across frames 4 to 6 that says, "and this is Sofia, the light of his life", it is indicated that Sofia is Nick's daughter. Thus, this young man is a father, and his smile affords the possible interpretation that he loves his daughter and enjoys spending time with her and seeing her happy. Nick strays from the traditional stereotype of a man used in advertising in several ways, as he has dark skin and is a father. People with dark skin have, as has already been clarified, not been well-represented in advertising, and furthermore men have not been shown to have feelings, and they have not been presented in roles where they take care of children.

The next person that appears in the advertisement is Lauren, who is the main focus in frames 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 41. She has fair skin and long brown hair, and the speaker reveals that she has just moved into her new home, and that the home "will soon be crammed with all her friends", thus suggesting that she has many friends. She is, however, alone in all of the frames. In frame 7 she is smiling and standing in front of a door with a key in her hand, which offers the meaning that she is happy about moving into her new apartment. The fact that she is moving into a new home alone offers the potential meaning that she is independent, which the stereotype of a woman usually shown in advertising is not. However, Lauren's appearance generally conforms to the traditional stereotype of a woman, and thus she does not stray far from it.

In frames 12, 13, 14 and 40, Stephen is the central person. He has dark skin, short dark hair and he is muscular. He is pictured playing basketball, and the speaker says, "this is where he schools his military buddies", which suggests that he has several friends and meets with them to play basketball often. Furthermore, this indicates that he is or has been in the military. Stephen has a big smile on his face in frame 13, and this offers the meaning potential that he is happy. Together with the speaker's words this suggests the further meaning that he enjoys playing basketball and spending time with his friends. Stephen both conforms to and strays from the traditional stereotype of a man, as the fact that he is or has been in the military affords that he is strong like the stereotype of a man, while people with dark skin colours have not been well represented in advertising.

A woman named April has the central role in frames 15, 16, 18 and 39. She has light skin, long dark hair, she is slim, and she is smiling in several frames. She is furthermore shown eating a doughnut, and frame 17 shows several different doughnuts, which implies that she eats many of them. The speaker moreover says, "She gets her sweet tooth from her dad", which further establishes that April most likely eats a lot of sugary food. The fact that she is smiling furthermore offers the meaning potential that she enjoys eating. April thus conforms to the traditional stereotype of a woman in the

way that she is slim and looks happy. However, the stereotype of a woman in advertising has not often been connected with eating food that is high in calories, and thus the fact that April eats a lot of sugary food may break some people's schemas in regard to what defines a woman.

In frames 20, 21, 22 and 38, a woman named Dee is the main focus. She has fair skin, short and dark curly hair and she is smiling in most of the frames. She is walking four dogs, and the speaker says that, "This is her dream job". Together, her smile and the speaker's words afford the potential meaning that she is happy, because she has found her dream job. Being a dogwalker is not usually perceived as a highly regarded job, and thus the fact that she is happy further suggests that she does not care about potential expectations to her. Thereby, she appears to be free-willed and independent, which the traditional stereotype of a woman is not.

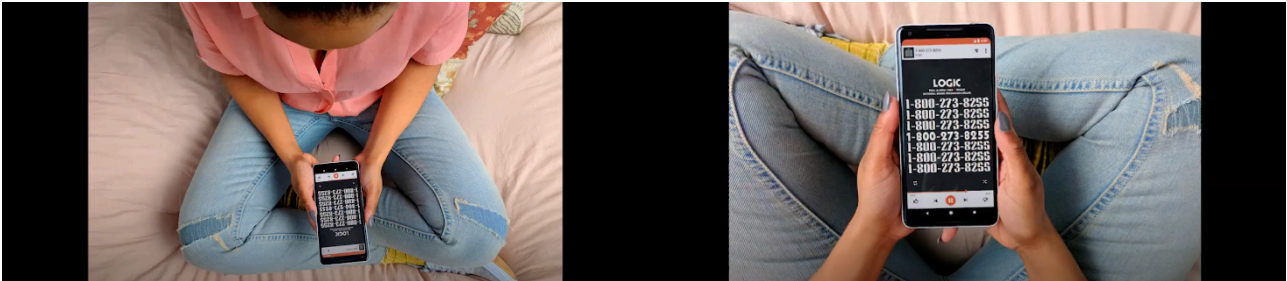
The next person who is presented is Cassie, who has dark skin and black hair. She appears in frames 23, 24, 25 and 37, and she is smiling and driving a car while singing in the first three frames. Frames 23 and 24 reveal that other people are with her in the car; there are two children and a man, and they all have dark skin and dark hair, which indicates that they are a family. The fact that Cassie is smiling suggests the meaning that she is happy to be with them.

Mike is the next central person, and he appears in frames 26, 27, 29 and 36. Mike has light skin, brown and grey hair and a beard. The grey in his hair and beard suggests that he is an older man, which makes him one of the only representations of older people in all of the examples analysed in this thesis. In the majority of the frames that he performs in he is standing in front of a barbecue, which indicates that he is cooking food for the people around him. Frame 27 reveals that he is together with a group of people that all appear to talk and laugh with each other, and this suggests that it is a family event. In frame 29, Mike has a big smile on his face, and this affords the meaning that he is happy about spending time with his family.

In frames 30, 31 and 32, a woman named Alex is the central person. She has brown skin, black hair and she is petite. In frame 31 she is standing in the middle of a crowd of people, and across frames 30 and 31 the speaker says, "This is Alex with all the friends that'll like her post from Friday night". Therefore, she must be at a party. Moreover, the speaker's words suggest the meaning that she will post a photo from the party on her social media, and that she has many friends that will like the picture. She is furthermore smiling in several of the frames she appears in, and this affords the meaning that she is happy to be at the party.

Near the end of the advertisement, frames 33 and 34 show a phone screen with a phone number on it, and it is revealed that all of these people have called the number, which is the number of the

suicide prevention lifeline. This piece of information affords the possible meaning that all of these people have or have had some mental health issues that they needed help with. Thus, even though all of the people are shown in situations where they appear to be happy, this advertisement indicates that no one knows how other people feel and that a picture never tells the full story.



As a result of this piece of information revealed in frames 33 and 34, it is furthermore possible to read more into the following frames. In frames 35 to 42, all of the eight people are shown in closeups. All of them have small smiles on their faces, and they all look directly into the camera. Their facial expressions now all seem to afford a melancholic feeling, which adds a seriousness to the advertisement. The fact that they do not have big smiles on their faces also offer the possible meaning that they are not happy all of the time – which further indicates that overcoming mental health issues is a process. In frame 34, the instrumental music is accompanied by singing, and some of the lyrics are “I finally wanna be alive”. This is Logic’s song “1-800-273-8255”, and the lyrics afford the meaning that all of the people realised that they wanted to be alive after having reached out to the suicide prevention lifeline. Thus, this advertisement shows that even though you experience serious mental health issues, life can get better.

Ultimately it becomes clear, that all of the people in this advertisement deviate from the traditional stereotypes traditionally used in advertising, as mental health is not a theme that has been brought up often. Even though women have traditionally been presented as dependent on other people, having mental health issues has been a taboo subject, however, it is possible to argue that the men in this advertisement stray more from the traditional stereotype of a man, as men have traditionally been presented as strong and independent, which mental health issues contradict.

In frame 42, white writing on top of the picture of Nick says, “Question your lens”. This piece of writing substantiates the previous message that a picture does not tell a full story. By asking people to question their lenses, Google asks people to find out the full story before they assume something about other people’s lives or mental states. In frame 43, another message is shown in grey writing on a white screen. The writing says, “If you are in emotional distress, reach out: [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)”. Thus, Google encourages people who struggle with mental health issues or emotional

distress to reach out and get help. Through this frame, as well as the frames that contain the phone number of the suicide prevention lifeline, this advertisement gets a practical purpose, and Google becomes an advocate for reaching out if you are in need of help. The fact that all of the men and women in this advertisement have different skin colours, hair colours and different ages furthermore offer the potential meaning that many different types of people face mental health issues, and that not only certain types of people experience depression or suicidal thoughts. Thus, through this advertisement, Google normalises mental health issues and helps raise awareness of the fact that many people deal with hidden issues. Thereby, Google communicates to a large group of people who have not traditionally been represented in advertising; people who battle mental health issues.

Lastly, it is interesting to consider whether or not Google is the actual sender of the advertisement. Logic is the narrator, and his song is used throughout the advertisement, and thereby Logic may also be considered as a kind of sender. The advertisement is supposed to market the Google Pixel 2 phone but only shows it two times, however, Logic's song plays throughout the advertisement, and contact information for the suicide prevention lifeline is shown several times. Furthermore, the main message of the advertisement involves mental health awareness, and so it seems that Google may be lending their platform to another cause, which their product in turn will be associated with.

Discussion: What Is Inclusivity and What Makes Inclusivity Successful?

Throughout the previous analyses, numerous observations about the ways in which the brands employ inclusive marketing strategies have been made. The characteristics of the brands' inclusive marketing efforts were discovered through multimodal discourse analysis, which allowed for several different aspects of the advertisements and social media profiles to be analysed simultaneously. Thereby, it was possible to consider how the different modes and semiotic resources work together to make meaning, which they certainly do. This method makes it possible to see how a message can be communicated in several ways; as an example, inclusivity can be exhibited through a model who strays from the traditional stereotype in regard to appearance, which can be seen in visual modes, through a woman's professional life, which can be seen in the mode of text in a description, and through a personal message or key issue, which can be presented through a tag that leads to another multimodal text. However, using the method of multimodal discourse analysis has the consequence that a lot of the content of the previous analyses consists of simple registration of different effects. However, this registration becomes a point in itself, as the numerous observations of diverse people are examples of inclusive marketing efforts – thus proving that there are many examples of the brands' inclusivity. In the following section, the findings of the analyses will be discussed further; now, it is both relevant and interesting to summarize and discuss what generally characterises the brands' inclusive marketing efforts as well as compare the different brands and their marketing strategies. Furthermore, it is natural to consider why the brands have made the choices of exhibiting inclusivity and portraying diversity in the way that they do through their inclusive marketing strategies.

One of the characteristics of the brands' inclusive marketing efforts is that all of the brands clearly have a general inclusive message they intend consumers to see. ASOS accepts and applauds all types of people and attempts to connect them, as they bring attention to the fact that different types of people can have things in common, while it is also possible that the same kind of experience may look different to different people. Aerie advocates female empowerment and praises diversity in the way that they show how very different types of women can all become successful and happy. AXE champions how all men are real men and have something that makes them special even though they may not look like the traditional stereotype. Lastly, Google raises awareness of mental health issues and states how it is okay to ask for help. Thus, all of the brands promote inclusive and positive messages.

All of the brands are furthermore inclusive in the way that they embrace different definitions of what it means to be male and female. ASOS includes people who conform to the traditional stereotypes as well as some who stray from those stereotypes in different ways in their advertising. Examples of people who diverge from the stereotypes are the man who is presented with traditionally feminine traits in Appendix I frame 21, as well as the possibly transgender man, i.e. someone who was born as a woman and is in the process of transforming into a man, in Appendix I frame 47. Aerie, who only includes women in their advertising and on Instagram, also shows diverse representations of women. Aerie presents a group of successful women who are all different from each other in several ways. Appearance is one of the prominent features in their branding, as only some of the women conform to the traditional stereotype of a woman with light skin, a slim body and delicate features, while other women stray from that definition. Furthermore, all of the women have successful careers within fields such as sports, business and science, and as such the women stray from the traditional stereotype of a woman who is dependent on a man and furthermore not active or confident. AXE only presents men, however, they also state that there are different ways of being a man and that all men are real men. Like Aerie does with women, AXE includes a very diverse range of men in their advertisement, and some of the men that stand out and differ most from the traditional stereotype of a man may be the men from frames 6, 8 and 9 in Appendix V. The man in frame 6 is dancing in high heels, and thus he represents some traditionally feminine traits, and the men in frames 8 and 9 appear to be a symbol of homosexuality. This is the most obvious, and maybe the only, example of homosexuality in all of the four examples, and thus it is very significant that AXE has chosen to include it in their advertisement.

ASOS, Aerie and Google use symbols of heterosexuality through depictions of stereotypical families, like Aerie does through a woman holding a baby in Appendix III frame 30, and like Google does through a man and woman sitting in a car together with two children in Appendix VI frame 25. The reason behind the choice to depict heterosexual relationships may be that some of the traditional stereotypes are still dominant in advertising, and thus many people expect and recognise a schema which involves a stereotypical family consisting of a mother, a father and children. Furthermore, by employing cues and schemas that are both recognisable and foreign at the same time, i.e. showing a woman that differs from the traditional stereotype while she is also in a heterosexual relationship, the brands do not stray completely from the traditional and expected norms. By showing two young, slim men who may be homosexual, AXE diverges completely from traditional expected norms in those frames where the men appear, and therefore these frames likely violate some people's schemas

completely. Another interesting point to consider in relation to this is that the advertisement may hold coded representation, as it is possible that the cues that imply homosexuality may be so subtle that only homosexual people, and people who deliberately search for signs of inclusiveness, may recognise them as homosexual. Thereby, people that expect and appreciate the traditional stereotypes may not be disturbed by the connection between the two men.

As was indicated in the previous section, Google shows traditional heterosexual families, and the people in their advertisement generally do not stray much from the traditional stereotypes, as most of the men are tall, broad and muscular and most of the women are slim, have delicate features and long hair. However, Google shows people with different skin types, and so they do present people that are different from the traditional stereotypes. Furthermore, Google is the only brand who presents an older person in their advertisement, and thus they are more inclusive in regard to representing age than the other brands are.

In relation to the conclusion on the issue of representation of men and women in these examples, it is interesting to note that few models stray completely from the traditional stereotypes. As was clarified in the theory of gender stereotypes in advertising, individuals who stray too much from the stereotyped views on femininity and masculinity may be perceived negatively. However, the predominantly positive reception of the generally diverging representations of men and women afford the possible interpretation that this is changing. That may however also be the reason why only few of the models stray completely from the norm; as that may drive away consumers who appreciate traditional stereotypes.

In contrast to Google, a common thing for ASOS, Aerie and AXE is how they clearly make sure to represent different groups of people in regard to appearance, which also became apparent in the previous section. In addition to showing people who both conform to and stray from the traditional stereotypes of men and women, almost all of the brands include people with various body types and people with different skin colours. Both ASOS, Aerie and AXE show people with body types ranging from thin to overweight, and thus many people will be able to identify with at least one of the models used in their advertising.

Both ASOS, Aerie, AXE and Google are inclusive in terms of their representation of skin colours, as they include people with different shades of light skin and people with various shades of dark skin, thereby representing different ethnicities. However, the variation of skin colours is not as distinct in Google's advertisement as in the other examples, and furthermore AXE fails to include people who can be recognised as of Asian descent as main actors in their advertisement. All of the

other brands, however, present people who can be recognised as of Asian descent, which is a group of people who have not traditionally been seen much in advertising. Because of the diverse range of skin colours that are generally shown in all of the advertisements, many people may be able to identify with the brands through at least one of their models. In relation to the issue of ethnic identification, it is also possible to suggest that regardless of peoples' ethnic identification, they will be able to identify with the brands to some extent, because there is such a diverse representation of skin colours. Moreover, none of the brands evidently display negative cultural appropriation or degrading representations of people from marginalised or underrepresented groups, which is also a characteristic of the brands' marketing efforts; and this may be one of the reasons behind their success.

Some of the brands also include people with disabilities in their branding, however they do it in different ways. One of the brands that stands out in a negative way in regard to representation of disabilities is ASOS, as they have not included people with disabilities in their advertisement. They do, however, show people with disabilities on their Instagram, and it is therefore possible that they include disabled people in other parts of their advertising as well. The disabled person they show on their Instagram profile is a woman in a wheelchair, and thus this woman resembles the stereotype of a disabled person most often used in advertising. AXE also only shows one disabled person in their advertisement; they present a man in a wheelchair. The two examples of people in wheelchairs make it possible to initiate a discussion about tokenism in advertising.

The term tokenism covers the act of making a symbolic effort to do something good, for instance including a person from a minority group only because it will give the illusion of diversity and inclusivity (Hogg & Vaughan 368-369). By choosing to represent disabled people by showing a person in a wheelchair, this seemingly kind-hearted effort to raise awareness of disabilities and disabled people ultimately may end up reinforcing narrow stereotypes. Thereby, ASOS and AXE only communicate to a specific and narrow group of disabled people, and it is possible that some consumers with disabilities will feel that they are excluded, and furthermore they may not identify with the brands. Nonetheless, these brands do show representations of disabled people that stray from the traditional stereotypes in the way that they are not presented as being dependant on other people. Thereby, the brands do make an effort to be more inclusive and counter negative stereotypes. Google, however, include no people with visible disabilities in their advertisement for Google Pixel 2.

Aerie, in comparison, is a front-runner in regard to including people with disabilities in their branding, seeing as they have chosen a woman in a wheelchair, a blind woman and a woman with a prosthetic leg as some of their role models. Thus, Aerie shows a more diverse range of disabled

people. The women with disabilities are moreover all shown as strong and independent within several aspects of their lives, and thus Aerie counters the negative stereotype of a disabled person, who is defined as someone who is weak and needs help from others. In fact, Aerie appears to be the most inclusive brand out of the four brands, as they include such a wide range of women in their advertisement and on their Instagram. As already stated, they show women with a wide range of different skin colours, and only few of the skin colours resemble each other. They moreover display women with different body types, including two pregnant women who also look very different from each other. Furthermore, many different professions are represented through the women, and the women all have different key issues that they wish to raise awareness of. Thus, Aerie shows complex women who are not only defined by one of the things that characterises them, which complies with the findings of some of the studies done on inclusive marketing that demand exactly that kind of representation.

In addition to representing several different kinds of disabilities, Aerie also presents a woman who has experienced something that hinders her in some aspects of life in other ways. Their role model Aly Raisman has suffered from sexual abuse, an experience that left her powerless, however she managed to learn how to take care of herself and her mental health, and thus Aerie also addresses psychological concerns. Both ASOS, Aerie and Google address psychological health. ASOS does this through the young people's concerns about coming of age, Aerie mainly does it through Aly Raisman and her experience with sexual abuse, although some of the other role models also have mental health as part of their key issues, and Google uses it as a focal point of their advertisement. Thereby, Google's marketing efforts differ from the other brands' efforts in the way that Google does not have inclusivity in terms of appearance in mind, seeing as the focus of the advertisement is that no one can see how people are really feeling. This is furthermore established through the fact that most of the people in their advertisement conform to the traditional stereotypes in terms of appearance.

The reason behind the choice to mainly focus on inclusivity in regard to mental health, rather than mental health along with appearance, may be that presenting people who have mental health issues while they also stray visually from the traditional stereotypes would be too high of a risk in regard to violating people's schemas, as the people would thus stray completely from traditional norms. This example of Google's marketing efforts thus stands out from the other brands' efforts in the way that they primarily focus on inclusivity in terms of emotions and inner feelings. Furthermore, as was established in the analysis of Google's advertisement, the circumstances regarding the sender

of the advertisement is interesting, as Google is not only advertising their product; they are advertising a self-help hotline. Thereby, Google lends their platform to another cause which their product in turn will be associated with, and this further establishes how this example differs from the other brands' marketing efforts.

In relation to the discussion of how the brands include the issue of mental health in their inclusive marketing efforts, it is interesting to note that AXE does not pick up this subject. Like it was just discussed with the example from Google, the reason may be that the stereotype of a man is strong and independent, and as having mental health issues might be considered as weak by some, presenting men with mental health issues could be too great of a violation of some peoples' schemas. AXE already presents different types of men that stray from the traditional stereotype, however, they might believe that adding the subject of mental health issues may be too high of a risk. Furthermore, the subject of mental health issues would not be consistent with the layer of humour that pervades the advertisement.

The humour in AXE's advertisement is also an interesting agent. It can be discussed that the layer of humour has an effect on the overall message of the advertisement in the way that all of the different representations of men may receive a better welcome if the men that stray from the traditional stereotype are presented in a humorous way. Thereby, the consumers who are rooted in the traditional understanding of what a man is may be able to accept or tolerate another definition than the one that they practise. The humour moreover works to give the advertisement a light and happy feeling, and it is an interesting factor to note that all of the brands employ a feeling a positivity in their branding. ASOS presents a positive vibe through the music and the youthful optimism that is the lasting feeling in their advertisement and through the positive message on their Instagram profile. Aerie exhibits positivity through the music and the lyrics to it along with all of the smiling women in their advertisement, and they also show it through the fact that they label their role models as part of a family. As already mentioned, AXE presents a positive vibe through the humour in their advertisement, and Google offers a positive feeling through the fact that the people in their advertisement are in the process of overcoming mental health issues.

Google's advertisement does have a melancholic feeling to it, but the overall message is positive, and thereby Google also utilizes the optimistic feeling of their message. This positive feeling that is present in all of the brands' marketing efforts could be labelled as an ideology of positivity, and this ideology becomes connected to the general message of inclusivity. This furthermore raises the question of whether it is possible to communicate an inclusive message without the positivity.

Generally, none of the advertisements or Instagram profiles display a criticizing view on the lack of representation in the media. All of the brands mainly focus on the positivity that is tied to representing previously underrepresented groups in their branding. Thus, the brands predominantly exhibit how inclusivity affords possibilities in the way that all people can and should be comfortable and proud to be who they are. Some of the only examples that may be perceived to present criticism are from ASOS' advertisement, where two different women respectively say, "People always ask me where I'm from. What they really mean is, where is your family from? It makes me feel alienated when I've actually grown up here" (Appendix I, frames 27-29) and "No, I do not feel like I'm represented properly" (Appendix I, frames 31-33). Through these women, ASOS brings attention to the negative effects of stereotypes in advertising; how stereotypes, through their rigid and narrow definitions, can be the cause of separation of people and feelings of alienation. Furthermore, the melancholic feeling of Google's advertisement along with their message that says, "Question your lens" also indicate a criticism towards representation of mental health issues in the media, as it would not be necessary to broadcast this message if mental health had not been a taboo subject in advertising. However, the ideology of positivity still dominates all of the examples of marketing efforts.

The reason behind the choice to predominantly exhibit a positive feeling towards inclusivity may lie with the consumers. It is possible that consumers are more likely to accept and appreciate marketing efforts that advocate inclusivity when the inclusivity is presented to them through a positive and wide representation. If consumers are faced with criticism of underrepresentation, some people may feel that they are the ones being criticized, if they themselves are represented in advertising. The positive vibe may thus be a kind of safety net that is meant to make sure that the consumers who identify with the traditional stereotypes are not affected in a negative way. Ultimately, the brands wish to appeal to a wide range of people, as they wish to sell their products, and therefore they have to be careful in order to not antagonize the consumers that identify with or appreciate stereotypes. Essentially, the brands' mission and intent with inclusive marketing is to not offend or exclude anyone, and thus they have to try to communicate to all of their consumers at the same time in a way that they will appreciate.

In order to not offend their target audience, the brands thus have to know who the people in the audience are and what they appreciate, and so the prevalent discourse influences how brands communicate. This is for instance evident from the fact that the four brands and their marketing efforts across advertisements and social media are tailored to the context they are part of. The described marketing efforts of the four brands are adapted to the culture of the western world, wherein many

people appreciate diversity, free choices and free speech. In other cultures, in other parts of the world, inclusivity may not be as widely appreciated, and therefore a consumer who practices other values that belong to other cultures may in fact not regard inclusivity as desirable. Thus, these brands may only be successful, and their marketing efforts may only be praised, in an already somewhat inclusive and open-minded culture. In relation to this it is important to note that there are most likely also people in the western world who do not appreciate inclusivity, but the majority of people in this part of the world do believe in matters such as equal opportunities for all people, which indicates some belief in inclusivity.

Through the conclusion on the brands' marketing efforts it has become evident that, through their branding, ASOS, Aerie, AXE and Google attempt to make the sets of beliefs about what characterises a particular group wider in the way that they do not move away from the traditional stereotypes, they rather include more types of people in their branding to show that all kinds of appearances and personal concerns are okay. Thereby, all of the brands encourage purchase activism in the consumers that either identify with the brand through a model they see themselves in or in the consumers who generally appreciate inclusivity and diverse representation. The positive reception of these marketing efforts moreover suggests how the positive and negative associations that have traditionally been tied to specific stereotypes may be disappearing or fading, thus indicating that the discourse is changing. All of these brands are thus inclusive in some ways; however, it has also become apparent that some of the brands fail to be inclusive in all aspects.

Google primarily shows people who conform to the traditional stereotypes in regard to appearance. ASOS, AXE and Google generally fails to include people with visible disabilities in their advertisement, and AXE does not fully represent the traditional stereotype of a man. Aerie, on the other hand, may come across as overly inclusive, seeing as all of the women are so different from each other that the feeling of unity and togetherness may seem unrealistic to some. The success of the marketing efforts may ultimately be due to the brands' understanding of their target audiences and the culture they are part of, and furthermore the brands' approach of delivering their inclusive messages in positive ways may also be part of their success, as it is possible that the positivity has an effect on the reception of the inclusive messages. Thereby, the brands probably do not lose much interest or engagement from consumers, which must be in their interest.

In relation to these findings, it is lastly important to note that this conclusion is made based on few examples, and therefore it cannot be determined that the findings are true for the brands' marketing efforts that extend beyond these examples. Thus, the approach and the examples chosen

for this thesis only offer a narrow field of investigation, however, one could imagine that some of the characteristics of the marketing efforts do recur in other parts of the brands' branding.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate what characterises the examples of inclusive marketing efforts provided by ASOS, Aerie, AXE and Google. Through the theory of multimodal discourse analysis and by the use of knowledge about stereotypes in advertising along with perspectives on inclusive marketing, it was possible to determine that there are in fact some characteristics in regard to what signifies inclusive marketing efforts. Multimodal discourse analysis allowed for numerous observations of inclusive effects to be detected and interpreted, and the theory about stereotypes and inclusive marketing served as a reference point in regard to what can be defined as inclusive efforts. In conclusion, what characterises the brands' inclusive marketing efforts in general is their diverse representation of people as well as the positivity that is tied to all of the inclusive messages.

All of the brands communicate an inclusive and positive message, through which they empower and encourage people to be themselves, follow their dreams or stay healthy. Through the positive and inclusive messages, some of the brands also raise awareness of different issues regarding representation or diversity. All of the brands are furthermore inclusive in regard to representing people who both conform to and stray from the stereotypes of men and women that have traditionally been displayed in advertising, and they all represent people with various skin colours. ASOS, Aerie and AXE present different kinds of body types, as well as they include people with disabilities in their advertising, even though their way of doing it differs. Moreover, ASOS, Aerie and Google represent people with mental health struggles, while Google is the only brand to use the subject as a focal point in their advertisement. Thus, all of the brands are inclusive to some degree, even though it also became evident through the analysis and discussion that the brands generally seem to focus on some aspects within representation, while they leave other aspects out. Moreover, by presenting inclusivity as a positive motion that is generally not connected to any critical aspects, the inclusive messages are communicated in a way that most likely will not offend too many people, which means that the brands probably do not lose much interest or engagement from consumers.

The brands' success with their marketing efforts is clear in the generally positive reception of their advertising and communication styles on social media platforms, and it may be due to the fact that the brands are able to communicate to their target audiences in ways that they appreciate. Thus, many consumers will likely identify with the brands through some of their models. The success may also be due to the fact that the brands encourage purchase activism in many different types of people by displaying such diverse models. Moreover, the fact that the brands generally do not display people who stray completely from traditional stereotypes may also be one of the reasons behind their success,

as that ensures that some cues or schemas can always be recognised by consumers who appreciate traditional stereotypes.

Ultimately, it is possible to conclude that displaying diversity through an ideology of positivity is the key characteristic of the inclusive marketing efforts that have been analysed in this thesis. As the findings are only based on few examples, it is, however, not possible to conclude that this applies for all examples of inclusive marketing. Yet, there is reason to believe that inclusivity, diversity and positivity are strongly connected, and that the same pattern could be found in other examples as well. Therefore, it will be interesting to see how the field of inclusive marketing unfolds in the future.

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