Goodbye stereotypes.
Hello Zerotypes.

Commercializing social change

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Zalando's campaign "Zerotypes", and its effect on consumer attitudes

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Acknowledgements

Through my years of study, I have regularly gone to the university project library to read semester projects and particularly - theses, written by other students. When reading theses, I encountered several chapters dedicated to acknowledgements. I must admit that I frowned a bit upon the notion of writing acknowledgements in a thesis - I might have even deemed them pompous. This was before I was a thesis student myself. The intense process of writing a thesis is bound to transfer to one's social life - and for this, those who have been involved in my process deserve words of acknowledgement and gratitude.

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Abstract

This thesis sets out to investigate the creation of meaning for the phenomenon of "Zerotypes", created by the multinational e-commerce fashion store, Zalando in the context of social change in the fashion industry as well as consumers' attitudes towards the campaign. Through social media posts on Zalando's official Instagram page, and transcripts of semi-structured interviews with young Danish consumers, the thesis departs from a theoretical framework consisting of chosen elements from Norman Fairclough's framework for Critical Discourse Analysis and Richard M. Perloff's account of attitudes to answer the research questions. The problem formulation arises from a background on Corporate Social Responsibility and the relatively new phenomenon of brand activism, and how this is executed in a commercial context as well as *how* commercials can be utilized to drive social change. In this connection, the issues raised in the fashion industry, such as body image, stereotypes and norms provide a good starting point for such a problem formulation to evolve into concrete research questions. Given that the problem formulation for this thesis is not very concrete, the research design; a qualitative single case study, aids in creating specifications around this topic, which can be answered within the frames that this thesis provides. Therefore, the research questions are all centered around the Zerotypes campaign, as a representative of the phenomenon of social change through advertising.

The overall findings in this thesis conclude that the main meaning created around the phenomenon of Zerotypes is simply "change" - however in different respects. Firstly, Zerotypes exists on a continuum along with stereotypes, but as opposing poles, where stereotypes represents a boxed-in, divided, and excluding way of thinking about people, whereas Zerotypes represents a free world, where no types or expectations are given to anyone, and where everyone are free to be who they want to be.

Furthermore, the analysis concluded that the campaign seems to be driving change on three different, but also interchanging topics: *gender, beauty standards* and *body shape.* Within these three topics, the Zerotypes campaign is drawing on prevailing discourses, which are driven by social norms, such as "women cannot wear men's clothes" or "Heavy is not handsome", and offering different - and more including and accepting discourses on these topics. Furthermore, the analysis concluded that the Zerotypes campaign assumes an activist genre rather than an advertising genre. This is realized by the campaign not setting out to sell products, but to change public perception on prevailing social issues. The form in which the campaign interpells the receiver to create change through either changing their mindset, or

modifying their behavior, rather than encouraging them to buy products is the driving force in this observation.

Additionally, analysis of 13 semi-structured interview transcripts concludes that Dansih youth are predominantly positive towards the Zerotypes campaign, as most of the respondents saw the campaign as a symbol of change. However, consumers, who were able to assume an empathetic subject position in relation to the messages expressed significantly stronger affective responses to the campaign than consumers who had not experienced disadvantage based on their appearance.

Furthermore, the analysis found that consumers are so used to seeing advertisements similar to the Zerotypes campaign that they would ask critical questions on what the company is actually doing to change stereotypes. Thus, it was found that having an experience that the company is taking advantage of the topic of social change for publicity created a significantly negative attitude towards the brand as a whole.

However, the analysis suggests that the discourse on appearance and stereotypes and appearance is changing to being more based on individual preferences than on social norms. Yet, in this connection, as most consumers regard Zalando as a large player in the fashion industry, it is arguable that social action - and activism is expected of the companies in the industry, to change the discourses on stereotypes.

Introduction

Stereotypes have long been discussed as being problematic in a social context. Particularly, the concept has been much studied - and discussed in both sociology and social psychology. The Oxford English Dictionary defines stereotypes as "Widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing" (Oxford English Dictionary 2021). Therefore, stereotypes are pervasive, and cover many fields such as racial groups, political groups, genders, demographic groups, and activities (Bordalo et al.2015). Some stereotypes are largely accurate, while others are grossly untrue. Some groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities have long been - and continue to be subjected to stereotypes, and Bordalo et al. suggest that this may be "... because the groups in power want to perpetuate false beliefs about them" (2015).

One of the main aspects of stereotypes is that of appearance. These stereotypes are often rooted in overall gender-standards of how men and women should appear to best capture masculinity and femininity. Scholars argue that ideal appearance for men and women exists within every culture (Strahan et al. 2011), and that many of the ideal appearance standards being promoted in Western culture are unrealistic (Strahan et al. 2011). In this connection, several studies conducted with bases in socio-cultural sciences have shown that factors such as sociocultural attitudes towards appearance, gender and Body Mass Index (BMI) were deciding factors in adolescents' use of appearance-enhancing products such as hair dye, diet pills and steroids (Yoo and Yurchisin 2017). With regards to the ideal appearance, researchers have found that particularly women often look to celebrities and models in women's magazines, who have come to appear as increasingly thin over the years (Strahan et al. 2011). Here, the ideals for men suggest a lean and muscular physique (Strahan et al. 2011). These ideals, and the role-models reflecting them, incline researchers to suggest that social comparison results in low self-esteem, since most beauty standards are unrealistic - as mentioned, and individuals are comparing themselves to superior others (Strahan et al. 2011). In the study on socio-cultural norms for ideal appearance, Erin J. Straham and her co-writers point out that "... social comparison with idealized models results in greater body dissatisfaction, whereas exposure to average size models does not" (Strahan et al. 2011). However, while this research focuses on idealized appearance standards set by analog communication channels, the post-modern society has gained a new medium for communication: Social Media. Depending on the context, social media can be argued to both have positive and negative influences on body image. The negative influence may be instilled

as studies show that young people are increasingly present on social media on an everyday basis (Kemp 2020). This fact correlates with the notion that people tend to only post self-promoting content on social media, meaning content that enhances the positive aspects of one's life and appearance. Therefore, individuals on social media are exposed to a high rate of "perfect" content to which they can compare themselves. Referencing what was mentioned previously on social comparison, this may create negative effects for users of social media. However, in the last few years, social media such as Instagram has proven itself to be more than just a medium for self-worship. In 2017, the hashtag #metoo went viral, and sparked a movement for survivors of sexual assault to tell their story, and explore healing. This movement spiked a global conversation about male superiority in many industries, and with this, Instagram became a medium through which a large number of influencers, celebrities, and regular people would question status quo in many areas (Metoo 2021). This is also true for prominent figures in the fashion industry. Through the past couple of years, people with a large following on social media have increasingly shared "imperfect" pictures, and have made use of the platform to challenge the status quo with regards to appearance and ideal standards.

One example of this is the world-known musician, Harry Styles, who has about 40 million followers on Instagram (@HarryStyles, May 2021). In November 2020, Styles participated in a photoshoot for the women's fashion magazine Vogue wearing dresses and traditional women's jewelry. The photo shoot sparked outrage with the conservative author Candace Owens, who voiced her concern about pop culture's feminization of men with her infamous tweet saying "Bring back manly men" in response to Styles' cover shoot (NBC News 2020). This started a global conversation between two poles of people who either thought that Styles' fashion choices were too bold, and that he was using his sexuality to gain publicity, or who were strongly opposed to Owens' statement, and thus applauding Styles for his willingness to challenge traditional masculinity (Carras 2020). Yet, sexuality and gender stereotypes are not the only issues being brought up in this seemingly spring of inclusivity and activism. The hashtag #bodypositive has been shared widely on instagram for the past years, as well as being the center topic for many online magazines, encouraging social media users to follow body positive accounts (Selzer and Andrews 2020) . As beauty standards have been known to cause negative body image, which may lead to eating disorders, the American resource center for addictions, Bulimia.com provided a study showing that one of the most popular hashtags within body positivity was #fatgirlscan, which recontextualizes the term "fat", which as long carried negative connotations (Bulimia 2018). In this conversation, the

model, Ashley Graham, who was the first curvy woman to appear on the cover of the magazine "Sports Illustrated" in 2015 (Pengelly 2015), has been vocal about the representation of women in the fashion industry, thus sparking a conversation about what it means to be a model. Graham refuses to be photoshopped in images, and is especially keen on diversity and size-inclusivity in the fashion industry, to reflect all types of women, as well as normalizing body changes such as stretch marks during pregnancy (Pengelly 2015). Recently, several accounts dedicated to changing the conversation - and the general understanding of stereotypical beauty have sprung up on social media. This has further inclined other media to report stories on the topic, and thus, the status quo on how one should appear to be accepted in society, has changed. This has also affected the way in which corporations in the fashion industry advertise themselves and their products. Hunkemöller, the largest - and leading bodywear retailer in Wester Europe have created the initiative "Together Tomorrow", which ensures inclusivity across their product line, and especially in their marketing initiatives (Hunkemoller 2021), Similarly, the British fashion website ASOS state overtly on their website that they aim at representing a diverse range of people in their marketing (ASOS 2021).

In February, the biggest fashion retailer in Europe, Zalando initiated their "Zerotypes" campaign through various channels. In a public press release, the company writes: "The work sets out to say goodbye to outdated stereotypes and make them a thing of the past. In turn, it welcomes us to a richer world of freedom and coins the new term "Zerotypes." (Zalando 2020b). Furthermore, Zalando states that their ambition for the Zerotypes campaign is to start a broader conversation about "outdated cultural stereotypes that still remain" (Zalando 2020b), as well as changing how both advertising and fashion plays a role in restricting people (Zalando 2020b).

The notion that large corporations, whose main goal is to be profitable, seeks to create social change, sparked my interest as a researcher. In their press release, Zalando points out that through research of their own, they found that 89 percent of people reported that they believed that stereotypes still exist, and 60 percent of those pointing to advertisements as the main culprit of creating, and maintaining these stereotypes (Zalando 2020b).

Problem formulation

As a student within consumption and market communication, I find it interesting that Zalando are trying to "spark a wider conversation around the outdated cultural stereotypes that still remain". This is not only from a business- standpoint, but also from a cultural, and social standpoint. While Zalando states that they have conducted research on their consumer basis, I find it relevant to investigate this campaign in a Danish context, as analyses show that Zalando is the most used webshop in Denmark (Dansk Erhverv 2019) . Therefore, this thesis will also set out to examine how Danish consumers make sense of the messages in the campaign, as well as what their attitudes are towards such a phenomenon, and what lays at the ground for those attitudes.

Therefore, this thesis sets out to answer the following research questions:

How is the phenomenon 'Zerotypes' discursively constructed in the "Zerotypes" campaign?

How do young Danish consumers make sense of the messages conveyed in the campaign?

- ***What are young Danish consumers' attitudes towards the Zerotypes campaign, and what lays at ground for those attitudes?***

Literature review

This chapter will present prevailing literature with relation to inclusion in general as well as in a commercial context. This will be done with the aim to identify a gap in knowledge within this area, which will be investigated throughout this thesis.

Corporate Social responsibility

The notion of businesses having a positive impact on society started with the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (hereinafter CSR).

CSR as a concept can be described in many different ways, but in general, the term "CSR" entails the relationship between business and society - with great emphasis on the former's impact on the latter. Over time, the concept of CSR has changed from being considered a tool for profitability to recently being perceived as a tool for developing society as well as organizations (Govindasamy and Suresh 2017). Therefore, the notion of CSR suggests that businesses have more commitments to society than merely being profitable, and operating within legal parameters (Carroll 1993). However, the notion that businesses should be sensitive to their surrounding societies is not new. In his essay "A Three-dimensional Conceptual model of Corporate Performance", professor in management and organization, Archie B. Carroll (1979) points back to the 1930's in reference to the development of attention towards the social responsibility of businesses. Yet, the first book on the subject was written in 1953 by Howard R. Bowen (Carroll 1979, 2), and following this publication, several other works came along. With these works - and thus views on the social responsibility of business, came many scholarly disagreements on the true definition of what "social responsibility" entails. With his 1979 paper on conceptualizing social responsibility, Archie B. Carroll became a referent within Corporate Social Responsibility, and some may even look to him as the conceptual founder of the concept. With his pyramid model, Carroll accounted for four different responsibilities of businesses: Economic responsibilities, Legal responsibilities, Ethical responsibilities and Discretionary (philanthropic) responsibilities. In the paper, he argues that "These four categories are not mutually exclusive, nor are they intended to portray a continuum with economic concerns on one end and social concerns on the other…. Rather, they are ordered in the figure only to suggest what might be termed their fundamental role in the evolution of importance" (Carroll 1979, 3). While the first two responsibilities, economic and legal seem foundational for business, given that they are rather necessary for businesses to be successful - and thus survive, ethical and discretionary

responsibilities are more so founded in the social expectations set by stakeholders. Especially the discretionary responsibilities can be discussed as to whether they are actually responsibilities, as the initiatives entailed in this segment are purely at the individual business' discretion. However, as this literature review moves forward, it will become increasingly clear that the ethical and discretionary responsibilities as described by Carroll actually lay the foundation for the problem area of this thesis.

As a continuation of his 1979 paper, Carroll published the essay "The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders" (Carroll 1991). In this paper, Carroll expanded his previous approach to the four responsibilities of business to also concerning relevant stakeholders -and pairing these two into a framework to determine best-practice strategies (Carroll 1991).

Translating CSR into organizational inclusion

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, disadvantages of minority groups have often been exemplified through the lack of representation in organizational settings. One core inequality, which has been discussed both academically and socially, is the lack of representation of women in C-level positions and at the top posts in boardrooms. Furthermore, representation of ethnicities in organizations has also been thoroughly discussed. In accordance with the increased focus on social causes in organizations, it is only natural that inclusion is top-of-mind in socially conscious organizations. In the chapter "The practice of inclusion in diverse organizations - Toward a Systemic and Inclusive Framework, professor in organizational psychology, Bernardo M. Ferdman emphasizes the importance of diversity and inclusion at the workplace, and how this not only creates many opportunities for interchanging knowledge across social groups, but also how the adoption of a diversity and inclusion framework in organizations can have widespread positive social outcomes in society:

"Inclusion at work has to do with *how* organizations, groups,their leaders, and their members provide ways that allow everyone, across multiple types of differences, to participate, contribute, have a voice, and feel like they are connected and belong, all without losing individual uniqueness or having to give up valuable identities or aspects of themselves" (Ferdman 2014, 12). This subject has become increasingly prominent in the wake of social media, which has provided a gateway for all minority groups to call to action in order for

them to obtain equality. Therefore, this subject can also be considered especially timely in organizational stakeholder management.
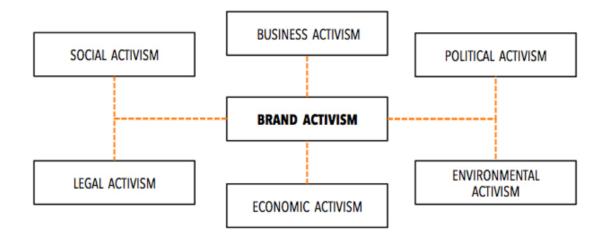
Brand Activism

In relation to both CSR and organizational diversity and inclusion, the relatively new concept of brand activism, as explained by Sarkar and Kotler in their 2018 book "Brand activism: From purpose to action" seems fit to include in this literature review. The concept of brand activism is relatively new, as Sarkar and Kotler's approach is the first in academic literature. Therefore, the concept is also only mentioned in a limited amount of literature. However, this following section will present existing literature on the subject relevant to this thesis.

What is Brand Activism?

In their attempt to define the phenomenon of companies pursuing solutions of global, social issues, Kotler and Sarkar describes brand activism as such: "Business efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform of stasis with the desire to promote or impede improvements in society" (Sarkar and Kotler 2018). If looking up 'activism', the Cambridge Dictionary offers the following definition: "The use of direct and noticeable action to achieve a result, usually a political or social one" (Cambridge Dictionary 2021a).

In their framework on brand activism, Sarkar and Kotler present the six categories of brand activism; social activism, business activism, political activism, legal activism, economic activism, and environmental activism (Sarkar and Kotler 2018).

Brand Activism Categories- Source: Sarkar and Kotler 2018.

In this theoretical framework, Sarkar and Kotler also conceptualize regressive and progressive brand activism, which draws strong parallels to the above-mentioned six categories (Sarkar and Kotler 2018). The scholars argue that these two concepts are differentiated by how a brand commits to the greater good of society (Kotler and Sarkar 2018). A regressive brand is characterized by going against the common good, whereas a proressive brand will commit to pursuing the common good (Kotler and Sarkar 2018).

In a business context, activism has especially received attention in America, where an increased amount of large businesses such as Nike, Patagonia and Starbucks have incorporated activism as a part of their foundation (Chatterji and Toffel 2018). Furthermore, Shetty et al. describes brand activism as taking place "when a company or brand supports or promotes social, economic, environmental, cultural and social issues and aligns it with its core values and vision of the company" (Shetty et al. 2019).

Thus, brand activism, in its essence, is about companies emphasizing specific values to promote solutions to social issues. In this connection, several scholars point to campaigning as a crucial part of conducting brand activism, as campaigns allow the company to communicate messages in order to influence consumers as well as the general public (Mandresi-Sánches 2019, Shetty et al. 2019).

Consumer demands for Brand Activism

While brand activism is relatively newly introduced in academic texts, the notion of businesses taking on social causes is not new. One can argue that brand activism is merely an enhanced development of CSR, which has been introduced previously in this chapter. In their framework on brand activism, Sarkar and Kotler argue that brand activism should be seen as an advancement of CSR, which is no longer enough (Sarkar and Kotler 2018). This notion is supported by consumer demand, as especially conscious and progressive consumers have increasingly come to demand businesses conducting initiatives to solve some of the most pressing issues in society. This may be rooted in the notion that consumers consider businesses the root of some of these problems, and thus expect large social players, with a significant amount of power, to initiate change for the better of society (Sarkar and Kotler 2018). This consumer mindset can be argued to further initiate a development of communication strategies in businesses, in order to communicate brand causes to consumers (Manfredi-Sánches 2019).

In the study conducted in 2019, Shetty et al. found that adopting a strategic approach to brand

activism and demonstrating the core values of a brand as well as expliciting the brand's sincerity toward the specific cause approached by the brand is imperative when conducting brand activism (Shetty et al. 2019).

Furthermore, Kotler and Sarkar suggest that consumers expect brands to take stands on society-driven issues, rather than issues driven by the individual business' interests. They argue that it is beneficial for the consumer-perception of the brand, and that approaching society-driven issues is connected to greater reward than risk (Sarkar and Kotler 2018).

Identifying the research gap

As I have now presented some prominent academic works within Corporate Social Responsibility, and brand activism, I will thus position the subject of this thesis, and myself as a researcher within this field.

As mentioned above, both theories and work within CSR as well as Brand Activism actively work at the organizational level of socially conscious businesses. Both CSR and Brand activism focus on the effects that taking a social stand has on business. However, not much research has been conducted on the messages themselves. Furthermore, Brand Activism, which is a relatively new field in both branding and organizational context, is centered around the activities of large American brands, which leaves a research gap outside the American borders. Therefore, this thesis will attempt to fill this gap by investigating an arguably activist branding campaign, "Zerotypes" by a European brand, Zalando, to gain insight on *how* a such campaign approaches social problems through discourse. Furthermore, this raises the question of how consumers react to a such campaign message, and as Kotler and Sarkar argue that there are more benefits than risks to adopting brand activism as a strategic initiative, this thesis sees an opportunity to gain further insight into Danish consumers' attitudes with regards to this campaign.

Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical positions utilized in this analysis. Thus, this chapter will elucidate discourse analysis as a theory and an analytical tool, which is the theoretical backbone of this thesis. Furthermore, the concept of "attitudes" will be explained, as a guiding tool for the collection and processing of the interviews.

Discourse as a theory and analytical tool

As the problem formulation suggests, this thesis sets out to investigate the communicative actions taken by a prominent fashion retailer to increase inclusion and representation of different social groups of society, and thus, diminish stereotypes. For this purpose, I have found the discursive research field especially relevant, given that the suggested change is initiated by language use in a social context.

But what exactly is a discourse, and how is that relevant to this thesis? The term *discourse* has been widely used on several occasions, and therefore, the term has become arbitrary in many ways.

When looking up definitions of discourse in the online dictionary Merriam Webster, one will find articulations such as: "Verbal interchange of ideas" and "A mode of organizing knowledge, ideas, or experience that is rooted in language and its concrete contexts (such as history or institutions)" (Merriam Webster 2021). However, in their book "Discourse Analysis as theory and method", Marianne Winther Jørgensen and Louise Philips offer a different definition: "...a discourse is a certain way of speaking of - and understanding the World (or a segment of the World)" (Winther Jørgensen and Philips 1999, 9). Even the two different articulations of what *discourse* is, are examples of how discourse functions. The first example refers to tangible objects, such as "mode", "knowledge", "ideas", "history" and "institutions". The second example is more abstract, given that it does not mention any objects that can be utilized in understanding the World. The two examples express two different discourses. In spite of the concrete form offered by the dictionary's definition, one might argue that it seems almost dry in it´s chancery-like use of language. The definition offered by Winter Jørgensen and Philips on the other hand, seems to make use of everyday language, even though the explanation is also made more or less general.

The different experiences given by these two definitions can first and foremost be explained by the difference in genre from explanations given by dictionaries and educational material. Secondly, the two definitions offer different social relations between the writer and the receiver. In general, a dictionary does not build on a sender-receiver relationship, whereas educational material, such as a book on discourse, where there is often a very clear sender-receiver relationship between the writer of the book and the student reading the book. This example is just an attempt to exemplify how the concept of discourse can be explained. However, there are several variants of explanations of the concept of discourse, and theorists do disagree on the definition of the concept - as well as how to analyze discourse. In the

following section, I will introduce some approaches to discourse analysis, which are especially relevant, and beneficial to the answering of the given problem formulation for this thesis.

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

As a scientific tradition, Critical Discourse Analysis (hereinafter CDA) has been approached, discussed and utilized by several scholars - all with different understandings of the concept. The most prominent scholars in the field of CDA are Norman Fairclough (1992, 1995), Ruth Wodak (2001) and Teun Van Dijk (2008). Yet, they all emphasize that CDA cannot be referred to as a fixed concept. Rather theorists seem to approach CDA as an interdisciplinary approach to sociolinguistics, aiming at uncovering underlying elements in texts (written, spoken, visual etc.), that seem natural, but carry ideology. One thing is, however, common to all scholars within the field of CDA: The notion that language is both socially constructed and socially constructive (Machin and Mayr 2012, 4).

Furthermore, Faircloughs understanding of CDA is that the analysis is: "The process of analyzing linguistic elements in order to reveal connections between language, power and ideology that are hidden from people" (Machin and Mayr 2012, 5).
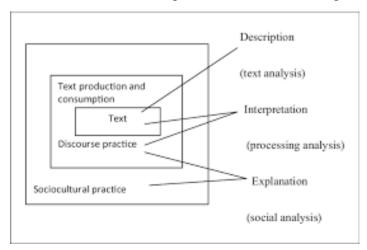
For Fairclough, the goal of CDA is not just to point out the existing discourses in the given use of language. Rather, he sees discourses as an important form of *social practise*, which contributes to reproduce and change identities, social relations and knowledge among other things (Winter Jørgensen and Philips 1999, 77). Thus, Fairclough argues that it is the task of anyone conducting Critical Discourse Analysis to "expose" the role of the *discursive practices* in maintaining inequality in the power structures in the social world. This is also what appoints Fairclough's approach to discourse as being 'critical'. The concepts "Social practice" and "discursive practice" mentioned previously in this section will be elaborated further later in this chapter. However, firstly, I will draw attention to Fairclough's own understanding of the concept of *discourse.*

In one of his works on discourse "Discourse and Social change" from 1992, Fairclough explains the concept "discourse" as being separated in two parts; One part contains the non-traditional textual analysis, focusing on fragments of either spoken or written language, focusing on larger fragments of written or spoken language with emphasis on text production and processes of interpretation as well as the given context within which the language is presented (Fairclough 1992, 3). In the other part, Fairclough is inspired by Michel

Fouchault's theory on power and knowledge. In this theory, power should not be solely understood as a tool of oppression, but also as a productive tool, as power also aids in constituting discourses and knowledge (Winter Jørgensen and Philips 1999, 23). Thus, Fairclough's textual analysis is present in a macro-structure, where the analysis of existing texts can provide insight into social and cultural processes, as well as social structures. According to Fairclough, discourse contributes to constructing social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and meaning (Fairclough 1992, 65). These three aspects respectively correspond to three functions of language and dimensions of meaning, which are present in all discourse: an identity function, a relational function and ideational function. The identity function concerns the ways in which social identities are presented in discourses. The relational function is concerned with how the social relations between the participants in a communicative event are conducted. Lastly, the ideational function concerns itself with how texts designate the processes and relations of the world (Fairclough 1992, 64).

To identify these functions, which are - according to Fairclough - present in all discourses, Fairclough created a three-dimensional model of discourse in communicative events (see model further down).

The model consists - as the name infers - of three dimensions of discourse; The *textual* dimension, the *discursive* dimension, and the *social* dimension. This model will create the frame for the analysis of social media posts sent out by the european fashion giant Zalando. The textual dimension is directed at linguistic analysis of texts. This dimension, as mentioned previously, concerns the specific spoken or written material. The discursive dimension specifies the processes around text production, distribution - and interpretation. As an example, the discursive dimension will consider the types of discourses being included in the production of the textual material, and how these are combined to reinforce - or change current discourses on the specific topic. Lastly, the social dimension directs focus at the institutional, and organizational conditions of the communicative event, and how these contribute to the formation of the discursive practice as well as the constitutive effects of discourse (Fairclough 1992, 4).

The three dimensions are presented in the following model:

(Winther Jørgensen and Philips 1999, 81)

As depicted in the model, Fairclough calls the textual part of the analysis for "description", the discourse practise is called "interpretation" and the social practise is called "explanation". Yet, he does not refer to these distinctions as being sharp, as one as an analytic is in a constant process of interpretation , and therefore, no process of analysis is purely descriptive. Instead, CDA offers a combination of description, interpretation and explanation, and therefore, the one conducting analysis must be aware of the resources being used in connection with the discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992, 199).

I will firstly present the textual dimension, and thus chosen headings and subheadings as explained by Fairclough. Furthermore, I will argue for my choices and deselections of tools.

Textual Practise

As mentioned previously, Fairclough's concept of text must be viewed in a broad sense, capturing both written and spoken language. In the case of this thesis, the textual practise will also contain visual analysis, but a separate set of tools will be presented later in this theoretical framework.

In his approach to textual analysis, Fairclough draws many comparisons to the Hallidayan tradition of systemic linguistics. Yet, Fairclough does select certain elements of textual analysis from critical linguistics. Thus, Fairclough describes linguistic analysis as both complex and rather technical with many techniques of analysis incorporated (Fairclough 1992, 74).

I will now approach Fairclough's conceptual apparatus of textual analysis under the main

headings *Vocabulary, Grammar, Cohesion* and *Text Structure*. I will especially emphasize the main heading *Vocabulary* as the aim of this thesis is to gain more insight into the articulation of the concept of Zerotypes. Thus, the main heading *vocabulary* is sufficient, and since *cohesion* and *text structure* are both aimed at larger bodies of text, and are also more intended for textual context with two - or more participants, they do not seem relevant for this analysis. Therefore, the following will elucidate the main heading *Vocabulary* as presented by Fairclough.

Vocabulary

Firstly, Fairclough's approach to the use of vocabulary is founded upon analyzing individual words in a given text. This entails the analysis of the different articulations of some words compared to other words in a given text as well as how this means of articulation can assert the social groups that voice them. In Fairclough's conceptual apparatus, this is called 'wording' (Ibid 1992 76-77). Thus, 'wording' is a tool to investigate "which words are used to name certain terms, people and actions" (Ibid 1992, 77).

Within the main heading *vocabulary*, Fairclough also presents the tool 'word meaning', which he argues is utilized in analyzing how social practise defines the meaning attached to certain words (Ibid 1992, 185). Fairclough argues that most words have multiple meanings, and therefore, a text can be interpreted in many ways, depending on the individual reading the text (Ibid 1992, 185).

This concludes the introduction to the chosen elements in the textual practise. I will now move on to elucidate the discursive practice, and the tools that it entails.

Discursive practice

The discursive practice is placed between the textual practice and the social practice in Fairclough's framework. The work of analysis carried out in this dimension concerns the production, distribution and consumption of the given text. Thus, according to Fairclough, the discursive dimension of the framework represents the interpretative practice of discourse. This is especially important to emphasize, as one must take into account that different texts are produced in given contexts, and thus, one text can be understood differently depending on the context in which it is utilized and interpreted (Ibid 1992, 78). Fairclough further explains the discursive practice to entail any instance in which one topic is verbalized or talked about, as the expression of opinion will ultimately help construct reality.

Within the discursive practice, Fairclough presents three main headings: *Force of Utterances, Coherence* and *Intertextuality*. I will explain those in the following

Force of utterances

The *force of utterances* used in a text can in short be detected through the types of speech acts which might be present in the text. These speech acts may be able to indicate how the text establishes a relationship with the one receiving it. Speech acts may encompass giving orders, making promises, stating threats, asking a question or in other ways encouraging someone to conduct an action - or to adopt an opinion on a certain topic. However, in this case, the analyst must be aware of the context in which these speech acts are presented. The context may have a determining role in how a receiver of a text will interpet e.g. an encouragement (Ibid 1992, 82).

Coherence

Fairclough suggests that the concept of *coherence* in a text is seen in relation to interpretation rather than as a quality of the text alone. In general, a text should be coherent, and create some meaning when reading it (Fairclough 1992, 83). With this, Fairclough emphasizes that a text will only make sense to those who make sense of it, and are still able to make meaningful connections in spite of the text lacking clear markers pointing to the intended meaning (Ibid 1992, 83). To exemplify this, Fairclough makes use of the following sentence: "She will be leaving work next Wednesday. She is pregnant". What creates the connection between these two main clauses is the assumption that women will stop working, when they are pregnant. According to Fairclough, these connections and conclusions are drawn from ideological assumptions, as the text creates subject positions which interpell the reader to take on these positions and thus automatically create a connection between these (Ibid 1992, 84).
As the concept of subject positions is central to this thesis in terms of how Danish consumers make sense of the Zerotypes campaign, I find it necessary to include a more thorough elucidation of subject positions in relation to the discursive practice. Therefore, I will include the work of Stuart Hall, referencing Foucault's approach to the subject and subject positions. In his book "The work of representation" from 1997, Stuart Hall cites the work of Michel Foucault, and approaches "the subject" in any discursive environment. Here, he points out that the subject seems to be present in two different senses: one in which discourse produces subjects as figures that personifies the given form of knowledge produced by discourse, and one in which the discourse produces a *place* for the subject to attain in order to best make

sense of the knowledge and meaning conveyed by discourse (Hall 1997, 40). This approach suggests that unless one subjects oneself fully to the subject positions produced by discourse, the knowledge conveyed by discourse, one will not be able to make sense of the knowledge conveyed by discourse. In this sense, Hall mentions pornography produced for men, which, according to this approach, will only make sense to women if they assume the position of a desiring male, as this is the ideal subject position conveyed by pornography produced for men (Hall 1997, 40).

Intertextuality

The concept of intertextuality refers to fragments stemming from other texts being present in a given text. Those fragments can both be clearly pointed out to originate from other texts, or they can be fused with elements from the given text (Fairclough 1992, 84). Fairclough distinguishes between two types of intertextuality: *Manifest intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity*. Manifest intertextuality is characterized by referring directly to other texts. This can for example occur if the producer of the text makes use of presuppositions - sentences in which claims or assertions are made, in which the producer of the text takes fragments of meaning for granted (Ibid 1992, 120). An example of the use of a presupposition could be the question "Are you still beating up your wife?". Here, the one asking the question presupposes that a husband (or wife) has previously been violent with their wife. According to Fairclough, presuppositions can stem from previous texts by the producer of the given text or from texts produced by others.
Moving on to the concept of *interdiscursivity*, which can be seen as an extension of the intertextuality-concept. Within this concept, the analyst will examine the presence of different discourse types - or genres. When investigating the different uses of discourses in a text, one can detect how different genres are combined in different ways - and maybe even across discourse orders. When several genres of discourse are mixed, one can refer to a high interdiscursivity, which often indicates a change of existing discourses (Fairclough 1992, 94). I will now proceed to elucidate the final dimension of Fairclough's framework: The social practice.

Social practice

As mentioned previously in this chapter, various scholars within CDA view discourse as an important form of social practice, which contributes to both reproduce, and change identities, social relations and knowledge. According to Fairclough, the social dimension follows

different economical, political, cultural and ideological orientations (Ibid 1992, 66). According to Fairclough, the dimension of discursive practice *mediates* the relation between the social- and the textual practice. To fully capture the dimension of social practice, Fairclough finds that textual analysis is not sufficient. He thus suggests that one must make use of either sociological- or cultural theory. In this connection, Fairclough himself draws on Louis Althusser's concept of ideology, as well as Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Ibid 1992, 86). These two concepts will be elucidated in the following:

Ideology

Fairclough sees ideology as constructs of reality which are built into the different practices of the discursive practice, and which contribute to the production, reproduction and change of relations of dominance (Ibid 1992, 87). According to Fairclough, ideologies are embedded in the discursive practices, and are most effective when they obtain a state of "common sense". Yet, in accordance with critical linguistics, Fairclough does not believe that ideologies can be 'read' from a text. On the contrary, Fairclough believes that the form and content of texts contains traces of ideological processes and structures, because meaning is created through the process of textual interpretation. According to Fairclough, texts are open to several different interpretations, which can also be different in their ideological meaning. Ideological processes thus belong to discourses as whole events, which is why these processes can be connected to interpersonally occurring processes (Ibid 1992, 88-89).

Hegemony

The concept of hegemony covers the political, economical, cultural and ideological power present in certain societal domains. Yet, the concept does not refer to power in the sense that the 'strong' dominate the 'weak'. Rather, hegemony is manifested through ongoing struggles between social classes for creating alliances and obtaining the 'subordinates' consent through concession or ideological means (Ibid 1992, 92).
The discursive practice, as explained previously in this chapter - containing the production, distribution and interpretation of text - exemplifies an aspect of the hegemonic battles which contribute to the reproduction - or transformation of prevailing orders of discourse. Reproduction and transformation of discourse orders may for example occur in the discursive practice through the way in which existing texts are articulated in the production of text - but also through social- and power relations (Ibid 1992, 93).

Fairclough argues that the concept of hegemony allows analysis of the social practice - partly in relation to analyzing the discursive practice as a hegemonic battle which also reproduces, restructures or challenges existing discourse orders (Ibid 1992, 95). According to Fairclough, the concept of hegemony further gives opportunity to 'theorize' change - both in the sense of discursive change and in a broader social and cultural sense - in relation to power relations (Ibid 1992, 92). In the following, I will approach hegemony in relation to the concept of 'change' - both in a discursive and in a social/cultural sense. This is both because the concept of change is central to Fairclough's theory, but also because this concept is central to the subject of this thesis.

According to Fairclough, hegemony plays a crucial role in relation to the concept of 'change'. The core of discursive change must first and foremost be found in the problematization of the conventions utilized by producers and interpreters of text. Along with the rise of problematization comes dilemmas. The resolution of a dilemma will - according to Fairclough, occur through processing existing conventions in an innovative and creative manner. Thus, a 'violation' of the existing conventions by e.g. drawing in different conventions to contexts, which will then exclude the existing conventions (Ibid 1992, 96). In a literal sense, this might occur as a conjunction of contradictory and inconsistent elements such as a mixture of formal and informal style. When this occurs, it creates a 'fertile environment' for discursive change. When a tendency related to discursive change is initiated, and obtains status as being 'popular', new hegemonies are able to form. Yet, change in conventions also influence the structural discourse orders.These structural changes can either affect the 'local' discourse order, or they can penetrate the institutional level, and thus affect the societal discourse order (Ibid 1992, 97).

As I have now elucidated fairclough's system of terminology, I will shortly approach Fairclough's claim to the use of social or cultural theory, extending the concepts of ideology and hegemony. Ideology and hegemony allow for analysis of the social practice, but they cannot stand alone. Unfortunately for the analyst, who sets out to conduct Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough does not lay out any guidelines for which theories apply, and which does not in relation to further analysis of the social practice. In addition to fetching inspiration from Foucault, Althusser and Gramsci, Fairclough also draws parallels to the widespread societal theory of Anthony Giddens. However, if approaching the problem formulation of this thesis, it is not as much concerned with global and political problems, as it is concerned with uncovering the discursive - and social construction of 'no-stereotypes' in

the marketing campaign "Zerotypes" by Zalando, at multiple levels, as well as consumers' responses to this campaign. Therefore, I have chosen to include Richard M. Perloff's theory on attitudes. This does not only allow the thesis to comply with Fairclough's claim to use a social theory, but it also allows for the thesis to approach the creation of meaning for the concept of "Zerotypes" from a top-down and bottom-up point of view. Furthermore, the choice to include the theory of attitudes coheres with Fairclough's further theoretical apparatus, as one can argue that the concept of attitudes supports the notion that discourse is both socially constructed and socially constructive. Thus, investigating attitudes of consumers of the campaign includes the social practice of Fairclough's theory. Therefore, it is highly arguable that the attitudes of consumers are both indicative of and influenced by the general discourse on the subjects, and thus, the concept of attitudes fits well into the social practice of the three-dimensional framework in the context of this thesis.

Attitudes

The concept of attitudes holds a central role in the composition of this thesis. Thus, including the layer of attitude measurement, I will gain a deeper understanding of the effects of the "Zerotypes" campaign, than if I had chosen to only focus on one aspect of the communication. Therefore, I will now introduce the concept of attitudes.

The concept 'attitude'

The term "attitude" has various meanings depending on the context. One might recognize the term when referring to having "an attitude problem". However, when applying the concept of attitudes in an academic context, it is most fruitful to look to scholars within different academic fields. However, even among scholars, there seems to be different views on how to properly identify, and thus examine, attitudes. In his book "The dynamics of persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21st Century" (2014), Richard M. Perloff regards strong emphasis on attitudes within persuasion-analysis. Perloff adopts a dualistic view on communication, much like is being done in this thesis, and emphasizes both the sending, and the receiving parties of a given piece of communication with regards to persuasion. When evaluating the efficiency of communication, and when studying consumers in general, Perloff emphasizes the importance of 'attitudes' - both when it comes to messages and objects of persuasion (Perloff 2014).

Perloff refers to an attitude as "... a psychological construct. It is a mental and emotional

entity that inherits in, or characterizes, the person" (Perloff 2014, 86). Yet, given that the basis for attitudes is a mental, and emotional character, one can also refer to attitudes as a "hypothetical construct", as it cannot be observed directly, but must be inferred from people's actions (Perloff 2014, 86). This also emphasizes the arbitrary nature of attitudes as a research matter; They cannot be seen clearly, or touched as one would with a rock, a cell, or a human organ. However, as Perloff also points out in his book, it would be false to assume that because of their arbitrariness, attitudes are not real, or are 'mere mental constructs'. Therefore, Perloff also rejects the notion that atitudes can only be inferred from behavior. He points to "several scholars", to support the argument that …"an entity that is mental or emotional is no less real than a physical behavior" (Perloff 2014, 86).

As a highly arbitrary concept, it is no surprise that attitudes have been described in many different ways by different scholars. Some focus solely on the mental aspect of the concept (Fazio 1989, 155) while others emphasize solely the mental association between a feeling and an object (Eagly & Chaiken 1993, 1). Yet, other scholars like Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Cantril (cited in Allport 1935, 804) approach attitudes from a behavioral perspective, focusing on how attitudes play a role in making people behave in a certain way (Perloff 2014, 87). However, one cannot argue that one definition of the concept is more correct than the other. As the concept is so arbitrary, scholars will differ in how they choose to describe and utilize the concept. Thus, Perloff offers what he refers to as an "integrative approach" to attitudes. He defines attitudes as such: "*A learned, global evaluation of an object (person, place, or issue) that influences thought and action*" (Perloff 2014, 87). He continues with the following explanation:

 "Psychologically, an attitude is not a behavior, though it may consist of acquired patterns of reacting to social stimuli. It is not pure affect, though it is mostly emotional. It is a predisposition, a tendency, a state of readiness that guides and steers behavior in certain predictable, though not always rational, ways" (Perloff 2014, 87).

While attitudes have been studied by various researchers, and in different contexts, most theories on attitudes have been developed with the goal of proving the structure and function of attitudes. However, the objective with this thesis is not to investigate the structure or functionality of attitudes. Rather, it is to evaluate the efficiency of the "Zerotypes" campaign amongst consumers. Therefore, this section of the theory chapter will draw some parallels to philosophy of science, in that, I will present attitudes as a concept to substantiate the basis for the interview data. Thus, I will not utilize theory on attitudes' functionality. Rather, I will make use of the concept to evaluate the responses of consumers to Zalando's "Zerotypes"

campaign. This decision, and its effects on the course of the thesis will be elaborated further in the methodological chapter. For now, this section of the chapter will be utilized for further insights into the characteristics of attitudes, as a deep understanding of the concept is critical for the further ability to measure it.

Characteristics of attitudes

Given the title of the book "The dynamics of persuasion", Perloff naturally approaches attitudes in the context of persuasion and persuasive communication. Thus, in this view, attitudes largely constitute the receiving end of any given communication between a sender and a receiver. This is also the case in this thesis. Thus, when investigating consumers' attitudes towards a given attitude object (a person, a product, a brand…), it is important to first understand what makes up attitudes. This understanding enables one to ask the right questions when conducting an investigation of attitudes. Perloff suggests the following characteristics of attitudes:

Attitudes are global, typically emotional evaluations

Attitudes are - according to Perloff - first and foremost evaluations. This means that when one adopts an attitude towards an object, a matter etc., one has categorized the matter, and made a judgement about it. Therefore, one is no longer neutral about the given topic. This does, however, not mean that one cannot have arbitrary feelings about the matter, but one is not neutral (Ibid 2014, 89).

Furthermore, attitudes most often somehow involve emotions. As Perloff quotes Cooper, Blackman and Keller (2016), "Attitudes express passions and hates, attractions and repulsions, likes and dislikes" (Perloff 2014 89). While affect usually plays a large role in how our attitudes are formed and experienced, some attitudes may also be built from absorbing information about the matter. Yet, as Perloff writes "attitudes are complex. They have different components and are formed in different ways" (Ibid 2014, 89). Given that attitudes are very complex, it must also be noted that attitudes can consist of various components such as beliefs, affect, intentions of behavior and actual behavior (Ibid 2014, 90). In this connection, the "Tripartite Model" of attitudes, empirically validated by Steven J. Breckler in his essay "Empirical validation of affect, behavior and cognition as distinct components of attitude" from 1984. As the title suggests, Breckler's Tripartite Model divides the concept of attitude into three distinct components: Affective components, behavioral

components, and cognitive components. (Breckler 1984). Breckler argues that the affective component can be measured through either physical responses, such as the presence of chills or increased heart rate, or through verbal utterances on feelings or mood (Breckler 1984).

Attitudes influence thought and action

One of the main reasons for the implementation of attitudes in this thesis, is the notion that attitudes influence how we think and act. Perloff explains that attitudes are firstly, an instrument to organize our social worlds, and navigate our relationships. Secondly, he points to attitudes as a driver to forecast behavior. This is mostly due to people wanting to "practice what they preach". However, this notion comes with exceptions as well (Ibid 2014, 90).

Attitudes, beliefs and values

When studying consumer attitudes, one must too give thought to values and beliefs. According to Perloff, attitudes exist with values and beliefs on a continuum. This means that "attitudes spring from values and contain beliefs" (Ibid 2014, 91). Therefore, it seems fit to further describe values and beliefs in detail to include them in the overall evaluation of consumer attitudes in this thesis.

Values

In the relationship between attitudes, values and beliefs, values are larger constructs that underlie the attitudes that one holds towards a subject (Ibid 2014, 91). Thus, values can accord to individual concerns as well as concerns that extend oneself. For example, freedom and equality are universal values extending personal interest, whereas values such as excitement, power and achievement adhere more to enhancing the self. Therefore, the attitudes that one might hold towards a subject will be inhabited from the more general values that one has about oneself and the world (Ibid 2014, 91).

Where values are general and thus, are not held in great numbers, beliefs are more specific and based on cognitions about the world (Ibid 2014, 91). In the next section, I will elucidate the concept of *beliefs* further.

Beliefs

As mentioned above, values are not held in great numbers. They are general considerations about life and the world held by the individual. On the contrary, beliefs are more cognitively conditioned, and therefore, they are held in great numbers: usually in hundreds (Ibid 2014,

92). Given that beliefs are based on the individual's cognitions about the world, one must note that beliefs are *subjective*, and will often appear to the individual as facts. However, as Perloff notes, "just because we fervently believe something to be true does not make it so" (Ibid 2014, 92). Some common beliefs held by a large number of people can be scientifically disproven, such as the complete rejection of the theory of evolution. Perloff emphasizes that almost half of the American population believes that God created humans in their present form, which is proven wrong by more than a century of studies of evolution (Ibid 2014, 92). Moreover, almost a third of adults in America believe that vaccines cause autism. This has too been disproven by a large body of empirical research. Beliefs such as those mentioned here, are often strongly held, and therefore, they will inherently affect believers' attitudes towards certain objects and ideas (Ibid 2014, 93).

Furthermore, Perloff points to two subtypes of beliefs: descriptive - and prescriptive beliefs. He describes *descriptive beliefs* as what has been mentioned previously in this section: Perceptions about the world, carried by people, which can both be true, not true, or even impossible to prove or disprove. Perloff refers to *Prescriptive beliefs* as "should" or "ought to" sentiments, which indicates the individual's preferred end-states of the world. While Prescriptive beliefs cannot be empirically tested, they are still very important in the measuring of attitudes, as they can give insight into how people see the ideal world. Some scholars regard prescriptive beliefs as components of values (Ibid 2014, 93). Therefore, the concepts of values and beliefs will be included in the analytical work of this thesis, when exploring how consumers react to the chosen posts from the "Zerotypes" campaign.

The structure of attitudes

As mentioned previously, attitudes are not a tangible object that can be observed with the same precision as other parts of the human body. Yet, like other aspects of the human body, attitudes, too, are made up around a structure. However, because of their intangible nature, scholars highly disagree on how this structure is made up. In addition to the tripartite model of attitudes, described previously, this thesis will utilize the symbolic attitudes approach when investigating young Danish consumers' attitudes towards the Zerotypes campaign. The symbolic attitude approach argues that people's responses to attitude objects are founded in their feelings towards what they believe that particular attitude object symbolizes (Perloff 2018, 97). Therefore, this model calls attention to the role of associations in the structure of attitudes (Perloff 2017, 97).

Methodology

This chapter will present an overview of the methodological choices and considerations made in this thesis as well as the structure of the thesis, an elaboration of the choices - and collection of data, and analysis hereof. Furthermore, this chapter will provide an outline of the thesis structure as well as considerations on feasibility, limitations and execution of the thesis work.

Philosophy of Science

Ontology and epistemology approach the questions of what acceptable knowledge is as well as how to view this acceptable knowledge and the World. Thus, the ontology and epistemology will present the academic standpoint of this thesis. Therefore, I find it fit to constitute the opening of this methodology chapter, as the philosophical approach will have a major impact on the way the data is collected and processed as well as the conclusions being drawn in the thesis.

Epistemological considerations

Alan Bryman explains epistemology as such: "*An epistemological issue concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline*" (Bryman 2016, 24). Therefore, when taking an epistemological stance, one must give thought to, how to approach the concept of *knowledge* in the collected data. Epistemological considerations within social sciences mostly revolve around whether to study the social world in the same manner as the natural sciences (Bryman 2016, 24). In the present thesis, the aim is to approach the meaning making process of a socially constructed phenomenon; *Zerotypes*, and in continuation, examine consumers' evaluations of the campaign. Here, I will point to the element most discussed within epistemology: The subject matter of the social sciences. In this thesis, the analytical body will be divided into two parts: One concerning the discursive construction of the concept "Zerotypes" and the other concerning consumers' reactions to the campaign presenting the concept "Zerotypes". Thus, the thesis adopts an anti-realist epistemology in the sense that it is not the aim for the work conducted in this thesis to arrive at a final and "true" conclusion about the concept of "Zerotypes". Rather, it is the aim for me as a researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the social - and discursive structures at play at both the sending and receiving part of the communication. Therefore, an interpretivist epistemology is adopted throughout this thesis. Interpretivism allows for the

researcher to conduct the exploration of the subject with the aim to *understand* the many facets of inclusive marketing rather than *explaining* them (Bryman 2016, 26).

In this connection, it is relevant to draw attention to the philosophy of phenomenology, which is concerned with "how individuals make sense of the world" (Bryman 2016, 27), as well as how this way of making sense of the world creates an imperative need for a researcher to bracket out her/his own conceptions of the world to deliver accurate research results (Bryman 2016, 27). In the words of the German philosopher Alfred Shcutz: "The World of nature as explored by the natural scientists does not 'mean' anything to the molecules, atoms, and electrons. But the observational field of the social scientist - social reality - has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the beings living, acting and thinking within it" (Ibid 2016, 27). In addition to this, Bryman also emphasizes a second point made by Schutz: That the real task for a social scientist is to interpret people's actions and thoughts from their point of view by gaining access to their 'common sense thinking' (Ibid 2016, 27). This view is particularly adopted in this thesis through the processing of semi-structured interviews from Danish consumers, regarding their attitudes towards the "Zerotypes" campaign.

This presentation of the epistemological considerations - and choices made for the present thesis, leads to thoughts on a closely related concept within philosophy of science: Ontology. This will be elucidated in the following segment.

Constructionist Ontology

The work conducted in connection with this thesis is realized based on a constructionist ontology. This means, that the researcher will study the campaign "Zerotypes" as a socially constructed phenomenon. This position is evident from the problem formulation, which is concerned with investigating the discursive creation of the concept of "Zerotypes" as well as consumers' reactions to the campaign. The constructionist ontology is also evident from the choice of a discursive theoretical position, as Critical Discourse Analysis theorists all share the belief that language is socially constructive and socially constructed. As the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis forms the structural foundation of this thesis, the constructionist approach comes naturally with the nature of the research questions.

Research Strategy- and Design

In this section of the methodological chapter, I will present the research strategy and research design of the thesis. The main focus of this section will thus be to not only evaluate the

overall nature of - and approach to the research data, but also to connect the research strategy with a concrete research design.

A qualitative case study

This thesis sets out to intensely investigate the the creation of "Zerotypes" by Zalando, and the reactions to this campaign by young Danish consumers. Thus, the design of the research resembles a single case study design, placing most emphasis on the contents of the campaign as well as consumer reactions - and attitudes towards this content as object of interest. Bryman points out that case studies often tend to employ qualitative methods, as such methods are especially favorable in generating deep, intensive and detailed examinations of a particular case (Bryman 2016, 60-61). As Bryman points out in his work on social research methodology (2016), there is more to the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research than merely the presence - or absence of quantification in the processing of data. Some may argue that the differentiation between qualitative and quantitative research lies mostly in the epistemological stances taken in the individual research as well as in other respects (Bryman 2016, 31). Furthermore, this thesis will assume an inductive view on the relationship between theory and data. Some describe this approach to research as being based on drawing general conclusions from specific observations, while others will refer to an inductive relation between theory and data as the first being generated from the latter (Bryman 2016, 22). Yet, in this thesis, the inductive approach is not utilized to generate a theory - rather it is aimed at producing categories from the data, as well as looking into one case of a wider aspect of marketing initiatives utilizing inclusion as a form of brand activism. This is also indicative of the explorative aim of this thesis: to gain deeper insight on a specific subject in a larger context, from which the findings can be utilized as a catalyst for further research within this area.

Introducing the case

As mentioned in the introductory chapter for this thesis, the basis for the research questions lies in a wonder from the researcher on, how brands are making social change through their commercials. Therefore, the case of Zalando's "Zerotypes" campaign was chosen to gain a deeper insight into the mechanisms behind such a campaign. This section will present an introduction to both Zalando as a company as well as information about the "Zerotypes" campaign.

Zalando is a German-owned multinational company based on e-commerce. The company

was founded in 2008, and offers fashion and lifestyle products in 17 European markets. The company utilizes a platform-approach, in which they pose as an online shopping centre, driving business through partner programs with widely known fashion brands. Zalando operates in most of European countries, including; Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic and The UK. Thus, Zalando is a well-known platform in all of Europe, providing millions of customers with easy and accessible fashion items year-round (Zalando 2021). Zalando has been known to feature some of the most well-known models in the world, in their campaigns. In 2015, the platform featured a campaign with British fashion retailer TopShop and the world-famous supermodel Cara Delevigne (Saramowicz 2015). In some countries, such as Denmark, Zalando has long been the leading e-commerce shop. In 2020, Zalando topped the list of the most used e-commerce sites in Denmark for the 5th year in a row (DI Handel 2021). As this thesis also sets out to investigate young Danish consumers' attitudes in regards to commercials initiating social change, it makes sense to look towards Zalando as the biggest online e-commerce platform in Denmark.

With relation to driving social change, this is communicated heavily on Zalando's website. In November 2019, the company launched their first ever Diversity and Inclusion report, in which the company explained their initiatives to create a more inclusive world (Zalando 2020a). In this report, it is evident that Zalando is supportive of various movements, such as the LGBTQ-community, creating gender equality, inclusion of disabled workers, and much more (Zalando 2020a). In this connection, the Zerotypes campaign can be seen as a contribution to social change and inclusion. As mentioned in the introduction, the "Zerotypes" campaign was launched in February of 2020, and was described by the Director of Marketing Strategy and Campaigns at Zalando as such: "For our spring 2020 campaign, we want to celebrate "Zerotypes" - a belief that people should be free to be as they are with no types, expectations or limits to define them" (Zalando 2020b). Thus, with the "Zerotypes" campaign, Zalando sets out to celebrate all individuals, and break down existing stereotypes in society.

Choosing and collecting data

As mentioned previously, the empirical data for this thesis consists of two different data sets: 10 chosen instagram posts from Zalando's official Instagram account, which also resemble the "Zerotypes" campaign, and 13 transcripts of semi structured interviews with 14 Danish

consumers of Zalando. These two sources of data form a "triangulation" of data types, allowing the study to focus on the creation of meaning for the phenomenon of Zerotypes from both a top-down and bottom-up perspective. Furthermore, the two types of data adhere to Norman Fairclough's conviction that additional social theory is needed to fully analyze the social dimension of discourse. However, this will be discussed further in the section "Methods of analysis".

In this section, I will present the two data sets, and further elaborate on the choice - and collection of these data sets.

Campaign material

To gain a deeper understanding of how the concept of "Zerotypes" is given meaning by Zalando, a critical discourse analysis will be conducted as the first part of the analytical body of this thesis. Ten posts from Zalando's official instagram account have been chosen to constitute that data set for this analysis[1]. While the campaign has been active on many different platforms, the only platform with all material available at once is Instagram. This is most likely due to the online marketing strategy, which segments users from their online preferences using cookies. Had the material been collected from various other channels such as Youtube, Google and Facebook, I would only be able to obtain the material segmented by my own online behavior. Thus, this thesis would not be able to offer a viable account of the campaign material. I have therefore chosen to only use data, which is accessible to everyone through Zalando´s official Instagram account. The material was posted between February 25th and March 12th 2020, and constitutes the total campaign, which was then replaced with messages about Covid19. Zalando has about 1,1 million followers on Instagram (Instagram 2021), and therefore, one can argue that these posts have a wide reach to many different people.

The posts consist of a mix of visual and written communication in accordance with the overall format of Instagram as a platform. Both of these modes will be included in the analysis. Furthermore, All the posts contain the hashtag *#Zerotypes*, and they have mostly been selected based on this criteria, as this is central to the research question of how this concept is discursively created by Zalando. As social media channels are extremely versatile, it is possible that the form and content of the data can be altered by the owner of the material.

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[1] Please refer to appendix 1-11 for material.

Therefore I have taken screenshots of the chosen posts and attached them in the appendix, to make sure that the data will remain the same throughout the process.

While stemming from social media, the posts share many traits with the data type "documents" as mentioned by Bryman (2016, 546). As Bryman emphasizes in his chapter about documents as sources of data, one of the advantages of documents is that they are a non-reactive source of information. Therefore, one can largely discount the question of validity in the data, as the data has not been created for the purpose of social research, and therefore, the issue of respondents not acting naturally because they are being watched or interviewed is eliminated (Bryman 2016, 546). Bryman distinguishes between a number of types of documents depending on the nature of the data. The instagram posts utilized in the present thesis fall into the category of virtual documents: Documents retrieved from online fora. Bryman briefly touches on the use of data originating from social media, noting that this kind of research is in its infancy (Bryman 20126 558). Furthermore, Bryman emphasizes the importance of approaching documents critically in terms of reality. He draws on writings from Atkins and Coffey to argue that documents are merely "...texts written with distinctive purposes in mind, and not simply reflecting reality" (Bryman 2016, 561). This critical approach has been applied in this thesis by adopting the critical mindset provided by critical discourse analysis.

Semi-structured interviews

To answer the question of how the campaign is received by young Danish consumers, semi-structured interviewing was chosen as a method of data collection for this part of the thesis. Due to the explorative, and inductive nature of this thesis, semi-structured interviewing provides several advantages to the proceedings of the thesis; firstly, semi-structured interviews provide great flexibility, which allows the researcher to elaborate on matters stated by the respondents during the course of the interview (Bryman 2016, 468). This has also formed a natural iterative process in the thesis, as new subjects are bound to emerge during interviewing. Secondly, the flexibility of semi-structured interviewing proves advantageous when working with attitudes as a research topic. As Perloff covers in his chapter on attitude measurement, quantitative methods, such as the likert scale, are most popularly utilized to measure attitudes. However, as Perloff emphasizes: "The main advantage of attitude scales - that they offer an efficient way to measure social attitudes accurately - is their main drawback. Scales do not always shed light on the underlying

dynamics of attitudes - the rich underbelly of cognitions and emotions" (Perloff 2014, 205). However, these underlying dynamics can be accessed through qualitative, and open-ended measures such as semi-structured interviews, as they provide a rich dialogue-based set of information, in which the researcher has the option of asking follow-up questions to respondents' initial responses. Therefore, it was chosen for this thesis to rely on qualitative measures - due to the explorative nature of the subject. However, as will be further elaborated in the section on limitations, it must be mentioned in this connection, that measuring attitudes through interview transcripts makes it difficult to generalize, as well as it can yield for subjective conclusions, based on the researcher's interpretations of the data (Perloff 2014, 206).

Thus, 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted based on the 10 aforementioned posts and the respondents´ attitudes towards these posts. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions in Denmark at the time of interviewing, the interviews were carried out via online platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, which were also used to record the interviews.

In addition to focusing on respondents´ attitudes towards the individual posts, the interviewer prompten questions on the interviewees´ overall attitudes, thoughts and feelings towards the general themes issued in the posts as well as their thoughts and feelings towards the overall campaign and Zalando as a brand after seeing these posts. The interviews were especially focused on three different elements within attitudes: Cognition, affect and action as mentioned in the theory section on attitudes. Furthermore, due to ethical considerations, the respondents were promised anonymity in the written bodies of this thesis. Thus, their names have been left out. However, I as the author of this thesis is familiar with all names, as such, it is arguable that this thesis has provided 'pseudo-anonymity', as the respondents are not anonymous to me.

Data sampling of semi-structured interviews

While Zalando communicates to the broad mass of individuals, it was chosen to focus the analysis of attitudes towards the campaign towards the young segments of what is popularly referred to as "Generation Z". Therefore, the recruitment of interviewees was initially rather randomized, but based on two factors: The interviewees should be born between 1995 and 2003, and they should be familiar with Zalando and online shopping. The age of the interviewees was limited to this age span simply because I was not willing to interview children under the age of 18 due to ethical and legal measures of parental consent.

The randomized approach to acquiring respondents has been deliberately chosen, as the Zerotypes campaign is concerned with social change, and social issues - one might argue that the contents relates to minority groups, who experience disadvantage from physical traits. However, as Zalando is the most used e-commerce-platform in Denmark, acquiring respondents based on their experiences with social issues would only provide insights on how the campaign resonates with minority groups, and not the broad spectrum of consumers of Zalando's website. Therefore, the randomized selection based on only age and experience with Zalando will provide a broader picture of how young Danish consumers react to the campaign message.

The ratio of respondents was 4 males to 10 females, all white, and most were characterized as highly educated, in spite of the sampling process not being dictated by educational level. One interview was conducted as a multi-respondent interview, as the respondents were quarantined together due to COVID19. This may have had an impact on the responses given in the interview, as the respondents may have affected each other.

It must also be noted that I am aware that 14 respondents are not representative of Danish youth, however, as mentioned before, it is not the objective of this thesis to generalize based on the interviews. Rather, this thesis sets out to analyze the interviews in depth, and thus extract categories and themes from the transcripts [2], and gain an understanding partly of the attitudes from Danish youths towards the campaign, and the underlying factors of these attitudes. The interviews each lasted between 50 and 70 minutes of in-depth conversations about various topics involved in the Zerotypes campaign.

Method(s) of analysis

As presented previously, this thesis is built on two different data sets. Given the diverse nature of these two data sets, each of them demands for different manners of processing - hence, this thesis will employ two different methods of analysis for the data: Critical Discourse Analysis and Thematic analysis. However, it must be noted that while Critical Discourse Analysis is predominantly utilized for the analysis of the social media campaign material, the theoretical framework presented in the theory chapter will adhere in its entirety to both data sets. As described in the theory chapter, the theoretical elements play a pivotal role in the data analysis, which is especially prominent through the close relationship between Critical Discourse Analysis as a theory and a method.

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[2] This will be elaborated further in the section "method of analysis"

This section will present the two methods of analysis: Critical Discourse Analysis and Thematic analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis as a Method of Analysis

To uncover how Zalando constructs the phenomenon of Zerotypes, the 10 posts from Instagram will be subjected to a critical discourse analysis, to uncover the discursive patterns in presenting the concept. CDA as a methodology allows for deep scruitening of how meaning is created in the instagram posts as well as in the interview transcripts.
The analysis will be carried out with Fairclough´s conceptual apparatus as covered in the theoretical framework. Thus, the focus of the analysis will not only be to interpret the use of linguistics in the posts, but also how social phenomena and intertextuality is utilized to create and employ the concept in a commercial context. In this connection, it must be mentioned that while the interview transcripts are analyzed using thematic analysis, CDA still plays a major role in the data set, as the interview data represents the social dimension of Fairclough's framework. Therefore, the two different methods of analysis are fused along with the theoretical standpoints to create a whole picture of not just the phenomenon of "Zerotypes", but also in the social and discursive flows surrounding the phenomenon.
The application of CDA creates a close synergy between theory and methodology in this thesis. As Critical Discourse Analysis assumes an interpretivist epistemology, the researcher participates subjectively in the processing of the data. Here, it is important for the researcher to be aware of one's preconceptions to the topic, to assure that the analysis is presented in a way that is not biased by the researcher's own thoughts and feelings on the subject. According to Wodak (2001), one methodological way of avoiding this happening is through the principle of triangulation (Wodak 2001, 3). This thesis does apply the principle of triangulation of data by using both posts from Instagram, and semi-structured interviews.

Thematic analysis

In order to reduce the extensive amount of data given in the 13 interview transcripts, thematic analysis has been chosen to process the interview transcripts.
Thematic analysis sets out to identify recurring themes throughout large bodies of data, such as interview transcripts. Scholars such as Bryman (2012) and Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to thematic analysis as a basis for generic approach to qualitative data analysis, primarily because of the flexibility and wide range of applicability of thematic analysis.

One of the main benefits of thematic analysis in qualitative research is the flexibility that it provides. However, as no clear and structured guidelines are established for thematic analysis, the researcher must always be aware of the choices one makes when conducting a thematic analysis. This is to ensure that one will not confirm the critique saying that 'anything goes' in qualitative research, which may rapidly become a reality if one is not aware of keeping a balance between flexibility and structure (Braun and Clarke 2006, 78). For example, it is important for the researcher to acknowledge one's own active role in the thematic processing of the given data. Braun and Clarke mention that it is not uncommon to read from a thematic analysis that themes "emerge" from the data, which entails a passive account for the process of analysis, which "denies the *active* role the researcher always plays in identifying patterns/themes, selecting which are of interest and reporting them to the readers (Braun and Clarke 2006, 80). As has also been covered previously in this chapter, I as a researcher resume my active role in procuring results, and therefore, I am aware of my own preconceptions on the subject, and will thus be able to take these into account when analyzing, to provide the most accurate account as possible. However, I will not be able to completely bracket out myself, and my perceptions, as the themes/patterns in the present analysis do depend on my interpretation of the data.

In this following part, I will briefly summon how the present thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted.

The practicality of thematic analysis

As previously mentioned, this thematic analysis sets out to explore how Danish consumers make sense of the Zerotypes campaign, and what their attitudes are towards the campaign. Therefore, the analysis is conducted based on latent themes. Distinguishing between semantic- and latent themes is essentially a question of at which level, one identifies themes. At the semantic level, themes are identified within the explicit meanings of the data, meaning that the researcher will not be searching for any meaning beyond what is expressed by the respondent. One can argue that this level of theme-deduction is more so a case of description rather than analysis and interpretation. At the latent level, the researcher assumes an active role in interpreting the underlying meaning of what is said at the latent level. Given that this thesis operates within the constructionist paradigm of ontology, and thus assumes reality to be socially constructed, the present thematic analysis will be conducted at the latent level, as the objective of the analysis is to gain a deeper understanding of not only which attitudes the interviewees hold towards the zerotypes campaign, but also which social factors are at play

underneath these attitudes (Braun and Clarke 2006). In this connection, both the theory of attitudes, and discourse theory plays an important role in the analytical work conducted on the interview transcripts. The concept of attitudes has been the guiding principle for conducting the interviews, and therefore, the analysis will work to identify attitudes based on *cognition, behavior* and *affect.* However, one cannot ignore the impact of discourses on the reception of the message. Since the research questions are centered around how young Danish consumers make sense of the campaign, and what their attitudes are towards the campaign, the elements connected to Fairclough's discursive practice such as *subject positions* play a pivotal role in the analysis of the interview transcripts, as an element of interpretation.

Following the steps

This thesis assumes the approach to thematic analysis through six phases as provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). One of the key-notes in these phases is that the process of analysis is not linear. Rather, it is a more iterative process of moving back and forth between the phases as the content of the interviews is coded.

These phases are:

1: Familiarizing oneself with the data

In this phase, the data is transcribed, read and re-read, and initial ideas are noted.

2: Generating initial codes

After familiarizing oneself with the data through transcription and thorough reading and re-reading of the data, phase two begins coding the ideas noted down. In short, a code represents features from that data that seem interesting to the researcher. Codes are "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Braun and Clarke 2006, 88). The coding process is a part of the analysis-process, as coding is a form of organizing the data into segments of meaning related to the research question. Yet, coded data differs from the themes, which are also the units of analysis, in that the themes are most often much broader and abstract than the initial codes. In this phase, the researcher works systematically through all the interview transcripts to identity aspects of interests, which may later form the bases of the themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, 89)

3: Searching for themes

When all data has been coded, phase 3 begins. In this phase, the codes are sorted into broader themes, and then gather the relevant coded data extracts within these themes. Here, the

researcher starts to establish a connection between codes, themes and different levels of themes (main themes and sub-themes), as well as forming meaning around the themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, 89).

4: Reviewing the themes

This phase aims at refining the candidate themes created in phase 3. Here, the researcher will work to make sure that the themes that are generated from the data are coherent with the objectives of the analysis as driven by the research question. This is also where one will begin to review the data extracts from the initial codings, and decide whether they fit into the themes. In this process, the researcher may feel compelled to go back to previous phases and revise the codes or initial themes produced. In this way, the process of analysis becomes iterative (Braun and Clarke 2006, 90).

5: Defining and naming themes

When the researcher has revised their initial candidate themes, one will then start to define the essence of each theme's substance and content. Here, the content is not just paraphrased, but the researcher must decide why these themes are of interest to the research question. As part of this phase of refinement, the researcher must also decide whether sub-themes are attached to the main themes, or not (Braun and Clarke 2006, 92).

The last step to this method is the writing up of the analysis, however this is presented in the analysis chapter.

Limitations to the thesis

With every choice comes exclusions, and that is also the case for this thesis. Therefore, this section will discuss some of the limitations that will undeniably follow with the choice of this research design.

Firstly, the findings in this thesis are not a result of a collaboration between the researcher and the company Zalando had this been the case, the researcher would have access to concrete numbers of the performance of the Zerotypes campaign, and thus, would have been able to draw much wider conclusions. Therefore, the choice to only include Danish participants was also a result of a lack of access to relevant informants in other countries. Yet, while a wider array of nationalities would allow for comparative work based on nationality, a deliberate choice was made to constrict the data set to only contain Danish respondents.

Furthermore, one of the most pivotal limitations to this thesis, concerns the generalizability of the data. As mentioned on several occasions throughout this chapter, it is not possible to generalize on either the findings from the Instagram posts, or the interviews. However, it is possible to gain some deeper insights on trends and tendencies in the threshold between marketing- and consumer research.

Furthermore, the number of interviews may limit the data set in terms of cultural representation, which may have an effect on the way the respondents view the concept of Zerotypes. For example, all the respondents are caucasian and ethnic Danish. The sociocultural background or regional belonging in Denmark has not been central in the collection of data, and these factors may have an impact on the answers given by the respondents. This thesis is based on the answers of the respondents as individuals, and thus focuses on the individual story told by the interviewee rather than on their cultural background. However, this may present a possibility for a quantitative study at a later stage, to investigate the connection between cultural belonging and attitudes towards the concept of Zerotypes. In general, the findings from this thesis may provide useful insights in a project of larger scale, given the focus on emerging trends and tendencies in popular culture as well as in branding and advertising. Thus, the findings may be of interest to not only academics within the field of branding - or cultural studies, but also for professionals in the advertising industry, as this thesis does conduct in-depth market-research on a segment of consumers, who may be receptive to socio-cultural change.

Analysis

This chapter will present the analyses of the data sets collected for this thesis. The analysis will be divided into two sections: One concerning the Instagram posts from Zalando's official Instagram page, and the other concerning consumers´ responses to the posts through interview transcripts. This chapter will begin with the analysis of the discursive creation of the concept "Zerotypes" by Zalando, followed by a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. For reference, the Instagram posts can be found in appendix 1, and the interview transcripts can be found in appendix 2.

Creating the discourse of Zerotypes

This analysis is rooted in Norman Fairclough's theoretical apparatus for critical discourse analysis. The analysis seeks to investigate Zalando's utilization of discourses to create the concept of Zerotypes. To avoid repetition in the analysis, the analysis will not structurally follow Fairclough's framework based on the theoretical apparatus. Rather, Fairclough's analytical tools will be applied to subjects found in the posts, but which are grounded in the faircloudian theory. While the majority of the analysis will be focused on the written material in the posts, ignoring the visual elements in the material would result in great loss of meaning. Therefore, the visual aspects will also be included, however, as supporting agents of meaning-making.

Zerotypes – an opposition to stereotypes

As the main purpose of this part of the analysis is to uncover how Zalando creates meaning for the phenomenon *Zerotypes*, it seems fit to begin the analysis from an overall perspective of the concept. The creation of meaning for *Zerotypes* as a concept can be divided into blocks: The overall, linguistic representation of the concept in relation to the word "stereotypes", and the intertextual approach taken in the individual posts. This section will thus cover the overall linguistic features and meaning potentials of the word "Zerotypes" in relation to "stereotypes" as well as the common bodies of texts, used in all the chosen posts.

One of the common elements for all the posts chosen for this analysis is the structure of the message. Three elements are present in every post: The picture, the text on the picture and the description of the picture on the right side of the image. These three elements each play a crucial role in creating meaning for *Zerotypes*. Firstly, the visual element of the image and the textual element displayed alongside each image pose as oppositions, as the text states a given stereotype, and the image disproves the stereotype. This is the case through the data set, which considers different issues within the overall topic of appearance. The third element, the text in the far right side of the posts, is the "caption". In each post, the caption explains the issue depicted in the posts. Two phrases are repeated in every post: "Tap the picture to change the stereotype and welcome the Zerotypes", and "Everyone should feel #freetobe". These phrases create an overall frame for the creation of the concept of Zerotypes in relation to stereotypes. From the structure of the message in all the posts, it is evident that Zerotypes are presented as an opposition to stereotypes. This can be deduced from the similarity of the words. In the theoretical chapter of this thesis concerning Fairclough's theory, the analytical tools "word meaning" and "wording" are mentioned within the main heading of "vocabulary". In the case of "stereotypes" and "zerotypes", a change of meaning within the concept occurs. By replacing "stereo" with "zero", Zalando provides a counter-discourse to the well-established concept of stereotypes by disregarding the use of stereotypes. The disregard of stereotypes can be read from the meaning attached to the word "zero", indicating "nothing", and thus not "typing" people based on certain features. "Zero" can also be interpreted as an extremity, given that "zero" indicates absolutely nothing, and thus representing a desired end-state of completely disregarding the functionality and the consequences that follow with stereotyping. Thus, "Zerotypes" becomes an empty signifier, which in opposition can hold many types - one could say 'any' type, in opposition to stereotypes, where the norm is dictated based on a divided sense of grasping people in terms of personalities and qualities. The case of extremity is continued with the use of "everyone" in the phrase "everyone should feel #freetobe", which is also repeated in every post in the campaign. Like "zero", "everyone" refers to a totality, not leaving anyone out, and it contradicts the overall idea of stereotypes. Everyone further emphasizes the notion of Zerotypes being an empty signifier, because it indicates that Zerotypes contain no norms, or lines within which one should stay to be accepted.

 In relation to the change of meaning, the verbs "change" and "welcome" emphasize Zalando's desire to create contrast between the stereotypes and *Zerotypes*. "Change" is linked to stereotypes while "welcome" is linked to zerotypes, which indicates that stereotypes are

indicative of the present state, while zerotypes represent a desired end-state. The imperative structure of the sentence coheres with Fairclough's concept *force of utterances*, which covers how the text establishes a relationship with the receiver. In this case, the imperatives "change" and "welcome" encourage the receiver to adopt a negative attitude towards stereotypes, and a welcoming attitude towards the new concept "zerotypes".

Thus, Zalando is contributing to a new diversity - and inclusion discourse, moving away from the old notion of stereotyping people based on norms. This will be a central element in the fore-seeing sections of this analysis.

Zerotypes as counter-discourse to various social issues

With regards to seeing "Zerotypes" as an empty signifier, where any meaning can be contained, Zalando are using different existing discourses to apply meaning to the phenomenon, as well as initiate a change in discourses within certain issues. As explained in the theory chapter, the concepts "intertextuality" and "interdiscursivity" are important elements in analyzing discourses. They are helpful in uncovering the movement of discourse, as well as how meaning is created by referencing existing texts and discourses, as well as utilizing discourses across texts. It is evident from the data set, that the Zerotypes campaign makes use of existing discourses in creating meaning – not only for the phenomenon of zerotypes itself, but also for the process of change in meaning from stereotypes to zerotypes. Therefore, this section of the analysis will be dedicated to further examining this process, and how existing discourses on social issues are utilized to give meaning to the phenomenon *Zerotypes*.

The 10 posts chosen for this analysis all present individual messages with *Zerotypes* as an umbrella term for a desired change. In general, three different concepts are explicitly referenced in the posts:

- Gender
- Body shape
- Beauty

These concepts are all presented in the posts as being related to appearance, however, as covered previously, the concept of stereotypes is reinforced by assuming to know people's qualities and personalities based on their social- or cultural background, or appearance. Yet,

while each post relates to these three concepts individually, the underlying discourses related to the pictures and concepts references several of the concepts within the same photo. Therefore, the following sections may include some repetitions in terms of including posts.

Gender - An overreaching discourse in Zerotypes

Gender seems to be a recurring, but underlying theme throughout the Zerotypes campaign. As will be discussed later, both beauty and size contain references to gender discourses in terms of standards for women or men. However, post 4, 6, 8, and 9 approach the issues on gender explicitly, through their vocabulary. Therefore, this section will address these posts and their role in creating the meaning of *Zerotypes* more thoroughly.

As an introduction to this section, I will approach the use of vocabulary within these posts, as this plays a major role in referencing gender discourses, and stereotypes. Firstly, the posts share one trait: They all reference masculine and feminine-type words, which are presented as opposing poles. For example, post 6 presents the utterance "Women can not wear men's clothes" in the image. Similarly, post 8 states "Men can not wear women's fashion", and post 9 states "Men can not show their feminine side". From these statements, it is evident that "masculine" and "feminine" as well as "men" and "women" are presented as opposites and thus, incompatible. This notion is strengthened with the utterance "can not", which indicates that something is impossible. However, in this case, one can argue that "can not" does not refer to the feasibility of the given actions, but rather to a set of "rules" of how men and women are supposed to dress. This choice of words may be a general reference to traditional gender discourse, where it seems impossible that men show feminine traits, and the reverse, while the overall discourse on men expressing femininity and women expressing masculinity is often connected to homosexuality. In this connection, the use of the word "style", which is recurring in all the posts that overtly reference gender stereotypes. "Style" - the way one dresses and expresses oneself, is very individual in opposition to the stereotypes being presented on gender, which draws more attention to a broader spectrum of expectations to men and women. Therefore, drawing attention to the notion of "femininity" and "masculinity" being a style, rather than a personality trait, emphasizes the meaning of "zerotypes" as a phenomenon that breaks down stereotypes, as style does not necessarily determine one's personality, as the stereotypical view on men and women might assume.

 In post 6, a woman is shown wearing a side-cut in her short, black hair, an open lumberjack-shirt, black chino pants, tennis socks, rustic jewelry and tattooed hands. The text says "Women can not wear men's clothes". The concept is the same in post 4, where a male

in black clothing wearing orange nail polish and eye-makeup is pictured. This image features the text "Your fashion sense can not be fluid". Like post 6, it seems that the man in the picture is disregarding the stereotype by embracing exactly what the stereotype deems impossible. One common aspect for post 4 and 6 is the use of the word "fluid", which has been frequently referenced in popular gender discourse. In the context of gender, the term "fluid" is usually used in terms of masculine and feminine being mixed in the same person, and thus breaks away from the strictly binary idea of women and men, focusing on the individual and their identity.

The four posts referenced in this section actively refer to traditional discourses on gender, and stereotypes for how men and women are expected to look to adhere to their gender. However, through the use of *vocabulary*, and *force of utterances*, Zalando are presenting counter discourse to the traditional gender-stereotypes, by exemplifying that it is okay for women to express masculinity, and for men to express femininity in their style. This suggests that in terms of gender, Zerotypes discards the "rules" of gender stereotypes, and allows for individuals to dress according to their own personal taste.

Beauty discourses in zerotypes

The word "beauty" seems to be a central reference point for the social issues brought up in the Zerotypes campaign. The concept of beauty is especially interesting in this context because of the arbitrariness and subjectiveness of "being beautiful". However, in the posts presented by Zalando, the reference to beauty is supported by various visuals, representing beauty standards, and an undermining of these. Post 1 for example, shows a woman in her underwear, with the text "It is not beautiful to show your flaws" written over the picture. In the bottom, the text "Stereotypes" is written. When tapping the picture, a black bar appears over the word "not", changing the meaning of the original text to the opposite. Furthermore, a black "tag" with the white letters "zero" appears over the "stereo"-part of the word "stereotypes", changing "stereotypes" to "zerotypes". This post therefore refers to an existing discourse of beauty, which dictates that beauty is synonymous with "flawless". However, with this post, Zalando aids in changing the meaning for the words "beautiful" and "flaws" by presenting them as synonyms. Yet, in this connection, it is interesting to direct focus at the lack of specification of what "flaws" entail. Therefore, the reader is left to interpret what they think of as being flawed in the image. In the description, it is also emphasized that the woman "makes the realest version of herself public, instead of a polished one", which creates a polarization between "real" and "polished". The contrast between "real" and "polished"

versions of self contains elements from social media discourse, as people most often only portray their "flawless" selves on social media, which contributes to a distorted image of beauty and expectations to oneself. The post further enhances this contrast, by also writing that "She hopes that others will learn to do the same" (Post. 1). With reference to the theoretical chapter, this sentence can be appointed to Fairclough's concept *force of utterances*, as a speech act from the sender of the message, urging "others" to also make their real self public, rather than a polished one. With this, Zalando are initiating a discursive change on the notion of beauty, through not just picturing a woman showing her flaws, but by inviting others to do the same.

This notion is further enhanced in post 2, in which "beauty" is also a central element. The picture showing the face of a blonde woman with large bushy eyebrows, has the text "This is not what beauty looks like" written on it, as well as the text "stereotypes". In this case, the word "beauty" relates to the picture, but like the post in appendix 1, "this" is not explained further. Therefore, the receiver is left to interpret what they think is not categorized as beautiful. This post contains a high degree of intertextuality, which is especially expressed through presuppositions. For example, in the sentence "She's bringing some much-needed representation to the fashion game" (Post. 2), "much needed", instills a presupposition that representation is lacking in the "fashion game". Presuppositions are also exerted in the statement "everyone should be able to define their own, and everyone should feel #freetobe". The word "should" indicates a preferred end-state, which is not currently in effect, and thus, Zalando takes the position that not everyone can define their own beauty standards, and that not everyone is free to be. In this connection, it is arguable that this presupposition is utilized in terms of Fairclough's concept of *force of utterance* to convince the receiver that it is wrong that not everyone is free to be.

Furthermore, the post states that "Beauty standards are a thing of the past" (Post. 2), and thus, the receiver is, once again, left to interpret what the concept of beauty standards means. Yet, if relating the posts from appendix 1 and 2 to each other, the notion of a "polished" look opposed to a "real" look, and "bringing some much needed representation into the fashion game", one might see a pattern of referring to the discourse of the polished fashion world, which has tended to adhere to only showing slim models with clear skin, who excerpts "sexiness" and "attractiveness". This discourse is further addressed in the post shown in post 11. This post concerns the question of what it is to be a model. The image shows a woman with buzz-cut blonde hair, prominent blue eye-makeup, tattoos on her neck and face and several piercings. The post also contains the text "You are not a model", and "stereotypes". In

this post, the *word meaning* as mentioned by Fairclough is significant in relation to the word 'model'. This reference draws on existing discourses around being a "model", and how the status of being a model often comes with excellence. Therefore, the stereotypical beauty-discourse may be viewed as pivotal for the discourse on what it means to be a model, and how models are usually portrayed.

 This is further enhanced with the post emphasizing that she may not look like "most" models. By referencing "most" models, it is evident that Zalando is pointing out that most models do not look like the model pictured in this post. Yet, "most" can also indirectly indicate that while she does not look like a typical model, she is still a model. Hence, her status as a model is presented as a state of fact. This also seems to be the pivot of the post: to approach the discourse of what the status of being "a model" entails.

In addition to the use of "most", this post also refers to "standards". One can argue that the choice of words in this post emphasizes the reference to existing discourses on beauty and how models usually look. However, the concurrent use of especially the verbs "shattering" and "broken", used about standards, Zalando creates a narrative around the model in the posts as an agent for change. This change can arguably relate to the "welcoming" of zerotypes and the "changing" of the stereotypes. Hence, in the context of being a model, one can argue that by presenting this woman as a model, Zalando is implicitly raising the question of what it means to be a model, and providing an alternative meaning to the discourse on being a model, by appointing the status to the woman in the picture.

Beauty is also a central term in post 7. In this post, the central issue must be extracted from the image. The person in the image is wearing makeup, but if looking closely, the person also has an Adam's Apple, and from that, it is evident that the person is male. While the text does not utilize pronouns to declare whether the person identifies as male or female, it does make use of the word "natural" in terms of beauty. This context offers a different meaning to the word "beauty" than has been presented in the posts discussed previously. In terms of Fairclough's definition of interpretation, it has been mentioned in the theoretical chapter that text makes sense to those who make sense of it. Therefore, those who do not realize that the person in the photo is a male, might interpret the statement of "natural beauty" to entail the amount of makeup on the person, while those who do realize that the person is male might draw a connection between gender and natural beauty. This arbitrariness of meaning is also expressed from the sentence "Beauty doesn't have just one definition", and in terms of Fairclough's concept *force of utterance*, one can argue that with this post, Zalando are encouraging the readers of the post to re-evaluate their own approaches to the term "beauty",

which is a term with various meaning potentials connected to it. In connection with this post, discourses on gender are also utilized, which is indicative of how the discourses blend together in creating meaning for the concept of *zerotypes*.

Finally, looking at the posts mentioned in this section, we arrive at a central question, raised implicitly by this campaign, namely "what is beauty"? or What does it mean to be beautiful? The posts do point to stereotypical ideas of beauty in their texts about flaws and beauty standards. However, by presenting the term 'beauty' in a new context, which involves flaws and mono brows, Zalando are recontextualizing the meaning of beauty, and thus making it achievable for individuals, who have not previously fit the stereotypical beauty standard. As I proceed to the next subject: Body shape, I will not abandon the concept of beauty in relation to creating the meaning of zerotypes, as this can be seen as merely a specification – or a sub-discourse within the beauty discourse.

Body shape, beauty and Zerotypes

As mentioned, the topic of body shape is also approached by Zalando in the Zerotypes campaign. Several posts contain an element of body shape, and in this connection: the size of the body, which is also heavily present in existing discourses on beauty and the "perfect and desirable body", as well as what it means to be a model, as most models are very thin. Two posts are explicitly centered around body shapes; Namely those presented in post 3 and 5. As I covered in the section on beauty, the subject of body shape can be regarded as a sub-discourse hereunder, as existing discourses on beauty, and particularly "not-beauty" also involve one's body shape and size.

Post 3 shows a blonde woman in purple underwear, standing against a white wall. Her posture is tall, and her arms are raised in angles, respectively by her right hip and towards her left cheek. She has a full bosom, full thighs, and her stomach is not flat. The picture further features the text "You should not embrace your curves", and "stereotypes". Firstly, the existing discourses around this topic must be given attention. When speaking of curves, reference is generally made as an opposition to being slim. The word "curves", and the adjective "curvy" has recently been used as a more positive way of referring to women who were previously called "chubby" or "fat". However, the distinction, women with this body type have never conformed to the stereotypical "beauty" or "model"-look, and thus "curvy" women have not been represented in media and through outlets that celebrate and constitute the idea of beauty, and attractiveness. Therefore, when referring to the "stereotype" that "you

should not embrace your curves", one can argue that the implicit reference is made to the general thoughts that curvy women are not beautiful, and that it is not desirable to have a curvy body.

However, Zalando chooses to refer to the woman in the picture as a "model and self-love advocate", both of which adjectives' meanings are interesting to accentuate in this connection. Firstly, by referring to the woman as being a model, Zalando opposes the existing discourses and stereotypes on what it means to be a model. Therefore, Zalando's explicit reference to the woman as a "model" creates a counter-discourse for the concept of being a model, to also entail curvy women. In continuation hereof, the adjective "self-love advocate" draws on the modern discourse of advocating against self-hate and initiating a loving approach to oneself – despite how one might look. This is in contrast to the context in which models have previously been represented. Many young people – especially women are struggling with low self-esteem and the feeling of never being good enough. This discourse of self-criticism is often connected to looking up to models, and only thin, blonde women being celebrated as a symbol of desire. However, by referring to this curvy woman as both a model and a self-love advocate, this whole discourse is countered with a notion of accepting oneself instead of always striving to be thinner and more attractive. This notion is further enhanced when writing that the woman is an "example of some much needed representation in the fashion-industry" (Post 3), Zalando makes the assumption that models like this woman are poorly represented in the fashion-industry. This intertextual element refers negatively to the current state, and overall discourses and representation in the fashion industry, and one might argue that the element functions implicitly as a speech act, in accordance with Fairclough's *force of utterances* at different levels depending on the receiver of the message. If the message is received by people inside the fashion industry, one might see this element as a prompt to them to change their approach to beauty by increasing the presence of curvy girls in the fashion scene. On the other hand, if the receiver is not in the fashion industry, the element may more so be an invitation to adopt a negative attitude towards the current discourses utilized in the fashion industry. The word "labels" is also used in the post. This word is a negatively charged word in line with stereotypes, referring to a sense of being constricted by perceptions from others. In the context of size as adopted in this post, labels can also be seen as an intertextual element, drawing on the notion that individuals with a certain size are not models, and should not show off their bodies. The concept of "labels" is not further clarified, and again, the reader is left to interpret the meaning hereof. However, the post continues to describe how the woman in the picture is "breaking free of labels and

fighting for body positivity" (Post 3). Thus, it seems that "labels" and "body positivity" are incompatible, while the metaphorical representation of her actions draws on a discourse of war, captivity and being constricted, which does not only aid in presenting the shift from stereotypes to zerotypes as being a serious matter, but also to paint a picture of the state of being labelled, as being imprisoned.

Similarly, the post shown in post 5 is centered around size. Yet, this post features a man standing in front of a concrete wall, lifting up in his white tank-top, showing his stomach, which hangs slightly over his waistline in his jeans. Furthermore, he has a denim jacket tossed over his left shoulder, and he appears to be laughing. The picture features the text "Heavy is not handsome" and "stereotypes" (Post 5). In contrast to the post covered before, this post does not apply any adjectives to the person in the picture, other than tagging his instagram profile with an "@". Nonetheless, the word "heavy" is used to describe an overall concept of his body type. This specific designation is relevant to look further into, as many other words could have been used instead of "heavy". As mentioned in the theory-chapter, Fairclough argues that the choice of wording of certain concepts is crucial to how the concept is communicated. In the case of "heavy", Zalando could also have chosen to use the word "fat" or "overweight", but these words are rather negatively charged, and draw on an overall negative discourse, with reference to health, stigma and body types. "Heavy" is only one of two adjectives used in this post, where the other adjective "handsome" is used as a polarization of the meaning of the two words. This means that with the structure of the sentence in the picture it seems that the two states "heavy" and "handsome" are incompatible. However, given the structure of the post, like the other posts, it seems that Zalando is attempting to provide an alternative meaning to the word "handsome". The Cambridge English Dictionary provides the following definition of the word handsome: "A handsome man is physically attractive in a traditional male sense" (Cambridge dictionary 2021b). With this in mind, it is of course undeniable that gendered discourses are present in the post, and in the word meaning, of "handsome". The post thus, draws on established stereotypes for how a man is physically attractive. These most often include being tall, muscular, and strong amongst other things. However, as the man in the picture is clearly confident, and enjoying himself, and the overall format of the campaign, which suggests that stereotypes should be broken down, this post suggests a different meaning to the word "handsome", which is inclined to include "heavy".

In continuation hereof, one can argue that the choice to use "heavy" to signify the man in general may contribute to an overall more positive depiction of the man and that particular body type. Furthermore, the choice to use "heavy" instead of alternatives that are more negatively charged, may also come from what seems to be the overall goal of this particular post. In this post, two sentences are especially notable: The sentence saying "@extra_inches_plussizeblog gives courage to people with curves" and the immediately following sentence "He urges everyone to accept and love themselves, no matter their size or shape". In relation to the concept of *force of utterances,* which is mostly concerned with how the text relates to the receiving part, it is evident from the two sentences, that the goal of the text is to persuade the receiver to adopt a positive attitude towards "curves" and "all sizes". Yet, in continuation hereof, it makes sense to approach one central question: "Who is the receiver of this text?". The answer to this question is rather ambiguous because it is arguable that the text is directed at multiple types of receivers. Firstly, the phrase "people with curves" may indicate to whom this message is directed. Especially because it is followed by "he urges everyone to accept themselves" - One can argue that this is indicative of the message being directed at people with curves, who may not feel satisfied or comfortable with their appearance, and thus giving them validation, that they can love themselves and not be unhappy with their looks. However, in this connection, it must also be noted that the use of the presupposition in both utterances mentioned above; namely that people with curves need courage, because they might not possess that, and that there is a need for people to accept themselves no matter how they look. With this in mind, this message might just as well be an implicit request towards people who may think badly of people with curves, and who may uphold the given stereotype that "heavy is not handsome". While the discourses referenced in this post are similar to the ones mentioned for the previous post, one aspect is different: the post from post 3 depicts a woman, whereas the post in post 5 depicts a man. Therefore, one can argue that the discourses on body-type and self-esteem are different from when referring to the woman in post 3. For example, the wording used to describe the stereotype is noteworthy in contrast to that used in post 3. The words "heavy" and "handsome" are presented in relation to the stereotype. In the case of the woman the word "curves" was used instead of "heavy", however these two words are describing the same state: weighing more than what is deemed "attractive". Also, the word "handsome" is used here, where the word "beautiful" was used in post 3 – again for describing the same concept. Thus, one can argue that when comparing these posts, discourses on gender, and what it means to be "attractive" as a man and a woman are implicitly utilized, by emphasizing this issue in connection with

words connected to respectively masculinity and femininity. This tendency can also be seen in the posts mentioned in the section on beauty standards. Post1,2, and 10 all depict women, and refer to existing beauty standards based on femininity. In general, the word "beauty" is mostly referenced in connection with women and femininity, and therefore, the discourses on beauty standards are mostly connected to women. However, in post 7, the notion of *natural* beauty is mentioned in connection with a man. Here, one can argue that the word "natural" gains a different meaning, in connection with both beauty and masculinity. This post implicitly draws on discourses on what is means to be a "real" man, what is natural for men, and arguably, homosexuality. In this case, the phrase "beauty doesn't have just one definition" (Post 7) gains a different meaning, as one can argue that this is an encouragement to accept that men can also depict beauty.

Interdiscursivity through genres

Through this analysis, it has been established that interdiscursivity is of particular significance in creating the phenomenon of Zerotypes. The previous sections of analysis have mostly focused on interdiscursivity in the sense of established ways of presenting concepts such as beauty, body-type and gender in various contexts. However, considering that this campaign is created by a large fashion webshop, and that it is communicated through their social media channel, it makes sense to also approach interdiscursivity in the sense of genres. One might argue that this campaign belongs to the advertising genre. This is primarily because of the sender being a large clothing distribution channel, whose primary goal is to be profitable by selling clothing items. However, as mentioned on various occasions during the preceding analysis, Fairclough's analytical tool: *force of utterances* is heavily present in the chosen posts from the campaign. This is not unusual for a campaign with the purpose of sales, however, it does not seem that it is the goal for Zalando to sell clothing items through the posts. There are no links to items, and neither are the clothing items worn by the individuals in the photos mentioned. Rather, the elements based on *force of utterances*, seem to have the purpose of persuading the receiver into adopting a negative attitude towards the stereotypes being presented, and a positive attitude - or even a behavior in favor of "zerotypes". This is primarily evident from the structure of the posts: Presenting a stereotype, disproving the stereotype from how the photo is staged, and explaining the stereotype as well as attempting to persuade the receiver to adopt a negative attitude towards this stereotype in the description. Therefore, one can argue that the campaign adopts traits from the political

genre, and even channels a discourse of activism. This is for example evident in the statement "Everyone should feel #freetobe", which all the post have in common. While the phrase creates a separate meaning for every individual post, depending on the message, the message out of context from the posts refers to a general discourse of freedom, which only supports the reference to the genre of activism. As I covered at the beginning of this analysis, the choice to use the word "should" indicates that being #freetobe is not something that everyone can at the present time. Given the construction of the posts and the message where stereotypes and zerotypes are presented to be opposites, one can further argue that an underlying meaning might lay in stereotypes being the cause of people not being free to be, and thus, Zalando are attempting to eliminate stereotypes. Yet, regardless of the underlying meaning of the message, utilizing social causes and highlighting inequalities are not typical for the advertising genre. Rather, this kind of message is more frequently seen in demonstrations for human rights and equality. With this in mind, one can argue that by utilizing their large platform and reach to spread messages of inclusion and equality for all rather than directly promoting their clothes, Zalando are taking position as the philanthropic actor in the business of clothing distribution.In addition to this, the overall discourse of body image on social media should also be considered in this connection, given that the basis of analysis lies in posts from Instagram.As mentioned in the contextual chapter, social media has been propounded as agents for self-orchestration, but with the possibility of creating one's own online persona as one desires to be viewed by others. Therefore, the reality of life is rarely shown on social media. However, by using pictures that show the opposite of what is deemed "perfect", and thus desirable in a commercial context, one can argue that Zalando are producing a counter-discourse to what has previously been deemed "okay" or "desirable" by offering "zerotypes" as an alternative to stereotypes for appearance.

Summing up

To sum up, the interdiscursive presence is a leading agent of change in the creation of meaning for the concept of Zerotypes. The mixture of beauty-discourse and gender-discourse into the messages suggests that the overall concept of Zerotypes might be an umbrella-term for creating acceptance for several minority groups, and social issues and the stereotypes connected to them. Zerotypes exists on a continuum with stereotypes, where Zerotypes represents a more inclusive and accepting discourse on appearance, moving away from the stringent way of adhering to social norms, which is represented by stereotypes. Furthermore, one can argue that the high degree of interdiscursivity used to describe the

phenomenon is indicative of a desire to challenge the status quo, not only in the business of fashion, but in society in general.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of Zerotypes represents a shift in the advertising genre, where the goal is usually to sell products. However, as the campaign adopts traits and elements from the activist - or political genre, one can argue that the discursive meaning connected to Zerotypes is also representative of how large corporations can advertise social change within their industry.

By challenging the well-established discourses on beauty, gender, appearance and what is accepted and what is not, Zalando may gain a place in a movement for normalizing not being perfect. However, this will be approached further in the following sections.

Consumer attitudes towards the Zerotypes campaign

Social change or publicity stunt?

This analysis covers a thematic analysis of the 14 interviews conducted on 15 respondents, who are consumers of Zalandos products. As the interviews were conducted based on the theory of attitudes, as presented in the theory chapter of this thesis, to uncover the respondents' attitudes towards the Zerotypes campaign it came natural that the two main themes deduced from the interviews are based on positive and negative sentiments given towards the campaign. As mentioned in the theory chapter on attitudes, people may experience inconsistencies in their attitudes towards a certain attitude object, if this attitude object contains multiple components. That is also the case for this analysis, as the Zerotypes campaign covers a wide array of social issues and discourses. Therefore, I as a researcher found it necessary to draw on discourse theory - especially the part of the theory concerning interpretation, the discursive, and the social components of Fairclough's theory to not only uncover how the respondents make sense of the Zerotypes campaign, but also which social processes that come into play when making sense of the phenomenon as well as forming attitudes towards the campaign as an attitude object. When I write "forming attitudes", it is because all the respondents disclosed that while they knew of Zalando and encountered their advertisements on a daily basis, they were not familiar with the campaign "Zerotypes" - therefore, the respondents' attitudes towards the campaign were immediate expressions of initial thought.

Before I present the two main themes, and their sub-themes uncovered from the data material in-depth, I find it relevant to first elaborate on the most general findings, and their basis in the theory. As mentioned previously, the two main themes found are based on positive, and negative attitudes towards elements in the campaign. This is firstly the most general finding to be drawn from attitudes - as attitudes as a general concept is based on whether certain people are positive or negative towards a certain object. However, what is more interesting in this finding is that the positive and negative attitudes are based on whether the respondents were able to assume certain favorable subject positions in order for the message to "work for them" as was discussed in the theory section on subject positions within the main heading of 'coherence'. As Stuart Hall mentions in his work on representation concerning the subject, individuals will not be able to make sense of a certain discourse until they have identified themselves with the positions obtained by the discourse, and thus, *subjected* themselves to the

power relations of the discourse (Hall 1997, 44). In the case of the respondents in this thesis, it became clear that those who were predominantly positive towards both the campaign as a whole, and particularly towards the individual elements of the campaign were those, who assumed a subject position that identified positively with the message of the individual post. As such, those who had for instance experienced social problems as a result of their weight or size made sense of the related posts in a compassionate way, and were thus, positive towards the message of the post. Yet, those who assumed a subject position as consumers, and who did not connect with the message on a personal level, were more inclined to being critical both towards the individual posts, but also towards the messages, and discourses offered by the campaign as a concept. With this in mind, I will now elaborate further on the two main themes: *Positive attitudes - Zalando is doing good*, and *Negative attitudes - Reservations towards Zerotypes* as well as their subthemes.

Positive attitudes: Zalando is doing good

As a starting point for this main theme of the analysis, it is important to note that in general, all respondents for this thesis said that they were overall positive towards the Zerotypes campaign. Most of the respondents expressed that values[3] such as diversity, freedom and acceptance were important to them, and many said that they thought that "it is important to break down these stereotypes" (Post. 1-10), and they "liked" the overall message for the campaign, namely that "everyone should be free to be themselves". However, as described above, some respondents resonated more deeply with certain messages, than others did, based on how they made sense of the messages of the post material. The following sub-themes are therefore based on recurring subjects brought out throughout the interviews. The sub-themes are as follows: *It is difficult to be different*, *Beauty standards* and *Everyone should be allowed to be themselves*. As the headings suggest, most of the respondents' positive sentiments towards the campaign material was based on their negatively rooted cognitions and emotions about stereotypes.

It is Difficult to be Different

Firstly, when speaking about "being different", one must assume that there is a norm to be different from. This is also true for the respondents participating in this thesis. The interview data suggests a dominant discourse on "how you should look and conduct yourself" in order

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[3] Please refer to the theory of attitudes for further elaboration on this concept in relation to attitudes.

to fit into the "norm", and thus, not be frowned upon by others. While this discourse is also central for the sub-theme to be discussed next, I will keep focus on it in the context of being different for now.

While the notion of "being different" can apply to many contexts, the interview data collected for this thesis suggests that at the base the notion of being different from the norm lies in gender. This should be understood in the sense that the respondents would refer to expectations regarding their appearance, which indirectly referred to how they should look according to their gender. In this connection, it also became evident that the respondents would modify their behavior[4] to avoid being frowned upon.

In this context, one respondent - a male, who identified as homosexual, disclosed that he liked to wear nail polish, but that he would take it off in work situations, because men with nail polish would not be taken seriously in a work situation (Interview 2). When asked, if he had actually been told that directly, he answered: "Yes, I am told that directly. Sometimes I feel like I have to conform to those rules, because if I am at a job interview, I will not be taken seriously because I have nail polish on" (Interview 2).

Furthermore, this respondent said that he owned a skirt, but that he would not wear it in public because "I might meet this stereotype that I can't do that" (Interview 2). First and foremost, the notions mentioned by the respondent in question points to a prevailing discourse of, how it is appropriate for men to express themselves, and how it is not. The fact that the respondent strongly believes that he will not be taken seriously in a professional context if he wears nail polish, and that he will be frowned upon if he shows himself in public in his skirt indicates that he is still subjected to the existing discourse on men and masculinity. Furthermore, his statement on behavior modification in spite of his apparent desire to wear nail polish and a skirt stipulates that he experiences a form of dissonance between his attitude towards the behavior - wearing skirt and nail polish, and the consequence - that he is frowned upon and not taken seriously. However, as will be discussed later in this section, this apparent dissonance, and negative cognitions towards the actions in question fuels a positive attitude towards the Zerotypes campaign, as there seems to be a power relationship between media and consumers, where media dictates discourses on right and wrong based on their representations. Yet, this will be much further discussed later in this section. With relation to the male respondent modifying his behavior to avoid being frowned

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[4] As mentioned in the theory section on how to examine attitudes

upon, this correlates strongly with a dominating discourse that men expressing femininity is less accepted than women expressing masculinity.

Several respondents expressed beliefs that a man wearing women's clothes would fuel much stronger reactions than women wearing men's clothes. In this connection, one respondent said "I think men who wear women's clothes meet more resistance. People will give more weird looks than when girls wear men's clothes" (Interview 1). Another said of her own reaction to picture number 9 in relation to number 6: " My first thought is that I find it funny that I react more to this one, than I did to the girl, where I didn't think that her clothes looked masculine - but this looks more feminine than the other looks masculine. I guess that correlates with that it is more okay for women to be masculine than it is for men to be feminine without anyone being puzzled by it" (Interview 13). While this statement in itself suggests a dominating discourse of women being allowed to be masculine, but men are not allowed to be feminine, the respondent's following description with the formulation "It doesn't take more than the hat, the pants and the blouse for it to be 'too risky for a man' and 'too feminine for a man'" (Interview 13), was what puzzled me as a researcher. While this thesis is not directed at the topic of gender stereotypes alone, one cannot deny that many stereotypes regarding appearance are connected to the gender of the given person. This will also be emphasized later in this analysis. However, it is especially interesting to give some thought to why the discourse of women who appear masculinely seems to entail a much more dominant discourse in that it is spoken of as "pretty normal", while men that appear femininely is a more marginalized discourse, where it seems that men in women's clothes, or who wears makeup is perceived as wrong, or "norm breaking". If directing focus towards the instagram posts which constitutes the basis of these interviews, this discussion is especially brought up when comparing post number 6 showing a short haired woman with tattoos and dressed in a lumberjack shirt, and post number 8 and 9 which shows men dressed in what Zalando calls "feminine" and "women's clothes". Here, several female respondents also said that they would dress in the outfit pictured on the woman without thinking about it, and most respondents voiced that that photo was not problematic, but when faced with the photos showing men expressing femininity in one way or the other, most of the respondents immediately assumed the subject position of someone being subjected to homophobia and expressing that many may have problems with it. One cannot know for sure why this seems to be a dominant discourse, but one can suggest that there seems to exist an overarching belief that men who express femininity are homosexuals, and that there are various problems with being a homosexual man. Mostly amongst other men. This was also expressed by two

male respondents in particular. One said: "I know many for whom the notion that a man wears makeup or is gay can envoke strong feelings" (Interview 3), and the other said "Many of those 'manly men' might be provoked and say 'he should not wear makeup - he is so gay" (Interview 6). This clearly shows that men who stray from the "norm" of masculinity, and thus how a "real man" is perceived to be may experience to be characterized "outside of the norm", and therefore experience a form of alienation.

However, it must also be noted that while the respondents did point out that they were aware that these presuppositions about men displaying femininity existed, they never assumed the subject position of "those who oppose men being feminine". Rather, the respondents expressed their knowledge of the existing discourses, but then expressed their positive sentiments towards the message of the given posts, which they all interpreted as being in favor of men dressing femininely, if they wanted to. Therefore, this analysis also suggests that the respondents generally had negative attitudes towards the stereotype of "the real man", and were more positive towards the notion that men can dress however they want.

While this part has focused much on the discourse of being different as entailing men exhibiting feminine traits, female respondents also chimed in on this issue. However, in this context, the notion of "standing out" was not as directly connected to their gender, as it has been suggested in the previous passage. Rather, several female respondents spoke of their fear of being different by merely standing out in the common everyday picture. In this connection, the reactions to picture number 2 deserved to be mentioned briefly in this context, as it will also play a crucial role in the upcoming section concerning beauty standards. Yet, when arguing that the "norm" and the notion of being different from the norm is rooted in gendered discourses, the way this image was spoken of by the respondents is worth mentioning. For the sake of contextual understanding, the picture shows a woman with a big, bushy and dark monobrow. In reaction to this picture, several respondents said that they thought that this picture was "significantly more stereotype-breaking" (Interview 1), than showing a woman with curves. One respondent said "I believe that this can offend more people than the previous picture (post 1). Because that is not what society thinks that women should look like" (Interview 1). Another respondent said "Many people think that brows should be kept in a certain way for the person to be beautiful" (Interview 2). These statements indicate a dominant discourse of beauty for women being a certain way - which is not bushy eyebrows. What is especially interesting about the first statement mentioned above is the comparison in the level of stereotype-breaking, that the respondent ranked showing a woman with a monobrow as a symbol of beauty versus showing a woman with curves. One can argue

that this is not as talked about as showing women with curves, which has become more normal in the past few years, but the respondent did offer a further explanation to her cognition about why a monobrow was outside the norm: "Society and men in general have this twisted idea that women are completely hairless creatures, and preferably, we should not have hair on our legs, or under our arms" (Interview 1). The word "twisted" indicates that this notion is not positively charged in the respondents' interpretation of society - and men's approach to how women are beautiful. This is a discourse that will be approached in much more depth in the following sub-theme concerning beauty standards, but in relation to the notion of being different, it was evident that this particular respondent held a very negative attitude towards the dominant discourse on women and body hair.

However, a different approach to the notion of this particular post being outside the norm was provided in interview number 4. This respondent's first reaction was also that the post was "outside the norm with those big eyebrows" (Interview 4), but following this statement, an ambiguous creation of the discourse around "the norm" in relation to this image emerged. This ambiguity came from the respondent saying "I think that it is cool that she dares to do it" (Interview 4), but following up with "I don't think it looks nice" (Interview 4), and "I might not understand why you would make an active choice to look like that, other than if it is to be interesting" (Interview 4). In relation to subject positions, as has been mentioned previously in this analysis, it is evident that the respondent in question is unable to assume a subject position from which having a monobrow is a conscious choice - other than if it was done to perform some kind of activism, or to draw attention to oneself. This might be a result of the clearly established dominant discourse that a monobrow is not desirable for a woman, because women should preferably not have body hair, and their faces should be "clean". However, what then puzzles me as I attempt to look at the statements from the interviews in an objective way, is that the same respondent said in the same connection "I think that it is cool when someone stands outside the stereotype and wants to show who they are, and that they are not like everybody else" (Interview 4). This ambiguity of statements from the respondent suggests that while some respondents might not like the given style, such as monobrow, the general discourse of "being oneself" is still viewed positively. In continuation hereof, it must be noted that the notion of standing out was also connected to strong emotional sentiments about being different.

One female respondent said that she did not get ready in the morning to be noticed on the street, rather the opposite. She said "I think, if I go for a walk, and I dress up, then I will blend in, instead of, if I go shopping in jogging clothes and no makeup, then people will

notice me. I know that is a stupid way of thinking, but if I dress up, then I think "phew, then I am not the one standing out in the picture postcard"" (Interview 11). Another visited the same line of thought in her elaborations on her style, where she said that she "... Would wish that my style was more brave" (Interview 13). This respondent also referred to the notion that people may look at her, if she dressed in more conspicuous clothes, she might be noticed more, opposed to if she would just apply the "mas style that everybody has because it is comfortable" (Interview 13). In these two instances, it is clear that being noticed for standing out is connected to some sort of fear - or a feeling of insecurity for the respondents. Whether this is based on their gender is debatable. The respondents did not mention that they felt like it was expected that they fade into the background. However, it seems that there is a generally negative discourse around standing out and being different from the "norm". Yet, there also seems to be a hegemonic battle between what the respondents want to feel and how they actually feel. This is exemplified in both uttterances - firstly with the respondent from interview 11 saying "I know that is a stupid way of thinking" as well as the respondent from interview 13 following her statement up with "I guess the essence of this is that I wish I didn't feel that way". What this shows is a disproportion between how the respondents view the world - the status quo, and how they wish it was. This is deeply rooted in discourse, and how certain things, such as men wearing nailpolish and skirts, and women who stand out in the crowd with particular clothing or makeup are talked about. The utterances from the respondents suggest that this is spoken of in a negative way. However, as I have now focused solely on how the respondents view the reality of the World, within the theme of being different, it is relevant to connect these findings to how the respondents react to the posts, and the concept of Zerotypes based on this. As mentioned in the introductory section for this main theme, most of the positive attitudes towards the Zerotypes campaign was rooted in the respondent's ability to assume a subject position from which they identified with the issues raised in the posts, and thus told stories of their negative attitudes towards the stereotypes mentioned in the post. Thus, the positive attitudes are rooted in the belief that the Zerotypes campaign is producing the change that they wish in the given discourses.

For example, the respondent from interview number 2 said "I am especially struck by the message of men not being able to dress femininely, because I can relate to that, and I am glad that they put focus on it so that it can become more accepted". He further said "I think that it is good that someone with a big platform is trying to break these boxes a little bit" (Interview 2). This indicates that there is a general belief that when a large company like Zalando vocalizes something, people are listening. This also exposes a certain belief of the structure of

power between the large corporations and the consumer, where this notion suggests that the large corporations dictate the discourses and aid in strengthening them - and changing them. This subject will be even more prominent in the next section, which will also take the role of general media into consideration.

Beauty standards

As the previous section has covered the general idea of "being different" in relation to respondents' positive attitudes towards the Zerotypes campaign, this section will continue in relation to the previous, but with a more concrete focus, namely the notion of "beauty standards", and how especially women find it difficult to live up to prevailing beauty standards, which is why they are positive towards a campaign that offers a different and more inclusive discourse on beauty, and the notion of being a model, which is not limited to a certain look. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that especially the female respondents would assume subject positions of women who are trying to live up to beauty standards, predominantly set in the media. They would express their positive attitudes towards the individual posts based on their ability to identify with the issues presented in the posts. In this connection, the subject of models became a crucial reference point, as the women referred to models as a symbol of success (Interview 1), and desirability (Interview 4), but at the same time, they would also refer to a model-look as unattainable, yet expected or desired. Therefore, living up to beauty standards set by models was connected with strong negative feelings, such as inferiority. The notion of "how a woman should look" was said in reference to a number of factors. One respondent said that "In reality, it's all about being attractive to men. Everything about what is beautiful for women is dictated by what men like, and how men think that women are" (interview 1). While this was the only respondent who overtly expressed that the thought of beauty-standards for women is being set by what men find attractive, all of the other cognitions expressed about this topic contained under-tones of beauty standards setting a frame for acceptance in one way or another. In this connection, the topic of weight and size was particularly prominent. One respondent said on this topic: "Even though I have never been overweight, I just get a sense that if you are not a size 0, then you should be" (Interview10), and when asked where that notion came from, she said: "Before Instagram, it was definitely fashion magazines and so. But after Instagram has become bigger, and is a media in which I am active, it is especially there" (Interview 10). Another respondent said of what beauty ideals meant to her: "Well, it is those that come from

social media. It is especially celebrities who are very prominent on Instagram, and it has started on TikTok, too. You see a bunch of videos about how you should look and so" (Interview 12). The notion that beauty standards are set in the space of social media, may also explain why the respondents thought of them as almost set in stone, since they encounter the picture of "the perfect person" multiple times on a daily basis. Therefore, one can argue that this thought can be even more difficult to break, as it is reinforced at such a frequent rate. One respondent, who also said that she was active on Instagram, said that she found herself comparing her own looks to people she followed on Instagram: "I sometimes replicate someone I have seen on social media, who has a lot of likes, because it works. They are acknowledged by a lot of people, and I think that it is deeply rooted in us, that we want acknowledgement for what we do, and how we look" (Interview 1). What is especially interesting in this statement is the prevailing belief that wanting recognition for how one looks is embedded in any human mindset. This also suggests that the dominant discourse on beauty is created by the media, who is then the power dominant in terms of discourse. As will be discussed later in this analysis, the realization of this power relation between media and consumers is also one of the main catalysts for the respondents' positive attitudes in terms of both cognitions and affect-responses towards the Zerotypes campaign. These positive attitudes were mostly based on a cognition - or a belief that when "big players" such as Zalando initiate a different, and more inclusive discourse on beauty, that will translate into the social world, and thus create a more beneficial status for those who feel marginalized by the dominant discourse.

In terms of the acknowledgement mentioned previously, it became apparent that this acknowledgement is mostly given to people with certain characteristics, which is then connected to "how one should look". In this context, "models" were commonly used as a reference point to beauty, but which was also very difficult to live up to. The respondents spoke of a cultural context in which models were seen as antonyms to "normal people". Therefore, the overall mention of the traditional discourse of being a model seemed to be present in the respondents' minds as an object of comparison - especially when speaking about shopping for clothes, as well as discussing the posts. One respondent said "I love to shop at places where I can see the clothes on regular people. Where they use different people. I actually don't like to go to a webshop where everyone is size zero and models in size 32. I can't relate to that. That does not depict me - and anything looks good on a size 32" (Interview 10). Another respondent said "... And then you get that nice dress home, which just does not look as good as it did on the model. So the thing with showing a different

picture of models - I think that is great" (Interview 6). A third respondent said "If I am going to shop for clothes based on how it fits a model who does not look anything like me, then how is it even possible to be satisfied with it, when I put it on? You would never say 'Oh man, it's the clothes that are wrong', you would think that you are wrong because clothes are not made for you" (Interview 8). From this, it became clear that in relation to clothes, and especially the experience of shopping online, respondents seemed familiar with experiences of comparing oneself to the models advertising the clothes on the website. In this connection, the notion of size was significant. The subject of size was, in general, a subject to which especially the women referred to personal experiences and feelings of not being good enough in the comparison with "perfect models", or "the perfect body". One respondent, a young woman, recounted an experience with size: "I am a relatively tall girl, and I have wide shoulders and wide hips. I have experienced that some shops don't have clothes in my size. It is not because I am huge, but some stores didn't even have a size large". This experience projects a feeling based on the discourse of alienation, when "normal" clothing stores do not hold your size. In this case, the respondent also implicitly pointed to the notion of not being good enough, because she did not fit into the "mold" of a woman's size. Also, the fact that "some of the shops didn't even have a size large", indicates that the notion of what is "normal" or in some capacity "most common" in sizes is reduced, when clothing stores do not carry a size large. This respondent went on to say: " The number on a clothing size, or the number on a scale can really matter. It probably should not, but that is the way it is (Interview 9). As mentioned in the theory chapter on the symbolic attitude approach, this clearly shows that women connected the number on the scale, or the size in the tag of a piece of clothing to something very emotional. Suddenly, the conversation was not about factual states on how the women looked, but rather on their perception of being wrong because of their size. It became apparent that the comparison to the "perfect" person, became altered when one did not fit the size of a model.

The male respondents did not give any personal accounts on their relationship with weight, rather it became evident that most respondents, both male and female, expressed the cognition that men were not as fazed by their weight as women were. This may have a correlation with what was previously mentioned about women's standards of beauty being created by male desire, and not the other way around. One male respondent said about post number 5: "I guess men are better at making fun of themselves and the dad-body. This guy is making fun of himself, and he is feeling good about it. The woman would probably go home and cry afterwards" (interview 6). However, the female respondents had a different approach.

One female respondent emphasized that men would use their weight as a catalyst for masculinity. She said: "I actually think that this issue relates more to women. Men can just amplify their masculinity, and a real man weighs 0,1 tons… It is like that it is more manly to have a certain size in a positive way, where I don't think I encounter the same as a woman (interview 1). This discussion further emphasizes that the general discussion on being outside the norm is grounded in a gender discourse, which dictates what is expected in relation to the appearance of men and women. This correlates with what was discussed in the previous section on being different, as this section also indicated that being different was related to the expectations of gender-specific aspects of an individual's appearance.

While the male respondents did not speak of personal experiences with regards to problems with weight, several did express their beliefs of women having a problematic relationship with weight in general. One male respondent thus said "I definitely think that there has been a lot with young girls getting those unrealistic expectations of how to look. That is the only thing they are exposed to on social media. So, I think it is good that we get more focus on the more regular bodies" (Interview 3). Particularly the notion of "regular bodies" was repeatedly mentioned throughout the interviews, and especially as an opposition to the "model bodies", creating a sort of gap of reality between what the respondents thought of as realistic, and how they perceived societal norms and expectations for perfection. One example of this was a respondent's reaction to post number 1, saying "I think that it is super cool to see a regular person used in a campaign, actually. A person who is not a Victoria's Secret model, and that you put focus on making it fashion to be regular" (Interview 10). The respondent continued: ".. The more we are on Instagram, the more we are conscious that we should all be svelte, and look like those Victoria's Secret models" (Interview 10). When asked to elaborate on the notion of "how we should look", the respondent presented the cognition that "There is hardly a body that is too thin. We should all be as slim as possible, our skin should be perfect and our hair should be healthy, and we have to live up to all of these things… It is like we have to imagine that we enter the game Sims, and make the perfect figure, and then that is what we want to look like (Interview 10).

What is interesting here is that the respondents do refer to the discourse on the perfect body in the media as being "unattainable" or "unrealistic", but most of the female respondents still refer to a desired end-state of living up to the media-image and being acknowledged for how they look. This further emphasizes the power of the media, and the "large" players in the clothing industry in discourse, who aid in setting the standard for female beauty. However, even more interesting is the majority of the reactions towards the woman in post number 1.

As mentioned previously this post is accompanied by the text "it is not beautiful to show your flaws" (Post.1). The vast majority of the respondents said of the woman in post number 1 that "she is just a regular woman". This cognition indicates the general belief that "this is what a regular woman looks like". It was not disclosed what the respondents thought of as definitive for this woman as being regular, but in opposition to how some respondents described "how you should look", as mentioned previously, this woman is not stick-thin, her breasts do not look firm, and her thighs show a little bit of cellulite. The respondents pointed out that "she is not a model, but she is pretty" (Interview.1, 4, 3). The cognition of drawing comparisons between models and the notion of being perfect will be elucidated further in the following: While not being explicitly mentioned in any interviews, it seems that the cognition of "having to be perfect" is fueled by a sense of comparison to people, who the respondents consider to have success. The interviewee from interview number 10 mentioned Victoria's Secret models as an object of comparison. These particular models were a recurring theme of reference to "the perfect human" in several interviews. Victoria's Secret is an American lingerie brand, which has become globally recognized for their depiction of a "fantasy world" orchestrated through the picture of some of the world's most famous supermodels. The brand especially became famous for their annual fashion show, turned TV-event, which set the scene for 90 minutes of entertainment from the models showing the brand's newest collection of lingerie (Hanbury 2021). The reference to Victoria's Secret models suggests a binary view on appearance, meaning that either one is beautiful, or one is not. This notion seems to be especially prevalent in respondents' accounts of how they experience the cultural context of deciding what is beautiful - or desirable, and what is not. As has been covered, several of the respondents expressed a belief that "You should look in a certain way", and one can argue that this in connection with the accounts of how the one end of the binary spectrum - how Victoria's Secret models look - is unattainable. Ultimately, most of the respondents, expressed that they thought that a large player in the fashion industry, as Zalando, who challenged this binary approach to beauty and desirability is beneficial to the overall perception of beauty, and thus, that it might aid in changing the cultural context of how one should look. In this connection, it must also be noted that many of the respondents, who particularly mentioned that they had experienced insecurities about their weight, referred to "when I was younger" - or sometime prior to the time of the interview. One respondent, who disclosed that she had been overweight, but had gone through a drastic weight loss said of her overall impression of the campaign: "Personally, I think that I wish that this campaign was around when I was fat, or when I was bullied in school for being fat. It might have been able

to shed some light on, that it is okay to look the way you do, and that I could have also been a model, when I was fat" (Interview 1), she continued: "It is nice that some of the big players put into words that I also fit in. You know, I have made peace with the way I look, but if that could have happened sooner, because this campaign was around, that would have been great!" (Interview 1). This shows that in terms of being positive towards the campaign, respondents thought of it as a validation of the beauty beyond the "perfect" bodies found in models on Instagram. In this connection, several of the respondents said that they thought that it was "extremely important to talk about" the issues presented in the posts. (Interview 8, 1, 11, and 5). Furthermore, it shows that for consumers, communications and representations from large brands matter. Several respondents said that they considered the Zerotypes campaign as a sort of validation with regards to the types of bodies and looks that the campaign portrayed. This cognition further led to the belief that the Zerotypes campaign is able to change the mindset of people, and thus, create more acceptance to other ways of appearing than the "stereotypical model look".

Everyone should be allowed to be themselves

One of the most frequent recurring phrases during the interviews with the respondents was "if that makes him/her happy, then he/she should just do that". In continuation hereof, many of the respondents mentioned that they thought that both style and expression through appearance, is very individual, and there seemed to be a general belief amongst the respondents that however one wishes to express oneself, one should be allowed to do so. In this connection, it should also be mentioned that when expressing that everyone should be allowed to be themselves, this sentiment was given based on the assumption that being oneself can be difficult, because of existing norms and standards -and because it is difficult to be different - as was mentioned previously in this analysis. This prescriptive belief, as elucidated in the theory chapter on attitudes, supports the overall message of the campaign, and therefore, one could leave the sub-theme with the conclusion that "the consumers express both beliefs and values in favor of the overall message of the Zerotypes campaign. They hold a positive attitude towards the campaign and the goal hereof". However, as a researcher, who has set out to investigate consumers' attitudes towards the Zerotypes campaign in relation to current discourses, and thus, change, I am not completely satisfied with this brief conclusion. However, the notion seemed to be increasingly present with respondents who did not have strong emotions towards the particular issue. One respondent said in connection with post

number 9 and the discussion about his attitude towards men showing their feminine side: "I think it is… Well, that is the way you are. There might be a stereotype that says that you should not show your feminine side, but again, you should do what you want" (interview 3). This answer puzzled me as a researcher, especially because the notion of "they should do whatever they want to do" was especially prevalent in respondents who either had prohibitions (which will be discussed more in-depth later in this analysis) towards the message in the posts, or who did not have any personal relationship with the issue. Therefore, these respondents took a more passive - or even objective subject position on the matter. Bearing Fairclough's approach to coherence, and that "a text does only make sense to those who make sense of it" in mind, one can argue that in spite of the respondents' seemingly positive attitude towards the single post -or the overall message of the Zerotypes campaign, they somehow does not fully understand the tribulations that "just doing as one wants" carries with it for those who feel out of place. One might even argue that these respondents are so subjected to the existing discourses -or accepting of the prevalence of the stereotypes presented in the posts -that they do not see the problem for those who do identify with the problem. Therefore, one can ask from a hegemonic perspective of discourse: Can you fight for a problem you do not fully know exists? From the perspective of Zalando, whose main goal probably is to sell clothes, one could argue that as long as receivers of the message agree with the message, and hold a positive attitude towards the message, the goal is obtained, and the message is successful. However, in the context of initiating change - which was mentioned by all respondents as a desired end-state, one can argue that the hegemonic battle between the binary beauty → ugly, man → woman, fat → skinny and feminine → masculine, and the more inclusive, accepting position of zerotypes is still eminent and unresolved, in spite of consumers' positive attitudes towards the message. In this connection, several of the respondents did utter their belief that they were more open to new ideas than their parents. One respondent said in connection with tattoos: "I don't know why I linger on that detail, but it is something that you shouldn't do if you want a job. That is something I have been met with a lot during my childhood. My family is very… And I should not blame them, because it was a different time" (Interview 13). Another respondent said of the issue of women wearing masculine clothes: "But I feel that people like my parents - who are of an older generation, are not as open about this as I am" (Interview 8). Thus, the respondents did indicate that they saw themselves as more open to new ideas than for example what they have experienced from their parents, which does indicate a state of change in perception of the message, and thus the discussion on hegemony above may prove to resolve itself over time.

In connection with speaking of being able to do what one wants, it was mentioned several times that the respondents thought that if anyone should walk at the forefront of such a movement, it should be Zalando. One respondent said: "I think it is great that Zalando comes out with such a campaign, because they are so big, and showing society that it is okay" (Interview 1). Another said: "I believe that it is good that a brand as Zalando is doing it. I can imagine that they have a wide reach, and that they can reach a lot of people. It is good that it is the big players like them that do it" (Interview 3). However, in this case, some respondents also said that they would expect a large company like Zalando to weigh in on difficult topics, and that they thought that Zalando would experience criticism if they did not.

Therefore, this analysis suggests two perspectives on the Zerotypes campaign: The first is that Zalando are able to create a change with their large reach, and thus, they are able to help change the existing discourses on "how one should look", and then generate acceptance for those who are not adhering to the norm. The second perspective is that consumers believe that Zalando should participate in the debate, and show support to those, who may feel different and not accepted in society.

Negative attitudes: Reservations towards the Zerotypes campaign

While all the respondents expressed positive attitudes towards the Zerotypes campaign, some reservations were also raised towards the messages in the campaign. These reservations were especially aimed at the trustworthiness of the message, the overt approach to the issues taken by Zalando as well as reservations towards advertising obesity in a positive context. This will be discussed in the following sub-themes.

Are they just generating attention or are they actually doing something?

In continuation of uncovering that the respondents actually did see Zalando as an agent for change within the social issues raised in the Zerotpes campaign, it became increasingly clear that the respondents were aware of the increased popularity within communicating social responsibility -and change in a business context. With this popularity, the respondents seemed to be aware of the great expectations that come from consumers as well. Thus, the respondents were much aware of whether Zalando were actually making actual changes in their interface, in how they carry products in their websites, or if they were making organizational changes to fit their message. As one respondent said: "It is one thing what they

are portraying on the outside, and how they are marketing themselves, but then I'm thinking "What has that got to do with their products?" (Interview 13). Another respondent said "It's all about people meaning what they say when they say it. It could easily be used to generate publicity. It is all about money at the end of it" (Interview 9). In addition to this, the respondent disclosed that the campaign did make her happy that a large company like Zalando did take up issues of feeling excluded, or even wrong in the eyes of society to change the overall outlook for society, but that she was also very aware that in the end, the company must be profitable, and that notion made her sceptical (Interview 9).

In this context, it was also very interesting that, when asked about his overall attitude towards the campaign, one respondent went onto Zalando's website to collect further information about whether they actually portrayed the same images that they advertised on Instagram. He said: "It is nice that it is them (Zalando red.), who take the first steps in breaking stereotypes. If they actually use it. It is one thing to send such a message, but it is a completely different thing to follow it. If I go to their website right now to find a random piece of clothing, will I see those values on their website, or do they just want to appear interesting? I might be scared that they are, and then it is not worth much" (Interview 7). The respondent then went to their website during the conversation, and found that Zalando did not - in his opinion- adopt the values marketed in the Zerotypes campaign. Upon this realization, the respondent went from being very positive about the message to uttering that he thought that is "... disgusting to try to increase brand value, and then not comply with it" (Interview 7). Based on these excerpts from the transcripts, it can be argued that in spite of being enthusiastic about the message of acceptance, and breaking down stereotypes from large companies, they are also very much aware of whether the companies are complying with their messages. One might argue that consumers are not satisfied with companies just expressing their opinions on a topic, if they are not intending to act to make changes on the issues. It also shows that consumers are willing to investigate the companies further in order to form an opinion on them.

Too much focus on the stereotypes

In relation to respondents' worries that Zalando are utilizing their message of inclusiveness for publicity rather than actual change, some also had reservations about their way of initiating societal change. Some respondents said that they were sceptical about how overt Zalando were in their portrayal of stereotypes, which they did not believe was beneficial for normalizing the social groups portrayed in the posts. One respondent said: "..And then I think that when you are portraying it like this, some part of it is reinforcing the stereotype because

you are mentioning it again" (Interview 13). In this connection, one respondent had some increasingly strong emotional reactions towards how the stereotypes in the campaign were presented. He stated that he thought that often things that are completely normal are illuminated for activist purposes, and that he was worried that that would blow things out of proportion (interview 6). He said: "I might be provoked because...Sometimes we emphasize things that are completely normal. I'm thinking why is it even necessary to focus on that he is wearing makeup, or that she is wearing men's clothes, or that the first one she weighed.. You know, why do we have to focus on it?" (Interview 6). When asked if he would have interpreted the photos differently if they did not overtly portray stereotypes, he said "Had they just put up this picture and written something, I think I would have just seen it for what it is and used it for inspiration" (Interview 6).

With regards to respondents expressing concerns of Zalando actually reinforcing stereotypes rather than breaking them down, several of the respondents referred to a sense of general society being prone to feeling violated. Thus, some of the respondents said that they had corrected themselves in their thoughts, especially when it came to gender. One respondent said of post 6: "My first thought was if it was a woman or a man. Then my next thought was "Oh, that might be wrong to say that" because it is not certain that the person identifies with being a man or a woman" (Interview 6). This notion was mentioned by several respondents, and it suggests a general irritation within the approach to such problems, that may offend certain groups, because it has been heavily discussed in news media and on social media. One respondent said of post number 2: "I don't know what I feel. I think I might be a little bit sceptical because there are so many campaigns about this topic. If this was the first time I was met with it, I might have been provoked, but it does nothing for me" (I1, Interview 11). This falls into a thread with the previous statement, that the respondents expressed worry that the campaign was a marketing stunt for publicity. It also suggests that the respondents feel like they have been overexposed to the topic, and therefore have become somewhat numb to it.

Advertising curvy or obesity?

In the section covering positive sentiments towards the message of the Zeroypes campaign, it was found that the subject of weight and body shape evoked strong feelings from the female respondents in particular. However, this subject inferred negative connotations from several respondents as well. These negative connotations were based on the respondents connecting the positively charged message towards individuals with more body fat with endorsing

obesity. Thus, several of the respondents stated that they were concerned about the development in "making it okay" to be more curvy, in that they did not think that it was appropriate to endorse obesity as a desirable state. One said "There's a difference between being curvy and being overweight. I don't think that you should advertise being overweight" (Interview 4). Another said: "There is a very fine line between promoting having different sizes of clothing within a healthy spectrum, and still being healthy. It is not because this picture is extreme at all, but sometimes I think that it is going too far" (Interview 13). The respondents being apprehensive about normalizing bodies with more body fat are not tied directly to the photos shown in the interviews. Rather, all of the respondents expressing worries, were pointing to general tendencies in society. One respondent referred to the American singer, Lizzo (I2, Interview 11), who might be categorized as obese. While she is fighting for body positivity, as is also mentioned for the model in post number 3. (I2, Interview 11).

The respondents who connected the term "curvy" with obesity all said that they had not had any prohibitions towards them because of their weight. While discussing this subject, a respondent said "You asked at the start of the interview how we cared about how we look, and I think that there is some ulterior motive that you want to be accepted in society, and if I was overweight myself, I might have seen these pictures with other eyes" (I1, Interview11). With this in mind, one could argue that the way the respondents had experienced the world, in terms of social exclusion because of the way they looked, may have a big impact on how they perceived the photos. This was also evident in the previous section, concerning how the respondents viewed the portrayal of models, and feeling good about themselves. Those who had experienced problems - either with their self esteem, or from others, reacted with strong emotions to the photos that resembled their situation. Therefore, the prohibitions towards the issue of normalizing different body types may be connected to not being in a situation, where one's weight is a social, or physical liability.

Conclusion

As we have now reached the end of this thesis, this chapter will present the conclusions drawn from the analyses to answer the research questions. The research questions will be answered in order, starting with the first question: ***How is the phenomenon 'Zerotypes' discursively constructed in the "Zerotypes" campaign?***

By applying the analytical tools provided by Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis, it was found that the phenomenon of "Zerotypes" is presented as a counter-discourse to stereotypes, indicating a shift in discourse from dividing, and judging people based on norms for appearance, and indicating a more accepting approach to the individual. The term "zero" opposed to "stereo" changes the meaning of the word from something with negative connotations, to a more neutral meaning - but it also indicates that "zero" becomes a sort of empty signifier, in which anybody can fit in, opposed to stereotypes, where norms and boxed-thinking is the dominant discourse.

 However, it was also found that the phenomenon of "Zerotypes" is given meaning based on existing discourses on appearance. Here, the analysis uncovered three discourses referenced through the concept of "intertextuality", and "interdiscursivity", these were: *Gender, body shape* and *beauty*. Here, gender seems to be a recurring theme, meaning that all stereotypes presented - also 'body shape' and 'beauty' contain references to gender discourses.

The chosen posts are all structured similarly by presenting a stereotype, and discarding it through the image. Thus, the images in the posts have a great impact on the communication of the message, as well as the discursive construction of "Zerotypes" as a phenomenon. Within the theme of *gender*, the Zeroytpes campaign approaches style, and how to dress as men and women. By drawing attention to style, which is ever-changing, the campaign removes focus from masculine and feminine traits as determining personality traits such as sexuality, and more a fashion choice. Thus, the campaign attacks the preconception that women who wear masculine clothes, and men who wear feminine clothes are homsexuals, but chooses to focus on their *style* choices, and thus changes the conversation of gender to be interchangeable through style.

The same mechanisms apply in the campaign's approach to the concepts of *beauty* and *body shape*, which overlap each other, as one can argue that the notion of *body image* is a sub-discourse within the overall notion of *beauty*. With regards to Fairclough's terminology, the tools *vocabulary* and *force of utterances* are central in creating the meaning of Zerotypes by contributing to a new discourse on beauty and body shape. This is because the campaign

sets out to change the *word meaning* of the concept of *beauty*, by offering alternate meanings, to it. This is done partly through combining the word *beauty* with images that do not depict stereotypical beauty, and emphasizing traits such as "flaws", "curves", "heavy" and "makeup on men" as being synonymous with beauty. However, in this case, *force of utterances* is also important, because the structure of the posts as well as presenting postulates such as "it is not beautiful to show your flaws", and then blacking out the word "not", implicitly emphasizes Zalando's wish to make the receiver of the post adopt this attitude towards beauty.

The notion that Zalando are attempting to spread the attitude and the message of zerotypes, is of further significance for the interdiscursivity portrayed through *genres*. As mentioned, Fairclough's tool *force of utterances* is heavily present in all of the posts, and the main goal of the campaign seems to be to encourage the receivers of the message to think differently about terms such as *gender* and *beauty*, rather than to encourage them to buy clothes. This is of significance, because the campaign assumes the position of an activist- or political genre, trying to derive social change rather than an advertising genre, with the main goal to sell goods. This is indicative of change - not just on the micro level of one individual company expressing their opinion on stereotypes, but also for their attempt to further this message to their receivers.

Therefore, to answer the research question at hand briefly, the phenomenon of "Zerotypes" is constructed as a counter-discourse to the general idea of stereotyping people based on their looks. Therefore, concepts such as *gender, beauty* and *body type* are central, as stereotypes based on these traits are prevailing in society. The phenomenon is communicated in a campaign setting, by a large retailer of clothes, who has a large reach of receivers, but the campaign contains activist and political genre-traits, which aids in presenting Zalando as a company who wants to do the right thing, and create social change.

With this in mind, the second and third research questions: ***How do Danish consumers make sense of the messages conveyed in the campaign?***, and ***What are Danish consumers' attitudes towards the Zerotypes campaign, and what lays at ground for those attitudes?*** will be answered in tandem, as they are connected in the analysis.

Through 13 semi-structured interviews with 14 respondents, based on the concept of attitudes, it was found that while the respondents were overall positive towards the campaign, their ability to assume a subject position that enabled them to make sene of the posts on a personal level was indicative of how strong their attitudes were towards the individual messages of the posts. It became evident that the positive attitudes towards the campaign were mostly rooted in respondents' negative attitudes towards the stereotypes presented in the

individual posts. Here, respondents especially related to the notions of being different and beauty standards being difficult to live up to. Within these two themes, it was evident that respondents reacted with particularly strong emotions to subjects within which they could assume the subject position of themselves in situations. For example the man who liked to wear skirts, but would not wear them publicly, because he connected wearing a skirt to alienation and ridicule in public. Thus, he connected the messages concerning men exhibiting feminine traits with the same feelings - and thus had a negative attitude towards the stereotypes being presented in such posts. This mechanism translated to all other issues. However, the notion of having to live up to beauty standards catered the most emotional responses to women, who would connect beauty standards to feelings of inferiority and not being good enough. Some women connected beauty standards and being different to experiences of bullying and social defeat, which fostered negative feelings towards the stereotypes presented. In this connection, social media was named as the main culprit for reinforcing this discourse on beauty. Yet, these negative feelings towards the stereotypes were translated into an overall positive attitude towards the message of the campaign, as the respondents did interpret that the main purpose of the campaign was to change the stereotypes. Therefore, the respondents connected such a campaign from a large company like Zalando with an opportunity to change the dominant discourses on beauty standards and the notion of "being different" to being more positive and individual.

In this connection, it was also stated by the majority of the respondents that "if that makes him/her happy, then he/she should do that". This is a rather neutral statement, however, it can both be interpreted as being a general value held by young Danish consumers that one should not feel alienated for not meeting certain beauty standards or gender stereotypes. However, it can also represent a lack of ability to assume a subject position in which the consequences of being different computes to one. Therefore, in terms of change in discourse, the notion that people should do whatever they want may be problematic, as the respondents referring to this might not actually recognize the problems in stereotyping. However, this does not mean that the respondents were directly negative towards the messages in the campaign, as they still stated that they agreed with the message. In this connection, it was also mentioned most of the respondents would expect a company like Zalando to take a stance on the issues presented in the posts.

In spite of the respondents being mainly positive towards the Zerotypes campaign, some concerns were also raised by the respondents. These concerns can be argued to stem from the respondents in question not assuming a subject position in which the message of social

change makes sense. These concerns were characterized by three themes: Question on whether the campaign is just a way to generate publicity, too much focus on the stereotypes rather on normalizing the issues at hand, and concerns about advertising obesity covered by the notion of inclusion. Mutual for these three themes was that the respondents assumed a subject position of consumers rather than members of the social groups depicted in the posts. Many of the respondents recognized that Zalando is a company, and pointed out that their main purpose is probably to make money, thus referring to the most normal discourse of advertising. Therefore, respondents also raised the question of what Zalando was actually doing to initiate social change. Thus, the respondents expressed inquiry for action in addition to advertising about social change. In this connection, the respondents further expressed worry that the Zerotypes campaign explicitly pointing out stereotypes would only reinforce them further, and not as much make change as making people think more about the stereotypes. This goes in thread with the inquiry for normalizing bigger sizes in models and gender fluidity in style.

Lastly, respondents raised concerns about advertising curvier models, which would endorse obesity. This concern was mostly raised by people who had not experienced any prohibitions with regards to their weight - and thus, they were not able to take on a subject position in which they would relate to the issue of weight and beauty standards. This can be seen in opposition to respondents who had experienced alienation and other negatives related to their weight or style. These respondents rather expressed that they wished that they had encountered campaigns like this to compare themselves to, when they were struggling. Accumulating these insights from both a top-down (Zalando) and bottom up (consumers) perspective, one can raise the additional question of whether the inclusion-theme seems to pose for a new dominant discourse both in society and in advertising. The results from this thesis suggests that large corporations are attempting to make a difference, and that in general, it is received well by consumers, who in the case of this thesis seemed to assume the same discourse as Zalando - namely that stereotypes should be changed and zerotypes should be welcomed. However, it must be noted as a final remark, that there seems to be a consistency from the young Danish consumers in this thesis that they expect large corporations to approach social issues in their fields - in this case body image, beauty standards and style for Zalando. This seems to create a natural prohibition from the consumers, in that despite them agreeing in the cause that the messages convey, they want the corporations to <u>actually</u> take action, rather than just use inclusion as an advertising message.

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