

Balenciaga is pure pedophilia.....

2022-11-30 Svar



WE SINCERELY APOLOGIZE FOR ANY OFFENSE
OUR HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN MAY HAVE CAUSED.
OUR PLUSH BEAR BAGS SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN
FEATURED WITH CHILDREN IN THIS CAMPAIGN.
WE HAVE IMMEDIATELY REMOVED THE CAMPAIGN
FROM ALL PLATFORMS.

Balenciaga is evil satanists run

2022-12-12 Svar



Balenciaga sucks!

2022-12-2 Svar



CORPORATE PEDOPHILIA OR MORAL PANIC?

A RESEARCH OF USER SENTIMENTS IN A
CORPORATE FIRESTORM

MASTER'S THESIS
IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Abstract

This thesis will investigate how user sentiments and algorithms on TikTok shaped and constructed the firestorm that concerned Balenciaga's ad campaigns, Gift Shop 2022 and Garde-Robe Spring 2023, from November 2022.

To investigate the sentiments and affective reactions of users on TikTok, a TikTok video, concerning Balenciaga's two campaigns, and 20 comments from the comment section have been collected as data. As this thesis will profess to the social constructivist paradigm, the theoretical framework must acknowledge the subjective perceptions of reality that are portrayed in user perceptions on TikTok. Further, to investigate how users on TikTok can construct a firestorm by voicing sentiments as a response to the Balenciaga campaigns, a focus on discursive products and practices will be adopted. Therefore, this research will conduct a critical discourse analysis (CDA), however, it has been modified to acknowledge the multivocal and technological dynamics of social media communication. The theoretical framework will therefore consist of selected aspects of the Social Media-Critical Discourse Analysis suggested by KhosraviNik, the Media Proximity Approach suggested by Kopytowska, and social semiotic analysis approach suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen.

These theoretical approaches have been combined and visualized in a framework that concern a Critical Discourse Analysis of Social Media Products and Processes (SDA-SMPP) on TikTok, which allow for an investigation of 1) the discursive products and practices that occur when users express sentiments in textual and/or visual content, 2) the algorithmic processes and how these create echo-chambers, and 3) how the ideological struggles of the mediated constructed reality influence society and vice versa.

This approach resulted in the findings that hostile perceptions and affective statements were vented on TikTok as a response to Balenciaga's ad campaigns. Due to the algorithms on TikTok, an echo-chamber was created. Here, the users' hostile perceptions towards Balenciaga were amplified, which caused a shared perception of a social gap between the users and Balenciaga. This generated moral panic on TikTok, which emphasized claims that the campaigns portrayed pedophilic tendencies. This constituted a firestorm which concerned a discourse of pedophilia. The power of the sentiments on TikTok was thereby materialized in the firestorm.

Keywords: *Digital meaning-making, negative eWOM, mediated constructed reality, discursive practices and process on social media, SM-CDA*

Indholdsfortegnelse

Abstract	1
1. Introduction	4
<i>1.1 Research question</i>	5
2. Scholarly approach	6
<i>2.1. Philosophy of science</i>	6
2.1.1 Defining social constructivism	6
2.1.3 Ontology and epistemology	8
<i>2.2 Research design</i>	9
3. Defining concepts	10
4. Defining the context	14
<i>4.2 The rise of TikTok: the new social media platform</i>	14
<i>4.3 Introducing Balenciaga and a summary of the firestorm</i>	15
5. Literature review	18
6. Theoretical framework	24
<i>6.1. Introducing Critical Discourse Analysis approach</i>	25
6.1.1 Ideology, power, and hegemony	27
<i>6.2. Dimension of visual and textual analysis of SMC products</i>	29
6.2.1. The textual analysis approach to content on TikTok	30
6.2.2. The visual analysis approach to content on TikTok	32
<i>6.3. Dimension of discursive and social practice processes</i>	33
7. Methodological approach	37
<i>7.1 Data collection</i>	38
<i>7.2 Describing the data</i>	41

<i>7.3 Analytical approach</i>	42
8. Critical Discourse Analysis of Social Media Products and Processes	48
<i>8.1 Visual and textual analysis of the video</i>	48
<i>8.2 Textual analysis of the comments</i>	58
<i>8.3 Discursive and social practice processes</i>	63
9. Discussion	70
10. Conclusion	73
11. Bibliography	74

1. Introduction

In 2023, social media is no new phenomenon, but the popularity of the different platforms continues to rise. During recent years, the development and further use of social media platforms has increased to 4.36 billion worldwide users in 2021 (Statista.com a 2022). More specifically, the media TikTok has become one of the most popular platforms since its launch in 2016, with 740 million new users in 2021 (Statista.com b 2022). Through these social media, we are able to enter a global community, where we can share, communicate and interact with the rest of the world. But with great opportunities also comes great power.

The Spanish fashion brand Balenciaga felt the power of users on TikTok when it published its collection Gift Shop on November 16th, 2022, and the Balenciaga Garde-Robe Spring 2023 campaign on November 21st, 2022. These collections were marketed as ad campaigns, with multiple pictures illustrating both children and adults dressed in different items. Despite both campaigns being centered around portraying the new clothing of the collection, the pictures caught the attention of people on the internet. On TikTok, users created videos that criticized Balenciaga for portraying elements which, according to users, contain sexual connotations in both the Gift Shop 2022 and the Garde-Robe Spring 2023 campaign. This resulted in hostile and affective reactions from users on TikTok, where an echo chamber of negative perceptions towards Balenciaga were established. On this social media platform, discourses concerning claims of pedophilia and satanism developed into a shared experience that Balenciaga was the wrongful other, and that the campaigns posed a threat to the morals, values, and beliefs of the public. In a matter of days, Balenciaga found itself in a so-called social media firestorm, which was shaped by sentiments and hostile opinions of the public. Eventually, the firestorm caused the company to apologize and withdraw the ad campaigns (App. 1, pic. 6, 7, & 8).

This case illustrates the power of communicative products and processes on social media platforms, and the purpose of this thesis is therefore to contribute with insightful research that investigates the communicative opportunities that are enabled on TikTok. This will include an investigation of how affective reactions and sentiments by users on TikTok, as well as the technological affordances of the app, can influence the discursive processes and product that shape and influence a public firestorm.

1.1 Research question

Based on the introduction above, I have formulated the following research question for this thesis:

How does user sentiments and algorithms on TikTok contribute to the shaping of the firestorm concerning Balenciaga's ad campaigns?

In order to answer this research question, a TikTok video, concerning Balenciaga's two campaigns, and 20 comments from the comment section have been collected as data. These have been selected to investigate how the sentiments of users and the algorithms on TikTok affected the discourses of the firestorm. Therefore, the analysis will be based on a theoretical approach of critical discourse analysis (CDA) which will allow for interpretation, critique, and explanation of the salient discourses portrayed in the data. This approach stems from the theoretical framework of Norman Fairclough, which concern discursive practices in traditional media, however, as this thesis will concern social media communication, the critical discourse analysis will be modified and adapted to become a social media critical discourse analysis (SM-CDA). This modification includes aspects of the Social Media-Critical Discourse Analysis suggested by KhosraviNik, the Media Proximity Approach suggested by Kopytowska, and social semiotic analysis approach suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen. Selected concepts of each approach have been combined to conduct a critical discourse analysis of social media products and processes on TikTok, which allow for an investigation of algorithmic processes and social semiotics in the TikTok video (App. 4, Fig. 4). This approach resulted in the findings that the algorithms on TikTok created an echo-chamber due to the sentiments that were generated in response to the TikTok video. Here, hostile perceptions and affective statements were vented and amplified, which caused users to emphasize a social gap between the public and the elite. However, the public were able to challenge and briefly fracture the unequal power relation, as their claims of pedophilia achieved ideological common sense and constructed a firestorm. The power of the sentiments on TikTok was thereby materialized in the firestorm, which eventually caused Balenciaga to react to the claims of pedophilia.

2. Scholarly approach

In this opening chapter, the reader will be presented to the philosophy of science of this thesis. Therefore, a brief overview of the three main scientific fields will be provided to determine the scientific placement of this thesis. Further, the scientific paradigm of social constructivism will be presented and explained in relation to ontology and epistemology, and later compared to the paradigm of social constructionism to emphasize differences and similarities.

2.1. Philosophy of science

As an academic researcher, it is essential to present the scientific theoretical approach, as this allows for a greater understanding for the basis of the research. It can be difficult to distinguish between the three main scientific fields, being humanities, natural sciences, and social studies, because they more often become intertwined and mixed due to the blurred and somewhat loose division of the fields (Collin & K ppe 2003, 13). The scientific fields of humanities and social sciences are commonly mistaken for one another, as studies within the two fields concern human life in different aspects. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how the sentiments of users on TikTok influenced the shaping of the public firestorm against Balenciaga. As this thesis will be concerned with communication among people on TikTok, the conducted research will contribute to the field of humanities. This is because the field of humanities concern the acts, thoughts, spoken words, and physical products of individuals. Humanities therefore centers around human beings, their thoughts, actions, and their communication along with the outcomes, or the so-called products, of these. This means that the field of humanities perceives humans as subjects that are both creating and constructed by culture (Collin & K ppe 2003, 10; Sonne-Ragans 2015, 111). This leads to the following chapter, which will concern the paradigm of social constructivism.

2.1.1 Defining social constructivism

Although philosophy of science can be a difficult concept to grasp, it is best described as certain traditions of research, each involving a specific ontological and epistemological standpoint, along with established methods of how to conduct research – in other words, it can be described as different scientific toolboxes (Presskorn-Thygesen 2012, 21).

Social constructivism stems from constructivism, which is a theoretical standpoint that concerns the perception that knowledge is created collectively, and on a basis of language (Sonne-Ragans 2015,

116). Social constructivism considers reality to be a social construction, meaning that each person perceives the world differently, because their knowledge of the world is based on communicative interactions. Therefore, reality is subjective, rather than universal or objective (Sonne-Ragans 2015, 116).

The social constructivist paradigm considers society to be a social construction, meaning that it has been constructed, shaped, maintained and often deconstructed through our language and social interactions (Sonne-Ragans 2015, 116). Through our behavior, we have created an understanding of what we perceive to be *true* – Andreas Beck Holm (2018) uses the example of money to illustrate something we perceive to be *natural* but is really a social construction (Holm 2018, 141). Bitcoin is another example though even more complex, since it is a digital currency, or a so-called cryptocurrency, which does not exist in any physical shape or form (Jensen 2021). However, the value of this currency, as with any other currency in the world, has been constructed and is now maintained by our behavior – we *act* like Bitcoin is a valuable currency, because we have *agreed* that it is. Further, it is perceived that people's perceptions of reality are shaped by certain social and personal factors, such as their social relations, their personal background, their personal beliefs and core values (Holm 2018, 144). The construction of reality is therefore considered to be both a personal and a societal phenomenon, and our knowledge of the world is therefore constructed on an individual as well as a collective level (Collin & Køppe 2003, 249). This allows me to consider that a fashion campaign can be consumed differently and thereby generate different perceptions of the campaign. Furthermore, marketing is a socially constructed phenomenon that people can experience differently based on their perception of it. Because people have collectively constructed marketing to be *something*, they can have a perception of what marketing is, because they are aware that it exists in the world, which enables them to categorize it as a corporate practice.

Social constructivism suggests a critical view on society and current social phenomenon in order to pave the way for new perspectives to gain a foothold and eventually be accepted in society. This means that social constructivist research will aim to illuminate that what is "true" and "natural" is in fact something that we have constructed and agreed to perceive as the truth. Social constructivism therefore seeks to deconstruct what is perceived to be a "natural" phenomenon (Collin & Køppe 2003, 249). This paradigm will support the investigation of how sentiments and affective reactions on TikTok shape the public firestorm, because it acknowledges subjective perceptions of reality.

Finally, the paradigm of social constructionism also acknowledges that people's perception of the world is shaped through language, but they are dependent on their social relationships to construct knowledge (Gergen 2015, 5; Burr 2015, 2). This paradigm concerns that, in relationships, people construct each their own perception of the world, and everything they perceive to be true is shaped by, and dependent of, their social relations (Gergen 2015, 5-6). In each interaction, people draw upon certain traditions or standpoints that allow them to understand the world in their relationship with others (Gergen 2015, 5-6). Social constructionism also recognizes different perceptions of the world, however, these perceptions are based on the social context that each person participates in (Gergen 2015, 5-6). In this thesis, I will profess to the paradigm of social constructivism rather than social constructionism, because I will not be able to investigate the social context and relations of the users on TikTok due to the technological affordances of the platform. This will be further elaborated on in chapter 3 and 7.1.

2.1.3 Ontology and epistemology

The paradigm of social constructivism, as well as every other paradigm, commits to three philosophical questions, that indicate how the researcher perceives the world, understands knowledge, and conducts research (Presskorn-Thygesen 2012, 26-27). Each paradigm relies on an ontological, epistemological, and methodological position which clarifies the scholarly approach on different levels (Presskorn-Thygesen 2012, 26-27). These will be presented below.

Based on the paradigm of social constructivism, the ontological stance will be relativistic (Presskorn-Thygesen 2012, 29). Ontology concerns how reality is perceived throughout the research, and therefore a relativistic ontological stance suggests that reality is subjective, meaning that all people perceive the world differently due to the contexts that they participate in (Collin & K ppe 2003, 376). These contexts influence how they perceive the world and everything in it. This supports the idea that people construct reality through social contexts, and therefore, a relativistic ontological stance considers that *what* is perceived to be real depends on *how* it is perceived in terms of cultural, linguistic, and social aspects (Presskorn-Thygesen 2012, 36). Therefore, one universal truth about the world does not exist. This relativistic understanding of reality will acknowledge the subjective truths of the sentiments on TikTok, because they are based on individual perceptions of reality.

A relativistic ontological stance is opposed to a realistic stance, which belongs to the paradigm of positivism. A positivistic researcher would argue that reality exist and that it is 'true', no matter how

people perceive it. In other words, a research based on a realistic ontological stance will seek to find the truths about reality (Presskorn-Thygesen 2012, 29).

Moving on, epistemology concerns what there is to know about the world and how reality is acknowledged by the researcher (Sonne-Ragans 2015, 187; Presskorn-Thygesen 2012, 27). The paradigm of social constructivism suggests a subjective epistemological position, which means that the world cannot be perceived objectively, because knowledge is bound to the social relations that people are involved in (Presskorn-Thygesen 2012 – 29). This will affect the production of knowledge in this thesis, because a subjective epistemological position acknowledges that what there is to know about the world is influenced by subjective observations. As this thesis will be concerned with the sentiments in a TikTok video and 20 selected comments, the users' knowledge about the world will be perceived as a reflection of the social contexts and the society that they partake in (Collin & Køppe 2003, 251). This epistemological position also eliminates my objective role as a researcher, because my perceptions of reality will influence the interpretative aspects of this thesis (Sonne-Ragans 2015, 189). Therefore, the presented theories and methods must adopt a critical analytical approach to ensure that the data will be collected, analyzed, and discussed on the basis of a critical perception of the knowledge produced on TikTok. Further, this will also enable the thesis to provide valuable knowledge to the scientific field of humanities.

In the following chapter, the research design will be presented and combine the scholarly approach with the methodological approach, which will be presented in chapter 7.

2.2 Research design

In this subchapter I will present the research design of this thesis, which will provide an overview of how I will conduct my research. As stated in chapter 1.1., this thesis seeks to uncover how the sentiments and the algorithms of TikTok influence the firestorm against Balenciaga. In this chapter, the interrelation of philosophy of science, the ontological and epistemological stance, the methodology, and finally the analytical approach will be presented to illustrate how these elements will structure the research and influence the findings of the thesis.

First, the social constructivist approach acknowledges that the sentiments on TikTok are based on subjective truths and perceptions of the world. The relativistic ontological stance and the subjective

epistemological stance suggests that each user on TikTok perceives the campaigns differently, but by engaging in the social interactions on TikTok, they construct new knowledge about Balenciaga which then influence the public firestorm. To investigate the construction of knowledge on TikTok, a TikTok video and 20 comments to the video will be gathered based on a sampling strategy that establish a frame for the data collection method. As the knowledge of users is constructed through language, and because language is discourse, a critical discourse analysis approach to social media content will be adopted to interpret, critique, and explain salient discourses in the sentiments. This means that the research will be based on a qualitative analytical approach to uncover the in-depth meanings that user of TikTok portray through their affective reactions. Further, the critical approach will support the critical aspect of social constructivism which concern that the firestorm is not naturally occurring, because it is socially constructed by users when they vent their affective sentiments on TikTok, and therefore the nature of the discourses must be questioned.

Finally, as the social constructivist paradigm does not acknowledge objective perceptions about the world, the conclusion of this thesis will not reach a universal truth. Instead, it will be possible to conclude how a TikTok video, 20 affective comments from TikTok, and the technological affordances of the app influence the saliency of discourses regarding Balenciaga and the campaigns Gift Shop and Garde-Robe Spring 2023.

In the following chapter, relevant concepts will be presented to account for the context of this thesis, and the third chapter will therefore establish a fundament of relevant background knowledge.

3. Defining concepts

Throughout this thesis, scholarly concepts and terms that are characteristic and commonly used within this field of research will be frequently used. Therefore, these concepts will be presented to provide additional and important information that will influence the references, reasonings, and considerations in this thesis.

The first concept to be presented concerns discourse as it will function as a key concept throughout the thesis. The concept will be further clarified in chapter 6.

Discourse can be described as language that partakes in a social process - it is therefore a social practice that can affect people and how they act towards each other and the world (Fairclough 1992,

63; Fairclough 2015, 7).). Discourse is therefore meaning-making language that exists in a social context (Fairclough 2015, 8).

Moving on, the term 'brand' will be clarified, as it will be used to refer to Balenciaga. The term can be described as "... a business and marketing concept that helps people identify a particular company, product, or individual" (Kenton 2022), meaning that a brand is also something that is used to know one company from the others. In chapter 4.3., a brief presentation of the company and its brand will be conducted.

As this thesis concerns people's reactions to Balenciaga's advertising campaigns Gift Shop and Garde-Robe Spring Campaign 2023, the concepts of marketing and commercial campaign will be clarified. Kotler and Armstrong (2016) define marketing as "(...) the process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return" (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 29). This means that marketing is a term that embrace social and managerial processes, and the main concern is the exchange of value among individuals and organizations (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 29). Further, the idea of selling and advertising products and services can be part of a marketing strategy, in which we find the term 'campaign'. A campaign can be both commercial and non-commercial (Windahl et al 2009, 210), and it is described as planned and organized communication activities that are aimed at a specific group of individuals within a determined period, and these activities often have a purpose (Sepstrup & Øe 2010, 23). This means that campaigns can be perceived as strategic communication that is produced with the purpose of changing a situation, and in commercial campaigns, the purpose is to influence people to buy a product or a service (Sepstrup & Øe 2010, 23). In this thesis, the term campaign will be used to refer the corporate communication activities by Balenciaga that constitute the two campaigns from November 2022. However, it is important to note that I will not be able to investigate how and why the campaigns were created.

In relation to this, the concept of consumer behavior, which concerns how people consume services and products and how marketers seek to influence this behavior, will be introduced. This is important as it relates to the topic of this thesis in the sense that the campaigns of Balenciaga were meant to advertise the new collection of clothing with the purpose of making people want to buy it. However, when they were published, it immediately resulted in hostile reactions from the public. Even though

consumer behavior will not be my point of departure in this thesis, the concept is related to my topic of interest, and therefore it is important to clarify how this concept will be understood in this thesis, as it generates a frame through which I will be able to understand how the situation developed.

Consumer behavior is a marketing-related term that concerns how individuals or groups acquire, use, or dispose of services and products to fulfill a need (Southerton 2011, 2). These individual and internal processes can be both intentional or something that happens automatically and unconsciously (Andersen 2014, 15). This means that the commercial behavior of a consumer stems from wants and needs, and therefore marketers seek to understand consumer purchases to target and influence them to buy products and services (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 167). In relation to this, the internet has empowered consumers to be more proactive in the sense that it has become easier than ever before to find information about a brand, a product, or a company, which also influence their behavior as consumers (Schivinski & Dabrowski 2016, 192; Andersen 2014, 25). Furthermore, scholars indicate that when consumers express their opinion or share their experience with a brand, other people will perceive this as more valuable than the information provided by marketers of the brand (Christodoulides 2008, 292; Andersen 2014, 25). Therefore, the concept of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and affective reactions on social media will be presented below.

As social media continues to enable new options of communication, it becomes easier to discuss opinions with others – also in terms of brand experiences and judgements on products (Olsen et al 2020, 125; Holmgreen 2022, 2; Decock et al 2021; Andersen 2014; 25). This phenomenon can be referred to as eWOM, which describes the social online interaction between consumers that post about their experience with brands (Yang & Mundel 2022, 279; Bai et al 2022, 2). In general, eWOM influences the behavior and intentions of consumers, and especially negative eWOM can influence their process of decision-making, as well as their general consumer attitude and trust in the brand (Zhou et al 2019, 189; Yang & Mundel 2022, 279; Bai et al 2022, 2; Olsen et al 2020, 125; Holmgreen 2022, 2; Decock et al 2021; Andersen 2014; 25). Therefore, negative brand publicity among consumers is potentially harmful to a brand (Yang & Mundel 2022, 279 – 280; Ghosh 2017, 148; Decock et al 2021, 2), and especially when consumers let their emotions run free. This is because emotions can “(...) influence what we notice, what we learn, what we remember and ultimately the kinds of judgements and decisions we make” (Forgas 2006, 273). Social media are easily accessible, which gives people the opportunity to vent their immediate emotions, thoughts, and opinions, and especially the sharing of strong emotions is considered a human need (Holmgreen 2020, 104;

Hidalgo, Tan & Verlegh 2015, 364). Furthermore, the interactive and engagement-enhancing design of social media is considered to have 'emotion-evoking advantages' which is not experienced to the same degree in offline media (Christodoulides et al 2013, 154). This is explained by the 'relative anonymity' that people can experience on social media, which can encourage them to express their honest opinions and create relations to other people that share the same values and beliefs, because they can act anonymously or as a made-up personality (Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020, 610).

When sharing emotions, a person is likely to experience positive feedback, attention, reassurance, and support (Vermeulen et al 2018, 5). Therefore, users on social media can attract attention to their content by portraying emotions, which can then lead to emotional and cognitive involvement of others (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan 2013, 222). This is because users on social media are driven by their moral compass and share a desire for recognition (Johnen et al 2019, 3140). Therefore, users will vent sentiments as a response to perceived misconduct by other users, companies, celebrities, politicians, or organizations (Johnen et al 2019, 1340, Rost et al 2016, 1). Further, content that evokes high-arousal emotions such as anger or amusement are more likely to attract attention than content that evokes a low-arousal emotion like sadness (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan 2013, 224). Content that portrays negative emotions can therefore cause social media users to interact, which can lead to collective aggression because users are willing to attack the perceived moral misconduct by others to protect their own moral compass – especially in situations of high emotional arousal (Johnen et al 2019, 1341; Rost et al 2016, 1; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan 2013, 224). This relates to how social media can become the harbor of online 'firestorms', in which users navigate with their moral compass. Firestorm can develop from negative eWOM when social media users criticize the behavior of a company, an organization, or a person (Olsen et al 2020, 129; Coombs 2018, 21; Svarre 2019, 240). Negative eWOM and firestorms can therefore have an impact on a company's reputation, sales, and customer relationships, as complaints and dissatisfaction from people online is vented out to thousands and even millions of other online users. This can influence the hostility of existing customers, and scare off potential customers, which then will have a negative consequence for the company's brand and reputation (Ghosh 2017, 151; Decock et al 2021, 2). Therefore, it has become more important for companies to be present on social media to engage in the communication of consumers, and especially if the company or its brand is mentioned in negative eWOM (Yang & Mundel 2022, 280; Holmgreen 2022, 3; Ghosh 2017, 148-149; Decock et al 2021, 2; Svarre 2019, 242).

With this subchapter, the relevant concepts of discourse, brand, marketing, corporate campaign, consumer behavior, eWOM, high arousal emotions, and firestorms have been explained. In the following chapter, the contextual background of this thesis will be presented and include insight to the social media TikTok, the fashion company Balenciaga, and the marketing practices that concern attracting consumer attention.

4. Defining the context

In this chapter, the contextual background for this thesis will be established to provide insight to the development of the firestorm against Balenciaga. In the first subchapter, the social media TikTok is presented along with the affordances that allow users to produce, react to, and distribute content on the app. The second subchapter will provide a presentation of Balenciaga and a summary of the case. This will include a brief introduction of the company with a focus on its history and its organization. Further, the Balenciaga Gift Shop 2022 campaign and the Garde-Robe Spring 2023 campaign will be presented, followed by information about the development of the case.

4.2 The rise of TikTok: the new social media platform

Within the last two decades, the concept of online, social platforms has developed rapidly, from the very first American social networks, SixDegrees.com and Classmates.com from 1997, to Friendster, Myspace, LinkedIn, and Facebook from the early 2000's, to Instagram, Snapchat and now TikTok within 2010 to 2020 (Gregersen 2023). TikTok is "(...) the leading destination for short-form mobile video" (TikTok n.d.), meaning that TikTok is a media that enables users to create short videos with audio, text, pictures, and different filters (Herrman 2019). TikTok has become an international community, that allows people from around the world to get a glimpse of how life is portrayed by others. On TikTok, people from across the globe can communicate to and with each other, defying borders, and social positions in the world.

TikTok differ from other social media as users navigate through videos by scrolling up and down, which creates an endless feed. Every user has two feeds - the "following" feed, where they only see videos from the creators that they follow, and the "for you page" (will be referred to as the FYP), which is a personalized, algorithmic feed (TikTok n.d.). Videos can be up to 60 seconds long if they are recorded in the app, while uploaded videos can be maximum three minutes long. For each video, the creator can use hashtags or write a maximum of 2,200 characters, which enables the creator to

elaborate on the video. The concept of hashtags is no new phenomenon, as it has been an integrated part of social media communication for the last decade. Hashtags, written with # followed by a word or a phrase, allow people to categorize their content by hashtagging topics and keywords (Twitter n.d.). This function is also enabled on TikTok, which means that users can categorize their videos to make it easier for others to search for it and identify the topic of the video.

On the FYP, TikTok suggests new videos to the users based on the content that they have previously interacted with or watched. This is also called the algorithmic feed, which means that the algorithms of TikTok react to the user's interactions in the app to suggest new content on the FYP, and it therefore never runs out of material (Herrman 2019). An algorithm is an artificial intelligence that filters, sorts, and ranks the endless amount of content on TikTok to personalize the user experience with an aim to increase the engagement, interaction, and general time spend on the app (Etter & Albu 2020, 71). In relation to this, users can interact with content by liking, commenting, saving, sharing, or following others. In comment sections to each video, users can react and express themselves within the limit of 150 characters. Content creators can limit the interaction of other users by deciding whether they can use the comment section attached to the video.

The affordances of TikTok therefore engage users by enabling them to react to and create content in which they can portray their life, their creativity, or anything else that they are willing to display, and this will be rewarded with the chances of gaining more followers, likes, shares, or comments, which can enable content to go viral (Herrman 2019).

4.3 Introducing Balenciaga and a summary of the firestorm

In this chapter, the company Balenciaga will be introduced, followed by a description of how the firestorm against the company developed due to the two ad campaigns, Gift-Shop 2022 and Garde-Robe Spring 2023.

The company Balenciaga is named after the founder, Cristobal Balenciaga, who opened the first Balenciaga Haute Couture atelier in Spain in 1917 (Judge 2022, Kering n.d.). In 1937, the fashion house opened in Paris, and the first steps of Balenciaga becoming an international fashion house was made. Cristobal Balenciaga transformed the classic silhouettes within women's fashion which led him to be awarded the Legion of Honor in 1958. This made Balenciaga a renowned brand worldwide (Kering n.d.). In 1972, the company was left dormant due to the death of Crisobal Balenciaga, however, in 1986 Balenciaga's first ready-to-wear line for women was launched by Jacques Bogart S.A. (Judge 2022, Kering n.d.). For thirty years, the brand continued to grow, and several designers

helped renew and reinvent Balenciaga, which was taken over by the global luxury group, Kering, in 2001 (Judge 2022, Kering n.d). In 2015, the designer Demna Gvasalia was appointed Creative Director, who presented a combination of ready-to-wear streetwear and the original silhouettes of Cristobal Balenciaga, creating the designs that are seen from Balenciaga today (Judge 2022; Kering n.d.; Highsnobiety n.d). After the appointment of Demna, celebrities and artists became friends and ambassadors of the brand, such as Kim Kardashian, Kanye West, and Justin Bieber (Judge 2022). The ready-to-wear collections differ with items available from 90 US Dollars for a pair of socks to 4,152 US Dollars for a biker jacket, and Balenciaga is therefore referred to as a luxury brand (Highsnobiety n.d.).

Today, Balenciaga has 273 stores worldwide, with its head quarter in Paris, and a second office in New York (craft n.d.), and the website enables people to shop online from Europe, America, Asia, Oceania, the Middle East, and from two international sites (English & Chinese) (Balenciaga n.d.). On the international sites, users can choose English or Chinese as the selected language. However, English is the standard language on the website, and it does not change despite the visitor's location is changed. The company is therefore an international brand, with international offices and stores.

On the website, it is suggested that people connect with the brand on their social media profiles, being Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Spotify. When visiting these accounts, all content is written in English, and there is only one account for each platform, indicating that the company communicates from an international account. Furthermore, the brand ambassadors as well as collaborations with celebrities and artists has enabled Balenciaga to become a visible brand on accounts that have millions of followers, which has generated publicity of the brand (Highsnobiety n.d.). Balenciaga has therefore become known for its relations to popular culture and its presence on social media (Highsnobiety n.d.). It is a renowned luxury fashion brand on an international scale due to its different designs, its brand, and its collaborations with celebrities (Highsnobiety n.d.).

On November 16, 2022, Balenciaga launched The Balenciaga Gift Shop campaign, a campaign that advertised a new collection of collectibles and homeware in time for Christmas (Pauly 2022; Paton et al 2022). The campaign images were shot in October by an Italian documentary photographer, and the images included six children portrayed posing in different homely settings, such as on a couch and a bed. The children wore clothes from the Balenciaga clothing line, and objects from the collection were placed around the children. Further, all children were holding teddy bear handbags with fishnet tops, leather garments, black eyes, chains, and piercings (Paton et al 2022).

On November 21, 2022, Balenciaga launched another advertising campaign, being the Balenciaga Garde-Robe 2023 Spring campaign, with the celebrities Nicole Kidman and Bella Hadid as models, which was shot in July 2022 (Paton et al 2022). The campaign took place in an office, and different looks from the Garde-Robe collection was portrayed with the models leaning on desks and slouching on office chairs. Further, pieces from a Balenciaga and Adidas collaboration took part in the campaign as well, in which one of the pictures from the campaign illustrated the Balenciaga X Adidas Hourglass handbag, worth 3,000 US Dollars (Paton et al 2022).

After the release of both campaigns, people pointed out specific objects in both campaigns (Paton et al 2022). In the Gift Shop campaign, sexual connotations were ascribed to the black garments on the teddy bears bag which the children were posing with. In the Garde-Robe Spring 2023 campaign, the Hourglass handbag is positioned on top of a desk filled with documents, and people pointed out that these documents were copies of a US Supreme Court decision from 2008 (Appendix 1, Pic. 3), which concerned a case regarding Michael Williams, who was convicted of promoting illegal child pornography (Oyez 2008). In the same campaign, people pointed out that a book containing the artworks of the Belgian artist Michaël Borremans was visible in the background (See picture 4 and 5 in Appendix 1), which users described to portray children in violent and sinister settings that include blood and severed body parts. These findings influenced users across social media platforms to express their reactions to the campaigns, which quickly developed into a firestorm with negative and affective accusations towards Balenciaga (Paton et al 2022; Stephaniesooyt a 2023; Marcbaigent 2022; Suzykazaryan 2022; Sensei Orlando 2022; Danzy 2022).

On November 21, Balenciaga deleted all its content on its Instagram account, and removed the comment section from all videos on its TikTok account (Paton et al 2022).

On November 24, Balenciaga posted two separate stories on its Instagram account, in which each campaign was addressed. The company apologized for featuring children holding the teddy bear bags, for displaying the court documents, and it announced that the Gift Shop campaign had been removed (Paton et al 2022; See picture 6 Appendix 1). Balenciaga emphasized that it would take legal action towards the involved parties of the production, and that it supports children's welfare and safety (Paton et al 2022). These stories are no longer available on either of the company's social media accounts.

Balenciaga filed a lawsuit against the production company behind the campaigns, however, Balenciaga canceled the lawsuit on December 2nd 2022. In the meantime, on November 28th, Balenciaga posted a statement, consisting of two stories, in which it is stated that the company takes full responsibility and acknowledge that the Gift Shop campaign should not have included children (See pictures 7 and 8 Appendix 1). In the statement, Balenciaga apologized and stressed that the it will learn from its mistakes. Further, the statement was signed by the president and CEO, Cédric Charbit, who personally apologized for the offense that the campaigns caused. The statement is still available on the company's Instagram account to this day (May 2023) under the headline "Statement".

This chapter has provided an insight to the affordances of TikTok as well as relevant information about Balenciaga, the two ad campaigns, and the firestorm. With this established foundation of background knowledge, the literature review will concern social media communication and seek to investigate how previous studies address this topic.

5. Literature review

As a researcher, it is imperative to be familiar with the scientific field related to one's research, as it enables the construction of a correct scholarly foundation the thesis. This thesis will contribute to the scientific field which it partakes in, and it is therefore relevant to ensure that it fills a potential gap in the field. In relation to this, previous, peer-reviewed research within the scholarly field of social media communication will be presented in this chapter.

In recent years, researchers have found that social media not only enables individuals to communicate to and with each other, they can also express their opinions, judgments, ideas, and emotions (Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020; Burmann 2010; KhosraviNik & Esposito 2018; Moussaïd et al 2013; Ghosh 2017; Andersen 2014; Olsen et al 2020; Holmgreen 2022; Decock et al 2021), search for and gather new information (Andersen 2014; Svarre 2019; Weitzl 2017) and thereby social media enables all users to both create, distribute, and consume content (Svarre 2019, Andersen 2014, KhosraviNik & Esposito 2018; KhosraviNik 2017, KhosraviNik 2020, Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020, KhosraviNik 2018, Kopytowska 2022).

Social media communication (SMC) can be described as electronic and mediated communication that takes place on platforms that enables users, being both individuals, organizations, and companies, to co-create content that they can reach and engage with at all times (KhosraviNik 2017, 752). The affordances of social media encourage individuals to engage in a collective expression of emotions, individual views, attitudes, opinions and more, which is done through meaning-making practices (likes, tagging, sharing, following etc) and content creation (commenting and posting) (Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020, 610; Burmann 2010, 1). SMC has therefore enabled people to always be updated on everyone and everything, which means that they are always exposed to the opinions, judgements, thoughts, and perspectives of others, even though they do not engage with them physically (Moussaïd et al 2013, 1; Kopytowska 2022, 149; KhosraviNik 2017, 64).

In everyday life, it is not unusual that personal opinions are influenced by others, which is something humans rely on; our behaviors, judgements, and decision-making are highly influenced by our observations of other people (Moussaïd et al 2013, 1; Kopytowska 2022, 149; KhosraviNik 2017, 64). Studies concerning opinion formation have illustrated that within groups, people can influence each other to generate strong judgements and opinions which they become passionate and confident about (Moussaïd et al 2013, 1; Kopytowska 2022, 149; KhosraviNik 2017, 64). This is also seen on social media because people communicate with each other and create new knowledge together (Weitzl 2017, 1-2; Andersen 2014, 25; Kopytowska 2022 ; KhosraviNik 2017). This perspective suggests that social media enables a circular and fluid distribution of power, because users co-create, co-consume, and co-distribute content (KhosraviNik 2017, 63).

In terms of the affordances of social media, users can express affective reactions using adjectives, 'context-bound discourse' (emojis), linguistic codes (such as LOL and LMAO), GIF (moving images) or memes (Ghaffari 2020, 170; Andersen 2014, 25). This illustrates that the research field has considered that discourses can be materialized in different representations within SMC (KhosraviNik 2022, 121). Therefore, a discursive approach to SMC have been presented to the field of discursive research in recent years. The Social Media Critical Discourse Analysis (SM-CDA) is a critical approach to analyze discourses in SMC, and it acknowledges the multivocal production, distribution, and consumption of discourses on social media (Esposito & KhosraviNik 2018, 55). It is also concerned with how mediated discourses influence social reality and vice versa (Esposito & KhosraviNik 2018, 55). However, as the affordances of social media enable content to consist of images, videos, audio, and text, this approach must be combined with a theoretical framework that

enable an analysis of the visual content as well. In a social media study by Ghaffari 2020, the Social Media Critical Discourse Analysis (SM-CDA) is combined with a social semiotic approach by Kress and van Leeuwen (Ghaffari 2020, 169) to demonstrate that content on Instagram can negotiate power through discursive clues (Ghaffari 2020, 169). Therefore, a social semiotic approach can be an important additional approach to analyze discursive clues in content on social media (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, 16; KhosraviNik 2022, 121).

It has now been found that social media enables users to produce, consume, and distribute content in which they can express their emotions, attitudes, or opinions. This can generate salient discourses which affect meaning-making practices (Koptkowska 2022, 145; Etter & Albu 2021, 71; KhosraviNik 2017, 64; Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020; 620; KhosraviNik 2017, 64). Scholars argue that this is due to the techno-discursive design of social media, which means that the technological design of social media influences what people see and in which context (KhosraviNik 2022, 121; Kopytowska 2022, 151). In a study by Kopytowska (2022), it is stated that social media discourses are both processes (practices of production and consumption) and products (verbal and visual outcomes), and that they must be analyzed in relation to the technological dimension they exist in (Kopytowska 2022, 145-6). Therefore, the Media Proximity Approach (MPA) is presented because it concerns the communicative dynamics of social media. This approach is interested in how algorithms determine what content users see and when and how this can influence the mediated construction of social reality (Kopytowska 2022, 146). This is an interesting addition to the field of SM-CDS as MPA is based on the idea that experiences online are formed by communicative processes and technological designs that manipulate the perceived distance between users and the world around them (Kopytowska et al 2017, 64). The power relation of social media in terms of influencing people's perceptions, ideas, feelings, concerns and more, are not only based on the visual, audio, or verbal dimensions of social media discourse processes (Kopytowska 2022, 155). It is also based on the communicative practices of social media when individuals produce and consume discourses (Kopytowska 2022, 155). This is an important acknowledgement of the technological processes of social media communication, as it enables for a greater understanding of how the technological design determine how content is produced, consumed, and distributed online. The idea is that algorithmic functions behind the feed of social media platforms manipulate the content that users experience and the context that they experience it in (KhosraviNik 2018, 436). This is because algorithms are created to feed the user content that they might find relevant based on their previous

interactions (KhosraviNik 2018, 436). Therefore, the feed on one person's social media platforms will be different than others. The scholar Majiid KhosraviNik states that the main purpose of social media is to influence people to engage, consume and contribute, which will add value to the platform (KhosraviNik 2018, 436). Furthermore, algorithms will allow users to experience content from other individuals who share their interests, views, concerns, opinions, and ideologies, which creates a fertile ground for the creation of "echo chambers" (Kopytowska 2022, 149; KhosraviNik 2017, 64; Etter & Albu 2021, 71; Kopytowska 2020, 156). The concept of echo chambers concerns how social media platforms allow individuals to create "groupings" in which their similar opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas about the world can be confirmed and amplified (Kopytowska 2022, 149; KhosraviNik 2017, 64). Scholars indicate that echo chambers can cause a discursive spiral and lead to the establishment of collective voices, or so-called firestorms (see chapter 3) (Holmgreen 2020, 104; Hidalgo, Tan & Verlegh 2015, 364; Esposito & KhosraviNik 2018, 47; Kopytowska et al 2017, 68; Kopytowska 2022, 155). A critical stance towards the technological design of social media is found in the field because algorithms can cause the creation of echo chambers which can lead to radicalization among users (Etter & Albu 2021, 71; Kopytowska 2022, 155). This is interesting to consider, since both the individual user as well as the algorithmic processes of social media determines which echo chamber(s) each user can become part of, based on their interactions and behaviors online. This makes the power relation twofold, in the sense that users hold the power of the content that they produce, consume, and distribute, however, it be in the settings established by the technological design of the social media platform they are using. Therefore, algorithmic processes will be referred to as techno-discursive design, as it is perceived to influence the discursive products and processes on social media.

Another important aspect in the field is the concern of discursive power in SMC. The study of Ghaffari, which was mentioned above, acknowledge the discursive power of users on Instagram which is contrary to traditional discursive practices, where access to discursive power was restricted by the gate-keeping processes of mass media (KhosraviNik & Espositio 2018, 54). This has been established in the research study by Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik, who emphasize that the meaning-making processes of social media are contrary to that of the traditional media, where individuals were passive and limited by the barriers of the gate-keeping practices of newspapers and magazines (KhosraviNik 2017, 61; Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020, 609). Some scholars portray social media as a "democratization" of access and as an "empowerment" of ordinary citizens (KhosraviNik 2018,

428; KhosraviNik 2017, 61; Kopytowska 2022, 156). SMC is therefore considered to enable the public to actively engage in meaning-making processes, which empower them as both producers, consumers, and distributors of communication. This also means that the multivocal and participatory nature of social media platforms enables new roles within communication; where traditional media consumers have been described as passive, especially in the transmission model by Shannon and Weaver in 1949 (Shannon & Weaver 1949), the new 'prosumers' of social media is encouraged to engage, produce, and consume – or, in other words, to "(...) actively engage in mediated meaning-making" (Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020, 609; KhosraviNik 2017, 63; KhosraviNik 2018, 437; Kopytowska 2022, 156). These scholarly understandings of SMC erode the traditional perception of the public as passive consumers of discourse, and some scholars therefore argue that individuals become empowered in the communicative processes on social media (Kopytowska 2022, 156). However, this perceptive will be challenged below.

As the thesis will concern aspects of commercial advertising, it is important to consider the options of companies and organizations in terms of SMC. As social media allow users to interact and engage, SMC can lead to meaningful relationships with other individuals as well as with companies (Christodoulides et al 2013, 165). Christodoulides stated in 2008 that

"Branding is no longer an egotistical exercise that marketers consider among themselves and then unilaterally impose upon consumers, and consumers are no longer passive recipients of messages but equal partners in mutual value - building relationships with brands and joint creators of brand meaning" (Christodoulides 2008, 292).

This means that, in 2008, scholars of branding and marketing were already aware that the co-creating opportunities of the internet was allowing consumers to become less passive, and thereby the practices of marketing and advertising had to be revised. In recent years, organizations, companies, and news media have found ways to participate on social media and regain some power from the empowered ordinary citizens on social media. However, the growing interaction between companies and consumers on social media does not remove the commercial responsibilities of the companies; it is still expected that they provide consumers with new products and services, regulated prices and occasional offers and advertisements (Andersen 2014, 25; Svarre 2019, 240; Christodoulides 2008, 293). Further, consumers have become even more difficult to please, more resistant to advertising,

they have short attention spans when searching for information online, and they exchange their experiences and opinions about a brand with each other (Andersen 2014, 25). Studies have found that consumers find such exchanges of personal experiences to be more trustworthy than the actual advertising from the company itself (Andersen 2014, 25; Olsen et al 2020, 125; Holmgreen 2022, 2; Decock et al 2021, 1). This supports the concept of eWOM, which was described in section 3.

The general idea is that all participators on social media are mediators as well as consumers of content, and this enables companies, organizations, and news media to use social media to regain a powerful position as mediators (Svarre 2019, 240; Christodoulides 2008, 293; Kopytowska 2022, 156). Therefore, social media communication can be used strategically with the purpose of involving users to a degree where they distribute the content to others and thereby makes it viral (Svarre 2019, 240). By doing this, companies can 'manipulate' people to discuss, mention or refer to their content, which will automatically trigger the technological processes of the social media platform, and more people will see the content (Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020, 609). This is contrary to the perception of consumers being the sole producers and distributors of information on social media, and therefore it must be considered that both consumers and organizations are able to participate on social media.

Furthermore, due to communicative practices, discursive processes, and techno-discursive designs, the concept of a 'snowball effect' is a frequent phenomenon on social media. This concept concerns the process that leads to certain content going 'viral' (Svarre 2019). This means that when specific content receives a certain number of interactions, being likes, shares, or comments, the technological processes of social media will react to this behavior and distribute the content to a larger number of users (KhosraviNik 2017, 65; KhosraviNik 2018, 437; Etter & Albu 2020, 71). Viral content has the potential to dominate the platform for a brief period, until new content creates a new snowball-effect (KhosraviNik 2017, 63,65; KhosraviNik 2018, 437; Svarre 2019). Therefore, it is important to consider the discursive power of the technological design of social media to determine how algorithms on TikTok influence the distribution of content.

Throughout this literature review, it was found that it is important to consider the various aspects of SMC that would become overlooked if a traditional critical discourse analysis was applied to this study. To use an example from the study conducted by Ghaffari, the ideological articulations and discursive clues of pictures or videos posted on social media are relevant and important to consider, since it will enable the researcher to unpack the nature of the discourses. Social media must therefore

be recognized as complex and unique communicative dynamics when conducting a SM-CDA to perceive “(...) discourse analysis as an investigation of meaning-making content *and* practices (...)” (KhosraviNik 2022, 121). Therefore, the SM-CDS, the MPA and the social semiotic approach offer relevant perceptions of SMC, and each present a special focus on discursive processes and products on social media. This is relevant in this thesis, because the focal point of this thesis is to investigate how the sentiments of users and the algorithmic processes on TikTok influence the firestorm towards Balenciaga. Therefore, it is important to analyze content on TikTok to investigate the discursive clues that are present in the sentiments. Further, the techno-discursive design of TikTok will be considered as it influences how sentiments are distributed and perceived by other users.

The approaches presented in this literature review will be further elaborated in the theoretical framework, and here a beneficial combination will be considered. This study will therefore fill a theoretical gap in the field of critical discourse studies of SMC, as it will seek to combine relevant elements from both critical discourse analysis approach (to analyze SMC on TikTok), social semiotics approach (to analyze the visual content on TikTok), and finally the MPA that considers the techno-discursive design of TikTok (to analyze how algorithms affects the user experience and the saliency of discourses).

6. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theoretical framework of this thesis will be presented. The following approaches will function as the theoretical basis for the analytical approach, which will be presented in chapter 7.3. This framework will not rely on a single scholarly established theory, instead, the approaches presented in the literature review, the SM-CDA, the social semiotic approach (SSA), and the MPA will be combined. As SM-CDA stems from traditional CDA studies, the CDA approach by Fairclough will be presented as the fundamental theoretical framework, however, it will adopt the presented perspectives on and acknowledgements of SMC. This will then constitute the SM-CDA approach of this thesis, which concerns the multivocal dynamics of textual and visual content on TikTok. This means that the term text from the traditional CDA approach will be used throughout this chapter when the CDA theory is described, however, it will not be adopted in the framework because content on social media can consist of both textual elements and visual elements. In the analytical approach, the

term product will be used instead, because content is a product of user participation on TikTok (Esposito & KhosraviNik 2018, 58; KhosraviNik 2022, 121).

The following chapter will establish a collected framework divided into three dimensions – a dimension of visual and textual content analysis, and a dimension that combines discursive and social practice processes. The dimension of visual and textual analysis of products will consist of a textual CDA approach, in which the nature of SMC on TikTok will dictate how this approach can be applied to analyze written and spoken words in content. Further, the SSA by Kress and van Leeuwen will also be presented in this dimension as it will function as an additional theoretical framework to analyze visual content on TikTok. Finally, the MPA will function as an additional framework that considers the interrelation of discursive products (the content), the techno-discursive design of TikTok (the algorithms), and the social practice (society).

6.1. Introducing Critical Discourse Analysis approach

Traditional critical discourse analysis approach (CDA) presents a critical view on discourse and seeks to analyze and criticize how discourse can be related to power, ideologies, and social institutions, which are described as social elements (Fairclough 2015, 15-6, 26). The overall understanding is that language is discourse and discourse is a social practice, however, this necessitates an analysis of the discourses in a text (text analysis), along with the processes that involve the production, distribution, and consumption of the text (discursive practice). Further, the text and the processes of production and interpretation must be analyzed in relation to social practices, which concern the situational context that the text operates within, but also the larger societal conditions which concern social and institutional structures (Fairclough 2015, 58; Fairclough 1992, 73). This interrelated structure, suggested by Norman Fairclough (1992, 2001, 2003, 2015) is depicted in Figure 1. Each dimension presents different concepts and analytical tools which will be presented through the chapter. The CDA approach suggested by Norman Fairclough emphasize that the researcher must look ‘under the surface’ of a text to question the presented discourses and investigate power relations in the text and in the social world that they partake in (Fairclough 2015, 6). This is done by adopting a critical view while analyzing discourse, ideology, power relations, and hegemony (Fairclough 2015, 5).

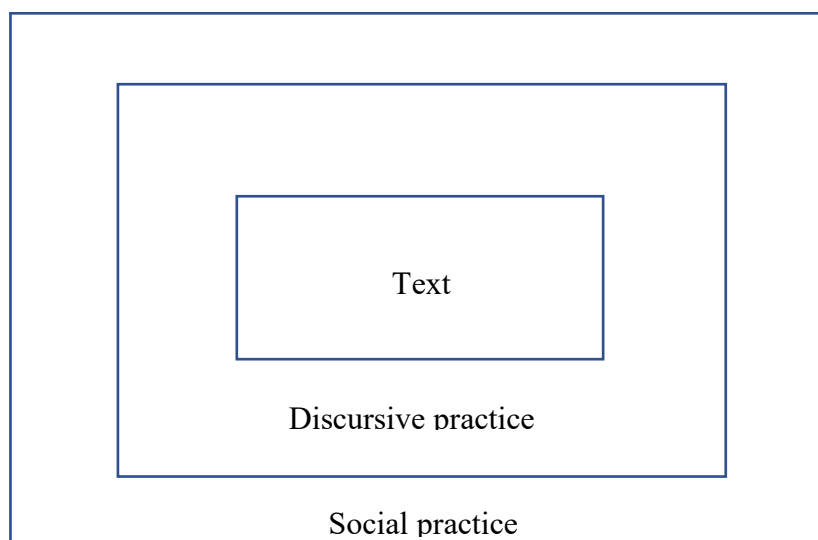


Figure 1: Three-dimensional discourse model (Fairclough 1992, 73).

Fairclough suggests an approach to CDA that is based on interpretation, critique, and explanation. The concept of *interpretation* concerns how discourse is interpreted with the use of the interpreters' members' resources (Fairclough 2015, 10). These resources concern the interpreter's internal and implicit assumptions and perceptions of reality, which help the interpreter to add value to textual features when the text is interpreted (Fairclough 2015, 154). The concept of *critique* concerns the practice of identifying discourse and investigating why the discourse is the way it is, which will enable the researcher to look for explanations to the critical question that is asked during the research (Fairclough 2015, 7). The critique is, in other words, based on and supported by the research question. The concept of *explanation* is related to critique, and it concerns how social context and interaction of text (the processes of production and the process of interpretation) are related (Fairclough 2015, 58-59). These three concepts will allow for a full discursive analysis of discourse and account for the textual, discursive, and social practice.

As in traditional critical discourse studies, the aim of a SM-CDA approach is to interpret, criticize, and explain discourses, power relations, and ideologies that appear on social media, which will allow for suggestions to implement social, cultural and/or political change in society (Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020, 613; Fairclough 2015, 8; KhosraviNik 2017, 757). The concepts of power and

ideology will be further described in the section below. In a SM-CDA approach, discourse is the central focal point, and the purpose of the approach is therefore not only to investigate the activities on social media as a closed context, but also how these activities can affect social life outside of social media (Esposito & KhosraviNik 2018, 55). Contrary to the traditional CDA, the SM-CDA acknowledges the multivocal production, distribution, and consumption of discourses on social media, and concern how mediated discourses influence social reality and vice versa (Esposito & KhosraviNik 2018, 55). Further, the dimensions of the CDA are also seen in the SM-CDA approach as a horizontal contextual level, which connects text and the discursive practice, and a vertical contextual level, which connects the socio-political context that the users engage in with the textual and discursive practices (KhosraviNik 2017, 756). This approach is therefore different than traditional CDA due to the difference in the affordances offered on social media compared to e.g., a newspaper. The sender-receiver relation, and therefore also the power positions, are different on social media, where all users can contribute to the discursive processes, compared to offline media, where the discursive processes are gatekept, produced, and controlled by politically, economical, or socially powerful individuals (Esposito & KhosraviNik 2018, 46). These different power relations will be further elaborated on below.

6.1.1 Ideology, power, and hegemony

In the following section, the central concepts of CDA will be presented, while evaluating whether and how these can be adopted to a SM-CDA approach. This presentation is relevant to understand the basis and be able to conduct a critical discourse analysis of SMC on TikTok.

The first concept is that of ideology, which concerns a person's individual perceptions of reality. These perceptions evolve around that person's knowledge of the world, their relationships, and social identity (Fairclough 2015, 108). Ideology is related to hegemony and power because it enables people to construct, sustains or transform current power relations, and it is therefore a means to gain hegemony (Fairclough 1992, 87).

Ideology is divided into two statuses: *ideological common sense* and *ideological diversity*. If an ideology is shared by most people in society, it is referred to as *ideological common sense*, which means that this perception has become neutral and a part of peoples' everyday meaning-making patterns (Fairclough 1992, 87; Fairclough 2015, 13). This also means that ideological common sense is powerful because it has become a widespread perception and understanding of reality (Fairclough

2015, 110; Fairclough 1992, 92). However, it is important to note that there are always different ideological positions in society, which leads to the concept of *ideological diversity* (Fairclough 2015, 108). This status acknowledges that society is not uniform in terms of ideology, and that there are different ideological positions (Fairclough 2015, 108). Ideological diversity stems from the different experiences, positions, and interests of social groups in society, and their ideological positions can therefore get in conflict in terms of power (Fairclough 2015, 110). This means that the ideological positions are in an ideological struggle to gain power over the other and thereby become common sense. These ideological processes are also seen on social media, where users can spread their ideological common sense to millions of people within a short amount of time, and especially if the content goes viral. Therefore, it is important to adopt the concepts of hegemony, power relations, and ideological positions to the SM-CDA approach of this thesis to investigate the distribution of ideological common sense on TikTok (KhosraviNik 2018, 437).

The CDA approach also presents the term hegemony, which applies when discourse dominates and takes leadership in society on an ideological, economic, cultural, and/or political basis (Fairclough 1992, 92). Hegemony is the type of power that concerns the achievement of ideological common sense in society (Fairclough 2003, 45; Fairclough 1992, 92). However, hegemony is temporary due to ideological struggles in society which are caused by the aim of sustaining, challenging, or destroying current hegemonic structures (Fairclough 1992, 92). It can therefore be said that in CDA, power is hegemony and vice versa, and it can be based on an economic, social, cultural, or political status in society, which are at the highest level of power relations (Fairclough 2015, 28). These types of power influence discourses in society because they are often involved in situations that allow them to achieve ideological hegemony, which can shape attitudes, actions, and social assumptions in society (Fairclough 2015, 28). This is seen in education systems, where the relations of participants are established by social, cultural, and political power – in other words, teachers are dominant over the subordinate class of students, and this constellation is based on a hegemonic ideology that has won consent in society.

Further, CDA concerns *power in discourse* and *power behind discourse*; *power in discourse* means that in certain social settings, some participants have the power to control how others can contribute to the social setting they participate in, this is for example seen in the army which has a hierarchical system that determines the power relations of participants (Fairclough 2015, 27). *Power behind discourse* concerns the power to control which discourses others can access in a certain setting, and

it is therefore referred to as a hidden power (Fairclough 2015, 27). Hidden power is seen in the implementation and control over language processes; in other words, power-behind-discourse actions take place underneath the surface (Fairclough 2015, 27). An example of this can be the implementation of a no-smoking policy in a company; it changes and implements a new order of discourse in the company. The power behind the policy is noticed by all employees at the company when it is implemented, however, it will be opaque or at least less visible to new employees that are hired after the implementation of the policy, because the new order of discourse will have become natural and standardized.

The concept of power in the SM-CDA approach investigates the power relations of social interactions on social media (Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020, 612-13; Esposito & KhosraviNik 2018, 55; KhosraviNik 2017, 755). As it was discussed in chapter 5, the affordances of social media have eroded the power relations that were at play in traditional media, because the public can now actively engage as both producers, consumers, and distributors of discourse (KhosraviNik 2018, 428; KhosraviNik 2017, 61; Kopytowska 2022, 156; KhosraviNik 2017, 753). However, it will be established that the algorithms are anything but neutral because they influence how people engage in meaning-making processes (Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020, 610, 620; Christodoulides et al 2013, 154). In relation to this, I find it important to consider the power relation of the technological processes on TikTok, as it has been stated that algorithms determine what content users see, when they see it, and the context they see it in. Therefore, it must be considered that the techno-discursive design on TikTok is powerful in terms of power in/power behind discourse, which is an element that will be analyzed and later discussed in chapter 8 and 9 (Fairclough 2015, 27). Since SM-CDA is concerned with the analysis of discourse rather than technological affordances, it is imperative to implement the MPA which acknowledge the power of the techno-discursive design (Esposito & KhosraviNik 2018, 55; KhosraviNik 2022, 121). Therefore, the Media Proximity Approach will be presented in chapter 6.3.

6.2. Dimension of visual and textual analysis of SMC products

Now that the general concepts of discourse, hegemony, power, and ideology have been established, the dimensions of visual and textual analysis will be presented.

First, the textual analysis approach to content on TikTok will be introduced, which concerns vocabulary and cohesion (Fairclough 2015, 129-30; Fairclough 1992, 75). For reasons that will be

explained in chapter 7.4, grammar and textual structures will be omitted. Vocabulary covers the investigation of single words, and cohesion investigates the vocabulary linkage between different sentences (Fairclough 1992, 75). Second, the visual analysis of content on TikTok will be established, and it will concern the social semiotic concepts of salience and social distance.

6.2.1. The textual analysis approach to content on TikTok

In CDA, the textual analysis is based on the Systematic Functional Linguistics approach, which is concerned with how language and different aspects of social life is interrelated (Fairclough 2003, 5). Language is a system of meaning making processes – this is also called a semiotic system, and it concerns “signs” and “sign-making”, which allow for the exchange and creation of meanings (Halliday 2003, 2). In linguistics, language is constructed by modes, which concern the systems that are used to make meanings evident in a material manner (Halliday 1994, 33; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014, 7; Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, xiv; Halliday 2003, 15). This means that a meaning-making system of written text construct one type of mode, whereas a visual meaning-making system, being a video or an image, construct another type of mode. The combination of different meaning-making systems results in multi-modality, which means that multiple modes are realized at once (Halliday 1994, 33; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014, 7; Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, xiv; Halliday 2003, 15). The concept of modes relates to another linguistic concept, metafunctions, which function as an umbrella term that organize the meaning-making systems that constitute a mode, and three functions are at play: the ideational function, the interpersonal, and the textual function (Halliday 2003, 435).

The *interpersonal metafunction* concerns the meaning-making systems that reflect interpersonal relations and how these systems portray the social world, being social activities, relations, and interactions (Halliday 2003, 435; Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, xiv; Fairclough 1992, 64).

The *ideational metafunction* concerns how meaning-making systems can tell something about how the world is experienced, and it therefore also concerns how language influences the portrayal of what happens in the social world (Halliday 2003, 435; Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, xiv; Fairclough 1992, 64). In other words, this metafunction is will concern language that indicate the ideological position of the creator.

Finally, the *textual metafunction* concern how the grammar of language shapes the discourses of a text (Halliday 2003, 436). This metafunction also concern how texts can provide new information, contain a theme, indicate internal links to other parts of the text, or links to the social world that exists outside the text (Fairclough 1992, 65).

Metafunctions construct the basis understanding of linguistics, and in relation to this, Fairclough presents experiential, relational, expressive, and connective values (Fairclough 2015, 130). These values are organized under the three metafunctions, and they concern the values that are found in meaning-making systems such as vocabulary, grammar, and textual features (Fairclough 2015, 130). In this thesis, the values of the vocabulary will be presented for reasons that will be presented in chapter 7.4.

The experiential value concerns the traces that the producer leaves in a text that can tell something about how they experience the world, and it therefore indicates ideational metafunction (Fairclough 2015, 130). This means that this value investigates how the ideological position of the producer is imprinted in the vocabulary of the text. In terms of analysis, the experiential value in vocabulary is determined by looking at words that indicate ideological position(s), **for example by** positive or negative presentations of aspects of society (Fairclough 2015, 129).

The relational value is seen in features that show signs of relationships in the text, and these therefore indicate an interpersonal metafunction. In terms of vocabulary, relational value is found in formal or informal words or personal pronouns (because they indicate the settings of a social relation) (Fairclough 2015, 130).

The expressive value indicates how the producer has evaluated reality and how the text relates to reality, meaning that the producer can present positive or negative evaluations, being words or grammatical features that portray either positive or negative values to the reader (Fairclough 2015, 130-1). Therefore, such values are categorized under the ideational metafunction. In terms of vocabulary, this is analyzed by looking at the expressive values of words in the text, and whether they express a positive or negative evaluation of the topic (Fairclough 2015, 142).

Finally, *connective values* are also presented, as these consider the features that indicate internal and external connections of the text, either through cohesion (repeated use of the same words) or reference (words that refer back and forth in the text), or intertextuality (references to contexts outside the text) (Fairclough 2015, 145-6). This value therefore indicates textual metafunctions.

In relation to SMC, it is important to consider the elements of textual analysis from the CDA in the SM-CDA, because all texts contain traces of the producer, because they make choices regarding the structure and vocabulary. This means that the perceptions of the producer will inevitable be involved in the production process, and therefore their ideology, social identity, and social relations will be

expressed in the text (Fairclough 1992, 76). The applicability of the presented elements of the CDA in relation to the SM-CDA will be presented and determined in chapter 7.3.

6.2.2. The visual analysis approach to content on TikTok

In the previous chapters it became evident that the textual analysis approach to content on TikTok will involve multiple concepts adopted from CDA. However, none of the presented concepts suggest how to conduct a discursive analysis of the visual content on social media. Therefore, a social semiotic approach will be presented as it will enable an investigation of how creators on TikTok can use visual elements to present and put emphasis on their affective reactions.

It is considered that pictures and videos contain discursive clues which can be important to analyze to uncover articulations of ideology and power (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, 16; KhosraviNik 2022, 121). Further, Kress and van Leeuwen state that “analysing visual communication is, or should be, an important part of the ‘critical’ disciplines”, which emphasizes that this approach is compatible with critical discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, 15).

.

When analyzing semiotics, the main concern is that of “signs” and “sign-making”, because meanings are articulated through signs (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, 8). As in CDA, the social semiotic approach has adopted linguistic concepts from Halliday (2003), and it therefore also concerns the three metafunctions: the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual function.

In a social semiotic approach (SSA), the *ideational function* concerns how the creator portrays what happens in the social world that they partake in, the *interpersonal function* concerns the capability of portraying relevant aspects of the social world, being social activities, relations, and interactions, and the *textual function* concerns the forming of social semiotic entities, meaning the elements that are portrayed in the content (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, xiv).

As these functions have been presented in the CDA as well, it is possible to combine the two approaches which will allow for an analysis of both the discursive processes and practices of the visual and textual content on TikTok. Therefore, Kress and van Leeuwen suggest a ‘grammar’ of visual elements, which acknowledge the resources that constitute the meaning-making signs in content.

The following social semiotic concepts will be useful to describe, critique, and explain discursive elements of visual content on TikTok. In a social semiotic analysis, it is suggested to investigate the concept of salience and social distance, among other concepts. These have been selected because the

nature of content on TikTok seeks to influence users to engage and interact, and therefore it is important to investigate the salient visual elements and the suggested social distance between the creator and the viewers. The concept of salience will be presented below, while the concept of social distance will be related to the similar concept of proximization from the MPA.

First, Kress and van Leeuwen present the concept of salience, which concerns the placement of different elements in the composition of an image to attract the attention of the viewer to that specific point, being either in the foreground, the background, the top, the bottom, etc. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, 182). This will allow for an analysis of how the content creator has decided to place different elements in the video to attract the attention of users on TikTok. Further, salience is also considered to be a compositional strategy to withhold the viewer and prevent that they scroll past the video.

Second, the concept of social distance concerns the relation between the creator and the users that are watching the video, and it is therefore a relational value, which ties this concept to the textual dimension to the CDA (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, 123). The portrayal of the creator can determine the distance that the viewer will experience, both in a literal and a figurative sense (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, 124). This means that if the creator is portrayed in a super close up shot, it will be referred to as close personal distance, because the viewer will get the feeling of being able to touch the person portrayed, which suggests an intimate relationship (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, 124). Far personal distance suggests a less intimate relationship, meaning that the person portrayed is not within reach, but still close enough to initiate an intimate and close relations (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, 124). Public distance suggests a non-physical and superficial relation that is similar to that of strangers (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, 124). Social distance can also be either close or far, where the close social distance suggests interactions that allow for discussions of personal opinions and interests, whereas the far social distance is more formal and impersonal (Kress & van Leeuwen 2021, 124). Further, the concept of social distance relates to the concept of proximization from the MPA, which will be clarified in the following chapter.

6.3. Dimension of discursive and social practice processes

In traditional CDA, the discursive practice is centered around the processes that indicate how a text has been produced, distributed, and consumed (Fairclough 1992, 78). This chapter will present the suggested horizontal and vertical contextual level of SM-CDA to analyze the discursive products and processes in SMC. Further, the MPA will be presented as an additional theoretical framework to the SM-CDA and will function within the vertical contextual level, which means that it will concern both

the discursive and social practice in the SM-CDA. This is because KhosraviNik (2017, 2022) states that the SM-CDA must be combined with an approach that allows for an analysis of the techno-discursive design of social media (KhosraviNik 2017, 757; KhosraviNik 2022, 121). Therefore, the MPA will therefore 1) examine how the techno-discursive design encourages sentimental and affective venting, and 2) consider the construction of echo chambers (KhosraviNik 2022, 121).

The *horizontal contextual level* concerns the patterns of how users on social media construct discourses with textual or semiotic practices, and it therefore combines the textual and discursive practice dimension of the CDA model (Figure 1) (KhosraviNik 2017, 756).

The *vertical contextual level* concern the discursive practices that surround production, consumption, and distribution of content on social media. Therefore, the vertical contextual level connects the horizontal contextual level to the social practice that the users engage in (KhosraviNik 2017, 756).

The Media Proximity Approach (MPA) by Kopytowska (2022) investigates SMC in relation to how the technological aspects of social media influence the discursive processes, which concern both production and consumption of discourse (Kopytowska 2022, 146). Discourses of social media must therefore be investigated as both products and processes, in which the latter concern the technological dimensions and affordances of social media (Kopytowska 2022, 146).

This approach presents concepts of reality that distinguish between objective reality, subjective reality, and constructed reality, and these will be adopted to the SM-CDA approach (see App. 4, Fig. 2) (Kopytowska 2022, 146). Due to the social constructivist approach in this thesis, it must be noted that reality and the world cannot be perceived objectively, and therefore the concept of objective reality will not be further elaborated in this thesis. Instead, the concepts of subjective and constructed reality will be acknowledged: the subjective reality is the perceived reality of the user that contributes to SMC, and this perception therefore influences how the user produces and consumes discourse. When users on social media co-produce and co-consume (and thereby become prosumers (KhosraviNik 2018, 428), they shape a constructed reality on social media. Therefore, the portrayal of reality in SMC is tainted by the producer of the content due to elements of proximization and mediatization, which will be presented below. A visualization of the approach by Kopytowska (2015) is found in Figure 2.

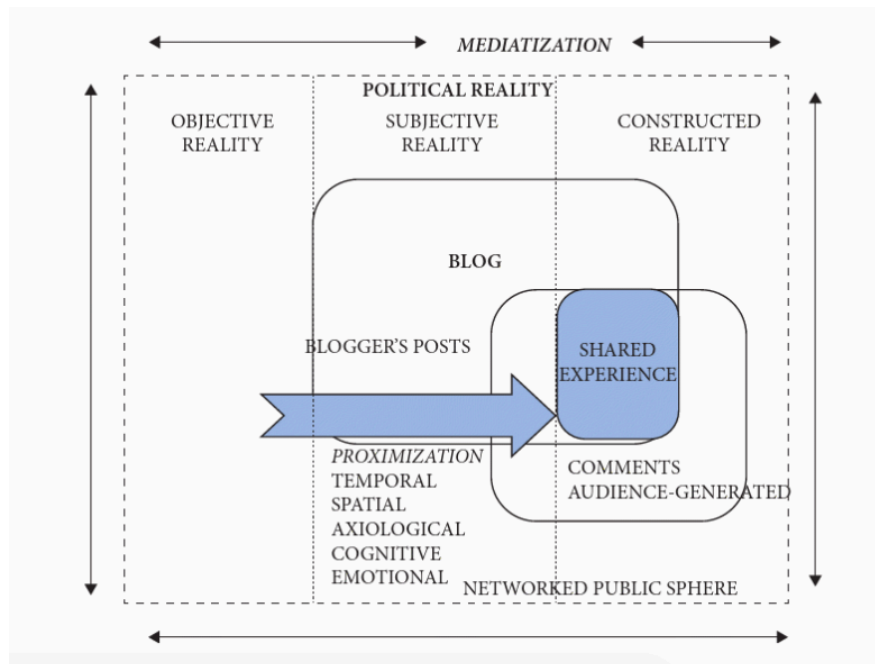


Figure 2: Visualization of the MPA to analyze news media discourse and proximization (Kopytowska 2015).

The term *proximization* means to “bring something closer”, and it therefore concerns how SMC can affect users’ perception of the world by reducing spatial, temporal, axiological, emotional, and epistemic proximization through discourses in the content (Kopytowska 2022, 146; Kopytowska 2013, 382). However, because the research question emphasizes a focus on affective sentiments on TikTok, spatial and temporal proximization will be omitted because they will not concern an emotional perspective.

First, the *epistemic proximization* can challenge proximization if the user is not familiar with the context of the content, and therefore this distance concerns the knowledge of the user (Kopytowska 2015, 349).

Second, *axiological proximization* concerns how the content creator can reduce the perceived distances between their own and other social groups in terms of values, beliefs, practices, ideology and more – it becomes a question of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Kopytowska 2015, 349).

Third, the *emotional proximization* concerns how the creator can reduce distance between themselves and other users by expressing their emotions in the content (Kopytowska 2015, 349). The opportunities offered by social media in terms of engagement and interactivity are important in terms of emotional proximization, as it allows users to connect with each other, share experiences, express emotions and more (Kopytowska 2022, 149).

As it was found in chapter 6.2, the SSA will investigate the use of social distance in visual content, which relates to emotional and axiological proximization because it can affect the users' perceived distance themselves, the creator, and other social groups in society (Kopytowska 2022, 146). This is relevant, as it is expected that a close personal distance in the video will contribute to the salience of certain issues and topics, which can affect the decision-making and stance-taking of the viewers.

The concept of *mediatization* follows the concept of proximization naturally as it transforms how users experience the world, because social media allow them to experience aspects of reality without being limited by time and space (Kopytowska 2022, 145). Mediatization can therefore create a space of shared experience for users on TikTok based on virtual interaction (See Fig. 2) (Kopytowska 2013, 382). This is done through discursive practices and the cognitive nature of users, which are sorted into three functions: axiological status, axiological conflict, and axiological urgency (Kopytowska 2022, 146, 148). On social media, users can establish and support an *axiological status*, which means that they can establish the values, beliefs, norms, and perceptions of their own or the social group that they partake in (Kopytowska 2022, 148).

Further, *axiological conflict* occurs when users illuminate their perceptions or beliefs and compare them to the perceptions or beliefs of others, which can emphasize differences or similarities (Kopytowska 2022, 148).

When defending own perceptions and beliefs from those of others, or because the actions of those with different perceptions and beliefs are perceived as a threat, the user expresses *axiological urgency* (Kopytowska 2022, 148). These functions occur when users engage with each other and construct a shared experience. This is due to the sharing of similar values, ideological positions, concerns, complains, fears and more. This can develop into echo chambers, where users can acknowledge their similar perceptions on different aspects of society (axiological status), establish differences between 'us' and 'them' (axiological conflict), or defend personal beliefs from those of 'the others' (Kopytowska 2022, 149). As these functions indicate the ideological positions of users, they will be related to the ideational metafunction as well as the experiential value from the CDA.

In relation to this, the final dimension of the three-dimensional model, the social practice, concerns the interrelation of the text, the discursive practice, and the social practice. The objective of this dimension is to explain the nature of the discursive practice with the social practice that it partakes in (Fairclough 1992, 237). This means that it must be considered and explained why the discursive

practice is the way it is, and how it influences the social practice and vice versa (Fairclough 1992, 237). In relation to the SM-CDA, the social practice is based on the vertical contextual level, as it connects the discursive practices within the mediated constructed reality, the content creation processes, and the external social practice. Furthermore, this dimension will also investigate the power relations in the social reality, which concern the reality of users on TikTok, the constructed reality, which concern the reality constructed by users on TikTok, and the social practice, which concern society outside of TikTok. In terms of ideology, the textual and visual analysis will help to unveil the ideological positions of users on TikTok, and these findings will be further analyzed in the social practice to consider whether the presented ideologies establish, challenge, or destroy current ideological position. This leads to the concept of ideological struggles within the constructed reality, which will also be analyzed in the final dimension to investigate the ideological positions presented in the content, how they challenge each other, and which are able to establish ideological common sense.

The theoretical framework has now been presented, and three dimensions of analysis have been established. The combination of the approaches will fill a gap in this particular field of research, as the framework will enable an analysis of both the textual and visual elements of content on TikTok, the techno-discursive design, the influence of proximization and mediatization, and the interrelation between these processes, social realities and society (See App. 4 Fig. 4). To summarize this chapter, Table 1, Appendix 4, visualizes the concepts and collected approaches from both the CDA, the SM-CDA, the MPA, and the social semiotic approach.

7. Methodological approach

In this seventh chapter, the methodology of this thesis will be presented. This chapter will therefore include my methodological approach, data collection, description of data, and finally the method of analysis. Throughout these subchapters, methodological consideration will be discussed to account for the choices that I have made throughout this thesis.

In this thesis, the methodological approach will be influenced by the paradigm of social constructivism, which allows for the retrieval of subjective perceptions of reality and suggests that knowledge is subjective (Presskorn- Thygesen 2012, 29). This means that the methodology of this

thesis will be based on a qualitative approach, because the purpose of this thesis is to reach an understanding of how the emotional reactions on TikTok influenced the firestorm against Balenciaga. Further, the social constructivist orientation in this research considers that reality is a social construction, meaning that each person perceives the world differently, because their knowledge of the world is based on communicative interactions. Therefore, the methodological approach of this thesis will reflect the ontological and epistemological considerations from chapter 2.1.3, which is that reality is subjective, and therefore there is no universal truth about the world.

On the basis of this, a qualitative methodology will be applied as it supports the relativistic ontology and subjective epistemology of this thesis. Further, a qualitative methodology will allow for an in-depth investigation of how users on TikTok perceive reality and how they reflect this perception in content on TikTok. The empirical data of this thesis will therefore consist of a video from TikTok and selected comments from the comment section of the TikTok video – this will be further described in chapter 7.2. As stated in chapter 2.2. this data will be analyzed with a qualitative analytical approach to uncover the in-depth meanings that user of TikTok portray through their affective reactions.

7.1 Data collection

In this subchapter, the data collection approach will be presented, which will involve the sampling strategies that was used to retrieve data.

In order to sample the correct data, a sampling strategy is favorable in order to properly obtain and examine the discursive practices of users on TikTok. Therefore, a sampling method that corresponds with the SM-CDA approach have been adopted. This strategy will be based on a suggested approach by Androutsopoulos (2008, 2013) because it concerns digital meaning-making practices (Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik 2020, 612; Androutsopoulos 2008, 2). Further, as SMC complicates the applicability of traditional textual data collection approaches, it is important to consider the issues of the data that I will be collecting to consider a compatible sampling strategy (Androutsopoulos 2013, 234).

First and foremost, the amount of content on TikTok is unfathomable, and it can therefore be a difficult task to single out the specific data based on a qualitative approach, and this is considered an issue in sociolinguistic research (Androutsopoulos 2013, 234). This qualitative selection of data can question the objectives of the selection process because it can reflect subjective thoughts and opinions. Therefore, it is a necessity to adopt a sampling strategy, as it will function as a rule set to determine the compatibility of the available content as well as the purpose of the selected data.

Second, the data will be primarily textual data based on comments from users, however, the textual language on TikTok interferes with resources of social semiotic character, such as emojis, pictures, audio, and video, and the communicative processes therefore concerns multiple modes (Androutsopoulos 2013, 234). However, it was found in the theoretical framework that the issue could be solved by adopting a social semiotic approach.

Third, it is difficult to retrieve information about the social context of users on TikTok based solely on visible communicative exchanges, e.g., the meaning-making practices that they partake in publicly (posted content) and not privately (private messages). This also means that it is difficult to investigate any personal relationships, which is due to the anonymous options offered by TikTok (Androutsopoulos 2013, 234). However, social relationships are indicated when users mention other users in a comment, but this specific function will not indicate affectivity or hostility, and such comments will therefore be omitted from the data. Therefore, the personal relations and the profiles behind each comment will not be analyzed. However, the reality of the participants (see Fig. 3, chapter 7.3) will be considered to investigate how their ideological position affect the wordings used in their affective reactions to Balenciaga.

In the following section, I will present the sampling strategy that will meet the presented issues and therefore allow for the sampling of a video from Tiktok.

In terms of data collection, it was necessary to narrow the field of data to concern the videos that evolve around the Balenciaga campaign. Therefore, the sampling strategy for the video was based on a theme, being the Balenciaga campaigns Gift Shop and Garde-Robe. This strategy is useful to collect data from “thematically organized streams of online discourse (...)” (Androutsopoulos 2013, 235), and it will therefore enable the sampling of data that evolve around the two campaigns. However, it is necessary to compare the data from the selected theme with a similar sample to compare the style or choice of language, and even though the video will not be compared to another video, the comparison will be accomplished due to the collection of comments that occur within the same thematic frame (Androutsopoulos 2013, 235). It is stated that this sampling strategy is useful to focus on a specific topic, however, it will limit the findings of other discursive activities that might be co-occurring (Androutsopoulos 2013, 235). As the research question concern how the affective reactions and the algorithms on TikTok have affected the firestorm against Balenciaga, this strategy is fitting for this purpose. Even though this strategy can exclude co-occurring discourses in the data set, it has been found in previous chapters that the algorithmic processes of TikTok distribute content to users

that share the same interests, perspectives, and beliefs, and therefore it is perceived that the amount of co-occurring discourses in the comment section will be limited.

In the search for content within the decided theme, the technological design of TikTok allows users to search for specific content. This function has therefore determined which video that relates to the theme “Balenciaga campaign”. However, it became evident that this theme contained a great number of videos, which required a more specific sorting strategy. Despite narrowing the content down to the theme and search word “Balenciaga campaign”, multiple videos from non-english speaking content creators were presented. Therefore, it became necessary to discard all non-english videos regarding the topic due to concerns of interpretation.

In relation hereto, it is important to note that another sampling requirement is that the video must concern either or both Balenciaga campaigns, the Gift Shop 2022 campaign and/or the Garde-Robe spring 2023 campaign. Further, some videos with these requirements had only received a few thousand reactions from other users. Even though it might sound impressive, it has been found that the algorithmic features of TikTok reacts to content that receives a lot of attention, and continues to distribute it to more users, which then enables popular content to go viral. Therefore, videos with hundred thousand reactions, and some even millions of reactions, have reached many users, and therefore the content is more likely to present reactions that are representative for the opinions on TikTok. Therefore, the video must have received at least 100.000 likes, which is the other additional sampling requirement. Finally, as the video will serve a basis for the development of the comments, another and final requirement is that the video must have an available comment section.

The presented sampling strategy as well as the additional requirements resulted in the finding of a TikTok video by the creator Kes, which will be further described in chapter 7.2. It complies with the requirements and are concerned with the determined theme. Further, as the video contain spoken words, these will be transcribed to conduct a textual analysis. The theoretical approach of SM-CDA does not suggest a method of transcription, and therefore a transcription system based on the theoretical approach will be adopted. Since the textual analysis of the video will be concerned with vocabulary and cohesion, the transcript must render the spoken words verbatim. Further, since the video portrays a monologue, turn-taking systems will not be considered. Due to the focus on vocabulary and cohesion, breaks and silence will also be omitted (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999, 91).

Instead, the transcript will be divided into scenes when the background changes. Further, the presence of the creator in the frame will be marked to emphasize the salience of elements (App. 2).

When sampled, the video had received 7073 comments, and due to the qualitative research approach of this thesis, it was impossible to sample and analyze all comments. As the research question formulates an interest in investigating the sentiments on TikTok, comments that are especially indicative of affective and/or hostile sentiments have been selected. This indication is based on the use of adjectives or descriptive terms that express negativity, hostility, and/or affectivity towards Balenciaga, the campaigns, or both in a societal context. Further, comments consisting of emojis, and acronyms have also been collected to investigate how these artefacts can influence the saliency of discourses in the comment section. The selected comments have been manually captured with a screenshot and numbered in Appendix 2.

In order to criticize the salient discourses of the sentiments portrayed in the TikTok video and the comments, three comments from users that oppose the sentiments of other users have been gathered to emphasize the ideological struggle within the comment section, which will solve the issue of the sampling strategy stated above.

It is important to note that content on social media can be momentary, as the creator can delete or edit the content, the content can be deleted or banned by administrating powers of the platform, the creator can delete comments, and users can delete their own comments. It is therefore important to acknowledge the elusive nature of data collected from TikTok. Therefore, the data presented in the following chapter might have been changed or edited since its posting date.

7.2 Describing the data

In this section, the collected data will be presented and described. The data will consist of a TikTok video that is 1,5 minutes long, and 20 comments from the comment section.

The collected TikTok video is made by a TikTok-creator with the username Kes. The profile has 781,800 followers and has more than 47 million likes (Kes a 2022). The video was posted on November 30th, 2022, and it has 7073 comments, 469,100 views, 25,300 saves and have been shared more than 34 thousand times (Kes b 2022).

In the video, the creator is speaking about Balenciaga, and this is indicated in the description because it contains the hashtag #cancelbalenciaga. Pictures from both campaigns are portrayed while the creator is describing the case, this is enabled by a TikTok filter named “green screen”, which allows creators to place a video of themselves in front of images.

Based on the sampling strategy described above, this video was selected because the theme of the content concerns both campaigns, it is in English, it has an open comment section, and it has more than 100,000 likes, and more than 4,6 million views.

Due to the qualitative research approach of this thesis, 20 comments belonging to the video have been sampled based on the requirements stated above. The comments are produced by users on TikTok to interact with the video. Some of the users use their full name as their username on the app, and therefore all usernames have been omitted in Appendix 2 to secure the privacy of the users. The comments consist of a maximum of 150 characters, which is the limit on TikTok.

Further, users are able to use emojis, and therefore these will also be analyzed.

7.3 Analytical approach

In this chapter, the methodology of a critical discourse analysis of social media will be presented. To visualize the analytical approach, a model has been put together from the findings of the theoretical framework, and it will concern the critical discourse analysis of social media products and processes (CDA-SMPP). In this model, the affordances of TikTok facilitate the products and processes that occur in SMC, and the different elements presented are interrelated and co-existing. The model is based on the dimension of visual and textual analysis of SMC products, and the dimension of discursive and social practice processes. Therefore, the concepts of text- and visual analysis, proximization, mediatization, techno-discursive design, realities, discursive practice, and social practice are presented in Figure 3.

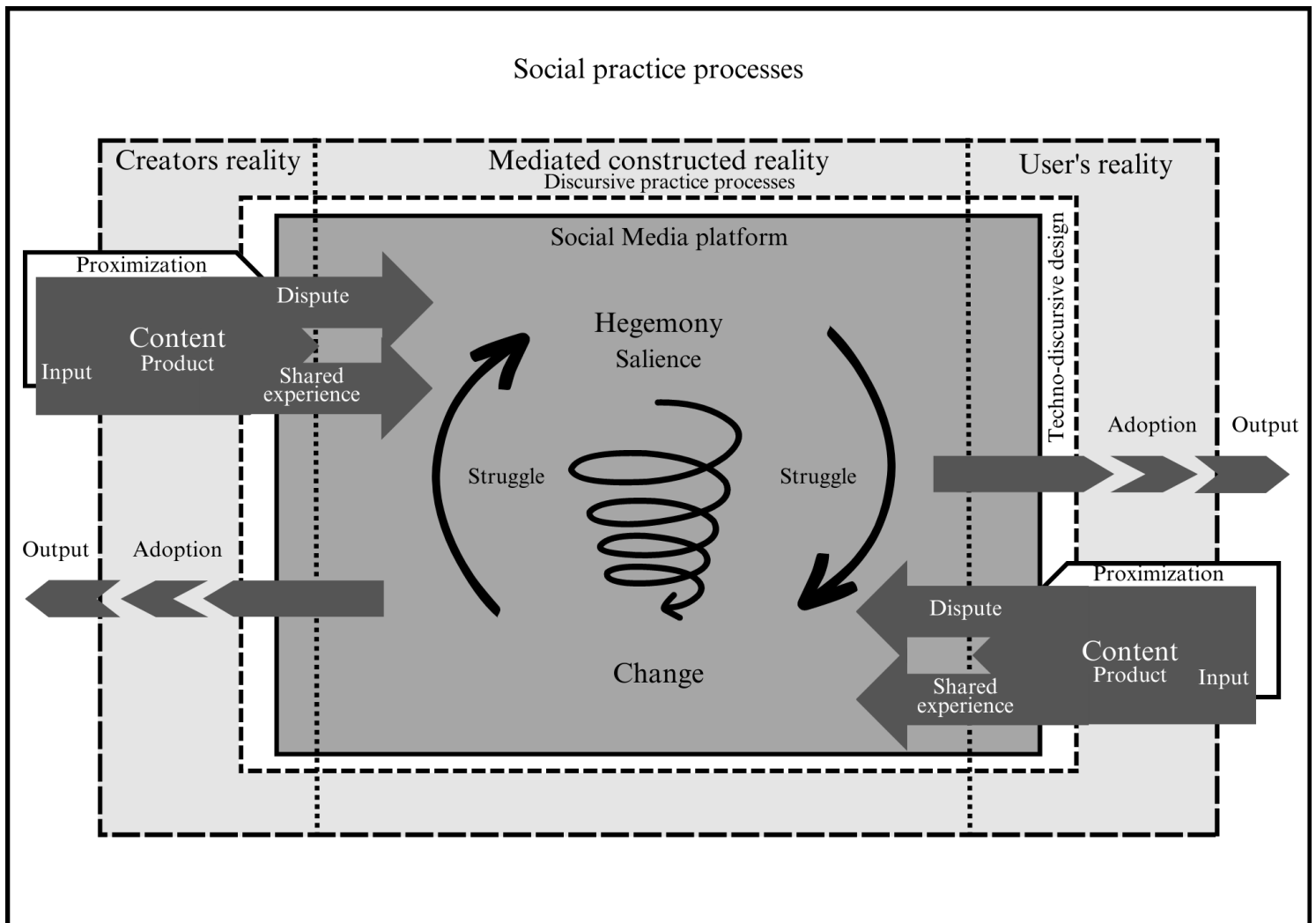


Figure 3: A visualization of the analytical approach (Critical Discourse Analysis of Social Media Products and Processes)

First and foremost, the model illustrates that the discursive processes on TikTok take place within the social practice, which serve as the third dimension in the model. In relation to the SM-CDA approach, the social practice is based on the vertical contextual level, as it connects the social realities of participants with the discursive practice processes in the mediated constructed reality and the external social practice processes. In the dimension of social practice processes, orders of discourse, hegemony, power relations, and ideology is interpreted, criticized, and explained.

Second, the next dimension concerns the discursive products and processes on TikTok. As SMC is multivocal and consist of many-to-many dynamics, the model represents the reality of the creator and the user. The creator is the participant that creates content on social media, whereas the user is the

participant that interacts with the content. Further, content is a discursive product because it is shaped by the reality of the participant. Both the creator as well as the user can produce content to participate in SMC; the creator is the participant that produces content, and the user consumes content, and they both participate in the distribution of content (the creator publishes it, the user likes, shares, saves, or comments on it). When the user comments on content, they create a new product and they thereby become a creator. Thereby, the communicative processes are never ending, because creators can become users and vice versa due to the multi-vocal dynamics of social media.

When creating content, the reality of the creator, which concern their ideological common sense, are shaped through social interactions in society. Therefore, input from the creator's social context shape the content and influence the production of discourses. This is seen as the content is produced within the creator's reality, which means that their perceptions of reality will leave discursive clues in the content, and these will then be decoded by the users that interact with the content. The same processes occur when users' produce content.

Further, the content can consist of different modes, being text, video, image, audio, and more. The textual and/or visual elements of content must be analyzed to investigate the discursive clues, and therefore the adopted concepts from the CDA textual dimension will be presented later, along with the visual elements of SSA to analyze the TikTok video. Furthermore, the content of the participants will also indicate proximization, which covers spatial, temporal, axiological, epistemic and/or emotional distance.

Third, the second dimension of the model, being the dimension of discursive practice will allow for an investigation of mediatization and the technological affordances of TikTok. Mediatization will concern the axiological status, axiological conflict, and/or axiological urgency which will be considered based on the findings from the textual analysis. Further, the techno-discursive design must also be considered in terms of how the algorithmic processes influence the distribution and consumption of content. This is relevant to understand the communicative dynamics on TikTok, which are influenced by algorithms as these enable the creation of echo chambers, viral content, and saliency, and affect the processes that occur when participants share, like, and receive feedback on, their opinions, concerns, ideas, and perceptions.

Content enters the second dimension when it is shared on TikTok, and here it will take part in the reality of the participant (referring to the content creator and the user) and the mediated constructed reality. The concept of constructed reality is based on the visualization of the MPA (Chapter 6.3. Fig 2), and it concerns the co-construction of reality on social media. However, as it is perceived that

social reality is constructed through social interactions, it is important to distinguish between social reality in terms of social practice (the social context, society as a whole) and the mediated constructed reality (the reality constructed on social media through SMC). Parts of the participant's reality and the whole mediated constructed reality are based on and influenced by the techno-discursive design of social media, which means that it influences the production, consumption, and distribution of the content.

When shared, content on social media can generate either a shared experience or a dispute. If the content generates a shared experience, the creator will meet supportive expressions of other users, who vent their shared beliefs, values, ideologies, sentiments etc. This can then develop into an echo chamber, where these shared beliefs and perceptions are amplified. If the content generates a dispute, the commenting users will emphasize differences in terms of their own ideology and beliefs compared to those presented by the creator in the content, and they will then seek to support and defend their own values and morals.

The vocabulary of content will shape certain discourses in the mediated constructed reality, and these can either sustain, challenge, reconstruct, or fracture current hegemonic discourse. If an ideological position is established within the mediated constructed reality, it will be able to change the current hegemonic ideology. Therefore, hegemony indicates salience. It is important to note that the mediated constructed reality does not cover the whole interface of the social media platform, but it will concern the communicative processes that unfolds within the specific context – for example as a video that receives comments from other users. Once again, it is important to identify the importance of the techno-discursive design of social media, as it is perceived to influence how and which ideological positions that can become common sense and gain hegemonic status within the mediated constructed reality.

When hegemony is changed or established, the discourse will then influence the participants that are involved in the process, being the content creator and the users that has interacted with the content. The participants become influenced by the results of the hegemonic struggles that take place in the mediated constructed reality, and these will settle in the participant's reality as new perceptions. The participant will then act upon these new perceptions, which means that the results of the hegemonic struggles from within the mediated constructed reality will be passed onto the social practice when the participant engage in social interactions in society. Here, their perceptions will partake in ideological struggles in the social practice to establish, challenge, or support current ideological positions. The results of these ideological struggles will then affect the production of new content as

an input. Thereby, the model acknowledges the ecological relation of the social practice, the textual practice, and the discursive practice.

Based on the presented model, the first analysis of the selected content will be a visual analysis of the selected video, and the approach will be described and explained below. The visual analysis will be based on the suggested social semiotic approach by Kress and van Leeuwen, which was presented in chapter 6.2.2.

The visual analysis will be based on the concepts of salience and social distance, as these are supportive of the experiential, relational, and expressive values and linguistic metafunctions. Further, these concepts are essential in terms of investigating the sentiments of the video as well as how the creator seeks to influence users with these portrayed sentiments.

Salience will enable an investigation of how different elements are placed in the video to draw the attention of the viewer to these specific elements. It will also enable an investigation of the experiential values and the expressive values of the video, as the salient elements will emphasize the attitude and the perceptions of the creator.

The final applied concept concerns social distance, which investigates the suggested relation between the viewers and the content creator. It will therefore be determined whether the creator draws on close personal distance, far personal distance, close social distance, far social distance, or public distance. As it was stated in chapter 6.2.2, the concepts of social distance and proximization concern how the creator seeks to eliminate distance between the creator, the topic, or the context of the video and the viewer. This concept therefore concerns the relational values of the video, as it investigates the social relationships that are being portrayed, addressed, questioned, criticized, or encouraged in the video. Further, proximization will be investigated in the second dimension of the analysis, which investigates the discursive practice of the video, and therefore the production as well as the consumption of the video will be analyzed. This is relevant to analyze how distances can influence the behavior and decision-making of viewers, which is determined by their language in the comment section. It is expected that the closer the personal distance in the videos, the more it will contribute to the generation of salience of certain issues and topics, which can affect the stance-taking of the viewers. Furthermore, it is also expected that viewers on TikTok will be more likely to express sentiments in the comment section to a TikTok video that suggest a somewhat close relationship, as this will give the viewer the impression that it is okay to vent out personal perceptions, moral panics, or hostile comments about the Balenciaga campaign.

As the video consists of spoken word, the language will be transcribed to conduct a textual analysis based on vocabulary and cohesion. These concepts will illuminate the creator's use of specific wordings and their appearance in the text. This is relevant as the analysis is intended to investigate which discourses that become salient due to the creator's affective and negative expressions. Therefore, vocabulary will concern the use of adjectives, verbs, nouns, and slang, as these words will possess ideological clues. This part of the analysis will therefore concern the experiential, expressive, and relational values of the vocabulary, along with the suggested metafunctions.

Cohesion will consist of a focus on the vocabulary links that appear in the spoken words of the video (Fairclough 2015, 145). Cohesion therefore concerns the connective values of the text, as it indicates how the text is related internally. However, some features in the spoken words will suggest that the creator refers to an external context, meaning that there will be references to another situation, event, text, and more, which has been presented as intertextuality and interdiscursivity in chapter 6.1.2 (Fairclough 2015, 145).

This textual analysis of the transcript will be paired with a visual analysis of the selected TikTok video. This approach of social semiotics corresponds well with the philosophy of science of social constructivism, as it acknowledges that meanings are constructed in social settings, being actions and interactions, when people use semiotic resources, which are socially made and existing in society (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021, xiii). This relates to the social constructivist perception of reality as a social construction.

The second part of the analysis of the content will be based on the collected comments from the TikTok video. The analysis of the comments will concern how users express negative and affective sentiments. Therefore, cohesion and textual structures will not be analyzed, as these are unnecessary with this purpose in mind, and because the length of each comment is limited with a maximum of 150 characters, which decreases the importance of these concepts. The main purpose of this analysis is to investigate which passages in the text that indicate affectivity and hostility towards Balenciaga, and which discourses that become salient due to these sentiments. Further, this will simultaneously allow for an insight to the user's ideological position regarding Balenciaga, as well as an investigation of which experiential, relational, and or/ expressive values are bound to the words.

Therefore, this textual analysis will concern a focus on vocabulary and the use of slang and artefacts, as the affections of users are loaded in the wordings that occur in each comment, and therefore the

grammatical structure within each comment are not influential when the primary focus is placed on single words. Users on TikTok express themselves within a limited number of characters, and some only use a few words or acronyms, which is not sufficient regarding implementing a focus on grammar, cohesion, or textual structures.

In the following chapter, the collected data, presented in chapter 7.1, will be analyzed based on the presented analytical approach. The presented model in Figure 3 will function as the analytical fundament along with Table 1 in Appendix 4.

8. Critical Discourse Analysis of Social Media Products and Processes

In this chapter, the analysis of both the TikTok video and the selected comments will be analyzed based on the analytical approach described in chapter 7.3.

The first and the second subchapter will concern the dimension of visual and textual analysis of both the video and the comments, which will provide an overview of the sentiments presented in the content and allow for an interpretation of the discursive clues. The second subchapter will concern the dimension of discursive and social practice. Here, the practices that concern the production, distribution, and consumption of discourses in the mediated constructed reality will be presented with a considerable focus on the algorithmic processes in TikTok to investigate how they influence the shaping of echo chambers. Further, the interrelation between the discursive products, the discursive practice, and the social practice will be established. In terms of the social practice, orders of discourse, hegemony, power relations, and ideology will be interpreted, criticized, and explained.

8.1 Visual and textual analysis of the video

In this chapter, a visual and textual analysis of the TikTok video will be conducted. The analysis of the TikTok video will be divided into scenes, which are also marked in the transcript (App. 2). Each scene will be analyzed with a focus on vocabulary, salience and social distance, and the concepts of cohesion and proximization will be used to analyze the gathered results of the visual and textual analysis. It is important to indicate that the viewers of the video will be referred to as users, as they are users on TikTok and later become participating users in the comment section.

First, the modes of the video will be established. As the video consists of both visuals, audio, and text, the product is multimodal as it consists of multiple modes. Therefore, the meaning-making systems of each mode will be organized into metafunctions and assigned discursive values in the analysis.

In the description of the video, the hashtag #cancelbalenciaga is used, which means that the video will be linked to other videos using the same hashtag. Therefore, this hashtag enables intertextuality and interdiscursivity, because it refers to content that exists outside of the context of the video. Further, this also functions as a statement, as it indicates that the creator supports the message behind the hashtag, which is that the brand must be “canceled” (App.2, l. 1). The video has a selected thumbnail picture that is displayed in a feed (App. 1, Pic. 10). In this picture, a large textbox is in the center, making it the most salient element in the thumbnail. The text (App. 2 pic. 10) mentions the acronym “CP” and the term “easter eggs”. The acronym refers to child pornography which establishes requirements to the user’s members resources to decode what it is an acronym of. The use of the term “easter eggs” suggests that the creator believes that both campaigns contain hidden messages (easter eggs), which have been strategically placed in the pictures for user to look for them (as an easter egg hunt). Another salient element in the thumbnail is a red box with white text in the top right corner which warns users of elements in the video, and it is therefore a “trigger warning”. This term is used in relation to disturbing content that can cause distress and trigger negative reactions. Therefore, the choice of making this textbox salient, both in terms of its color and placement above the textbox, suggest that the creator wants to attract the attention of the viewer in the beginning of the video. Further, the trigger warning is removed after seven seconds, and its saliency in the beginning of the video could make the viewer curious to find out why there is a trigger warning.

The creator introduces the video by stating that “everyone” on TikTok is talking about Balenciaga’s Gift Shop and Garde-Robe campaign in relation to “kiddie corn” and “trafficking” (l. 3-4, App. 2), while picture 2 (see App. 1) is portrayed in the background. The word “everyone” contains an experiential value, as it indicates that the creator perceives that the ideological common sense on TikTok is that Balenciaga is mentioned negatively and in relation to child pornography and trafficking. Further, the term “kiddie corn” is a synonym for “child pornography”, and it is used here to prevent that the video gets banned or removed from TikTok for mentioning illegal and incriminating topics. The term “kiddie corn” and the verb “trafficking” present an expressive value, as they indicate the creator’s perception of the case; the choice of words as well as the composition

of the video suggests that the creator is hostile towards Balenciaga. The words are presented as something that has been said by “everyone” on TikTok, however, they have still been chosen to be presented within the first three seconds of the video. This indicates that the creator has chosen to emphasize these words in the beginning to evoke high-arousal emotions and thereby withhold the attention of the viewer.

Throughout the video, the creator uses a filter named “green screen”, which enables the background of the video to consist of different pictures of choice. In the video, the creator has inserted pictures from the Balenciaga campaigns, Gift Shop and Garde-Robe, as well as pictures of the Michaël Borremans’ artwork, and Balenciaga’s statement from November 24th 2022 (App. 1). The creator is placed in the foreground of the video in the bottom left corner with a picture in the background (App. 1, Pic. 11). Each time the background is changed, a new scene is indicated in the transcript.

This position suggests a close personal distance because he is within reach of physical touch. This can indicate an intimate relationship with the users, as if they were communicating with a close friend. This could be on purpose to make the users feel safe and comfortable, which could persuade them to engage with the video. Further, this could also make it easier to persuade the viewer to accept and support the presented viewpoints and ideological common sense. The creator also looks into the camera, which is seen as eye contact by the viewer. Eye contact is a common social and communicative process that occur in situations of close social contact, which can demonstrate intimacy, attention, and interest, but it can also demonstrate confidence and superiority. Therefore, the eye contact is demonstrated to establish the visually articulated close relationship with the viewer, but also to demonstrate that the creator is confident in his presentation of the case. This is a relational value, as it indicates that the creator seeks to establish a close relationship to the viewer, and these visual meaning-making functions belong to the ideational metafunction. As this continues throughout the whole video, the suggested social distance will not be analyzed further.

In the first scene, the creator is the most salient element because he is seen in the foreground of the video (App. 1, Pic. 11). However, when the creator is out of the frame, the picture is no longer in the background, and the picture becomes fully visible to the viewer. This invites the viewer to take a closer look, while the creator states that the picture is from the recent campaign which has caused “everyone on TikTok” (App. 2, l. 3) to think of “kiddie corn” and “trafficking”. By stepping out of the frame, the creator increases the saliency of the background which is further emphasized by his words “(...) because of their most recent ad campaign” (App. 2, l. 4). In this first scene, the creator

indirectly projects that he perceives Balenciaga to be guilty of portraying discourses that relate to child pornography and trafficking. This is supported by the vocabulary, the hashtag, and the salient text boxes in the thumbnail, which belong to the ideational metafunction, because the choice of words and salient elements provide insight to the creator's ideological common sense, which is a negative and hostile perception of Balenciaga.

In the second scene (App. 1, Pic. 12), the creator returns to the frame as he suggests an honest conversation about the topic (App. 2, l. 5). This indicates that the creator will present his honest opinion, but it also indicates that his prejudices and perceptions are temporarily set aside. Therefore, no expressive values are found in this scene, as the creator seeks to present a neutral and honest position, and therefore positive and/or negative expressions are omitted. Instead, the scene contains experiential value as it is indicated how the creator perceived the ad campaign when he first saw it. This is seen with the word "first" (App. 2, l. 6), which suggest that the campaign did not affect the creator at first, but that this has later been changed.

As the creator is positioned in the foreground of the video, he becomes the most salient element, which is further increased by the close personal distance and the suggested eye contact. This establishes a relational value that supports the interpersonal metafunction, as these visual features suggest that the creator seeks to establish a personal relationship with the viewer and thereby invites the viewer to engage and interact with his content.

In this scene, the creator is briefly out of the frame, allowing the viewer to see the child holding the teddy bear, and thereby the picture is made salient (App. 2, l.5). The creator emphasizes the saliency of the background both visually and verbally, and this is used to manipulate the viewer to look at the emphasized elements, being the child and the teddy bear portrayed in the picture. Further, the creator states that he did not perceive the garments on the bear as "bondage", but rather as "goth" (App. 2, l.5), referring to a subcultural style that is associated with black garments and chains as jewelry. The term "bondage" refers so a specific sexual orientation and activity, and by mentioning this term, it is indicated that others have perceived the garments as bondage gear. Therefore, these words constitute a connective value, as they connect the text with concepts that exist in society, and it therefore suggests intertextuality.

As the second scene ends, a new picture is inserted as background, and it portrays the second child from the Gift Shop campaign (App. 1, Pic. 13). In relation to the previous scene, the creator continues by saying "But then I saw this picture (...)" (App. 2, l. 8), referring to the picture in the background.

As this is said, the creator disappears from the frame, and the background becomes salient, which invites the users to place their attention on the picture. The conjunction “but” contradicts the statement in the previous scene, and it therefore indicates that his perception of the campaign has changed. Further, the term bondage from the previous scene is now established as an underlying discourse by the nouns “collar” and “gag” – these are nouns that describe garments that relate to bondage. However, another discourse is established which concern “children’s toy”, and this is supported by the nouns from the previous scene, “toddler” and “teddy bear”. These words establish cohesion across the two scenes, and thereby a discourse is established. The established discourses are presented in the same sentence (App. 2, l. 8-9) to suggest that the campaign is combining two contradicting themes, being childhood and innocence on one hand, and paraphilia on the other. Bondage is a paraphilia, which is a term that covers all atypical sexual interests or behaviors (Fisher & Marwaha 2023). By connecting these discourses in the same sentence, the creator emphasizes that the interrelation of these discourses in the picture is “not cool” (App. 2, l. 9), which is an experiential value, because the creator’s perception of the campaign is displayed. Further, the creator’s negative attitude towards the campaign is evident in this scene, and it therefore contains an expressive value which indicates that the creator experiences moral discomfort. This is emphasized as the creator describes that he has been “creeped out” (App. 2, l. 9), meaning that the themes presented in the picture made him uncomfortable, and that he perceives the picture to be wrong based on his moral compass. Based on these findings, the presented values and the vocabulary in this scene can be organized under the ideational metafunction because they disclose how the creator experiences and perceives the campaign.

In the following scene, the picture of the Hourglass handbag from the Garde-Robe campaign (App. 1, Pic. 14) is seen in the background while the creator is in the front of the frame. The verb “snooping” (App. 2, l. 10) is used to describe how users on TikTok found the picture from the Garde-Robe campaign, and this choice of word suggests that the creator believes that Balenciaga has tried to hide something that users on TikTok was able to find. The creator uses the article “this” (App. 2, l.10), as well as saliency, to draw the attention of the viewer to the picture, which is seen as he disappears from the frame. While presenting the SCOTUS ruling, Supreme Court Of The United States, which is visible underneath the handbag, the picture is the most salient element in the frame. Further, the term “easter egg” (App. 2, l. 11), is once again used in relation to the campaign, which indicates that the creator perceives that Balenciaga has hidden the documents on purpose for consumers to find

them. This establishes an experiential value, because the choice of words suggest that the creator perceives that Balenciaga's campaigns are inappropriate, and that underlying discourses of child pornography and bondage are coded into certain elements that function as easter eggs in the pictures. The vocabulary as well as the experiential value are structured as an ideational metafunction, as the choice of words indicate that the creator believes that Balenciaga has planted easter eggs in their ad campaigns.

The creator continues to withhold a focus on the SCOTUS document in the fifth scene, and the background is now a zoomed-in version of the previous picture (App. 1, Pic. 15), and the creator therefore visually indicate an enlarged focus on the document. Further, the creator is supporting his previous claim of Balenciaga planting easter eggs in the campaign by investigating what is said in the document. To do so, the creator briefly increases the salience of the background as he leaves the frame and invites the viewer to take a closer look at the document.

In terms of vocabulary, the term "child pornography" is used when the SCOTUS ruling is explained, and it refers back to the first scene where the creator used the term "kiddie corn" as a synonym for child pornography. This creates cohesion between the two scenes in terms of a vocabulary link, which establish a reoccurring discourse of childhood and innocence on one hand and paraphilia and sexuality on the other. As the creator perceives these discourses to be coded into Balenciaga's ad campaigns, a concern for criminal offences against children is raised in the video.

In this scene, the cohesive vocabulary link concerning child pornography suggests a connective value across the scenes, which suggest that the creator wants to emphasize this discourse, and this indicate that he takes on a hostile perception towards Balenciaga and the campaigns.

The sixth scene is different from the others as the creator is in the frame during the entire scene, which makes him the most salient element (App. 1, Pic. 16). This choice of saliency emphasizes his words instead of the picture which remains in the background. The picture consists of different screenshots of Google searches on the topic; however, the viewer is not offered the opportunity to view it in full size.

In terms of vocabulary, the noun "connections" (App. 2, l. 15) is used as a reference to the easter eggs that people on another social media, Reddit, has found, and therefore this choice of word indicate that multiple elements have been found and that these connect the pictures of the ad campaigns. Another noun, "Bombshell" (App. 2, l. 16), is used as a figure of speech to emphasize that the creator was

shocked, and he is therefore not referring to a bombshell in its literal sense. This is an experiential value, as it is used to describe how shocking information has challenged his previous perception of the campaign, which was presented in scene 2. This is further supported by the term “got me”, which emphasizes that it has affected him and influenced his perception of Balenciaga. Therefore, the meaning-making systems of this scene belong to the ideational metafunction, as the statements provided here give an indication of the creator's perception, which is that the campaigns contain easter eggs that provide choking information.

The following scene is the longest in the video as it lasts 20 seconds, 00:37 to 00:57, and the same picture from the Garde-Robe campaign is used as background through the whole scene (App. 1, Pic. 17). The creator alternates between being visible in the foreground, and letting the background become the foreground, which suggest a change of salience during the scene.

The adverb “enough” is used when he is describing himself in terms of being a customer at Balenciaga (App. 2, l. 17), which suggests that he identifies the consumers of Balenciaga of being rich and stylish, and because he is not that, he is not a consumer of Balenciaga. With this statement, the creator indirectly explains that he perceives himself to not be part of Balenciaga's target audience. Further, as he is not a customer, it is expected that he does not have any personal experience with the brand, and therefore he has no relation to the company. This means that the creator has been able to easily shape a hostile perception of Balenciaga.

Another interesting choice of word is the verb “inventoried” (App. 2, l. 19). Here, the creator emphasizes that everything visible in a picture from an ad campaign has been strategically placed. Thereby, the creator again suggest that Balenciaga has placed the elements in the ad campaigns on purpose, which supports his previous claims of “easter eggs”. Therefore, this claim creates cohesion as it refers to his presentation of the term in scene 4, and in the text in the thumbnail picture.

Further, when the creator explains the process of how pictures of ad campaigns are created, the adjective “legit” (App. 2, l.21), which is a shortening of the word legitimate, is used to describe that all elements in the campaign have been evaluated before the shot and been considered as legitimate. However, a question is raised at the adverb “right?” (App. 2, l. 1) which is indicated by the question mark, and the creator thereby indicate that he doubts the production processes of the campaigns. The creator does not believe that the element is placed by accident, and therefore this scene contains experiential values and are supported by the ideational metafunction. This is seen because the

presented semiotics unveil that the creator present a negative and doubtful perception of how the campaigns were produced.

The creator engages in the decoding of a perceived easter egg in the eighth scene, where the background is a zoomed-in version of the previous campaign picture, however, a book by the artist Michaël Borremans is in focus in the picture (App. 1, Pic. 18). Further, the term “trigger warning” (App. 2, l. 23) is used again, which suggests cohesion, as a vocabulary link is created between this scene and the first. This term indicates that the information that will be presented is disturbing, and by stating this, the creator gives users the opportunity to stop watching. However, the term can also have the opposite effect and increase users’ interest in the video, because it is made clear that the next scene can cause high-arousal emotions.

The creator also warns the users by saying that they have “no reason” to search for the artist Michaël Borremans on Google (App. 2, l. 25). Together with the cohesive term “trigger warning”, this scene suggests a discourse of warning against something disturbing. This discourse consists of an experiential value as it indicates that the creator finds the pictures in the campaign so disturbing that he needs to warn others. Furthermore, it can also indicate that the creator seeks to evoke the high arousal emotion of the users to withhold their attention and influence them to interact. This is emphasized as the creator states the name of the artist as well as his work in question, “fire from the sun” (App. 2, l. 25), which contradicts the trigger warning. By providing the users with the exact information needed to find the material which have been portrayed to be disturbing, the creator indirectly invites the users to search for the artist on Google. As he has now shaped and primed their expectations to the artwork, the users’ perception has become biased and this increases the chance of users adopting the creator’s ideological common sense, which could then lead to interaction based on emotions, values, and beliefs. Therefore, the semiotics in this scene is organized as an ideational metafunction because they indicate that the creator perceives the content to be disturbing, and that his intention is to evoke high arousal emotion that will cause users to defend their moral compass with affective reactions in the comments.

In continuation of the previous scene, the background changes to a picture from the artwork of Michaël Borremans’ “fire from the sun” (App.1, Pic. 19). Throughout this scene, the creator is visible in the foreground, which makes him the most salient element. This also means that the users are not able to get a full view of the picture in the background, which suggests that the creator is trying to

shield the users from the picture. This is supported by his statements in the previous scene, where he gave the users a trigger warning, and therefore indicated that the picture in this scene would be disturbing.

Throughout this scene, the creator explains what he experienced when he searched for the artwork in question, and in relation to this, the words “brave” and “censored” are presented. As the creator expresses that the users are braver than him if they search for the artwork (App. 1, l.26), he refers to the previous statement in which he warned the users against graphic content. With the adjective “braver” (App. 2, l. 26) the creator addresses his perception that one must be brave to look at the art, which suggests that he finds it appalling. This is supported by the verb “censored”, which the creator has chosen to indicate that he perceived the artwork to be graphic. When the creator refers to censored images of toddlers, the concern for child pornography, which has been a recurring theme in the video, is established once again. By referring to the artwork with these words, the high arousal emotions of users will be affected. Therefore, as the vocabulary indicates that the creator has a negative perception of the portrayal of Michaël Borremans’ artwork in the Balenciaga campaign, an expressive value is present in the scene. This is organized by the ideational metafunction because the statements in this scene illustrate how the creator perceives the artwork to portray toddlers wrongfully and to contain graphic elements. This does not directly influence his perception of Balenciaga, however, the previously suggested discourse regarding child pornography is supported in this scene due to the vocabulary.

In the final scene of the video, the creator presents the official statement of Balenciaga from its Instagram story on November 24th 2022 (App. 1, Pic. 20). In the beginning of the video, he is visible in the frame, as he starts by saying “side note” (App. 2, l. 29). This suggests that he is now moving on from the previous topic concerning the artwork of Michaël Borremans, and that the information that the viewer is about to receive is a side from what he has mentioned previously. This is supported by the choice of picture for the background, which is a screenshot of Balenciaga’s statement from its Instagram on November 24th 2022, and this suggests that the last seconds of the video will concerns this statement.

When referring to the statement as a formal apology (App. 2, l. 30), the creator increases the saliency of the statement by removing himself from the foreground, which briefly allows the users to read the text. In relation to this, the creator mentions the celebrity Kim Kardashian, who has functioned as a public ambassador for the brand. By mentioning this celebrity, the creator refers to a social context outside of the content, and therefore it suggests a connective value. This means that the scene contains

an intertextual element, which links the video to an event that took place in another social context. The creator emphasizes that Kim Kardashian has stated that the campaigns are “fucked up shit” (App. 2, l. 31), which indicates that even an ambassador of the brand is hostile towards the pictures in the campaigns. This is used to support his own hostile perception, and to persuade users to adopt this perception. Therefore, the vocabulary establishes an experiential value as well as an expressive value. The experiential value is embedded in the choice of focus in the last scene, the emphasis on the apology suggests that the creator wants to highlight that Balenciaga is guilty, and that his claims have been legitimate. This strengthens the position of his ideological common sense, which is important to be perceived as convincing by the users. Thereby, the video will receive more social recognition, more attention, and his video will be shared on TikTok. The expressive value is found in the intertextual reference to Kim Kardashian, as he uses a powerful celebrity to present his own personal perception, and to support the discourses that he has presented throughout the video. Due to both the expressive, experiential, and connective values in the scene, the semiotics can be organized into both a textual and ideational metafunction.

Through this analysis, it was found that the semiotics are influenced by the creator's expressions and perceptions, and therefore the video consists of experiential and expressive values. These suggest that the creator uses axiological and emotional proximization to minimize the perceived distance between the topic of the video and the users. This means that the creator paints a picture of Balenciaga being the wrongful “others”, whereas users on social media constitute a community of “us”. Thereby, the creator suggests that it is “us” vs. “them”, which is supported when he explains how users on social media platforms have found connections between the campaigns and identified easter eggs. Further, the emotional proximization is seen in the emotional evolvment of the creator as well as his desire to awaken the high arousal emotions of the users and persuade them to react.

It also became evident that the creator of the video establishes discourses that are atypical in relation to ad campaigns regarding luxury fashion. The vocabulary links through the video consists of discursive loaded words and terms like “trigger warning”, “child pornography”, “bondage”, and “censored image” which have been connected to words like “toddler”, “teddy bear”, and “children's toy”. The choice of using these words in relation to the chosen pictures, the semiotics become loaded with discursive and ideological clues stemming from the creator's perception of reality, which have been found to be hostile towards both Balenciaga and its ad campaigns. Further, the video is therefore based on the creator's own high arousal emotions, which he has shared to both gain social recognition

and to gain the attention of others by appealing to their high arousal emotions as well. This could therefore be the beginning formation of an echo chamber and negative eWOM because no contradicting perceptions are presented in the video, and because the presented perception is negative.

8.2 Textual analysis of the comments

In this subchapter, selected comments to the TikTok video will be analyzed to investigate users' affective reactions and hostile perception of Balenciaga. To do so, the comments will be grouped and analyzed based on the discourses that they have in common. This will allow for a consideration of whether an echo chamber is created, which will then indicate the influence of the techno-discursive design. In terms of the presented CDA-SMPP model (Chapter 7.3) this analysis will concern the user's reality and production of content.

In the comment section, affective sentiments and hostile reactions are found in response to the video. Users are describing the elements in the pictures from both campaigns to be disgusting, sick, and disturbing, which indicates that the campaign has made them feel discomfort. A user states that they perceive that Balenciaga knew what it was portraying in the campaigns, and that "this whole thing makes me nauseous" (App. 3, 2). This indicates that the user is supporting the creator's claim regarding easter eggs in the ad campaigns, which means that this user perceives that Balenciaga intentionally displayed the teddy bear garments, the SCOTUS document, and the Michaël Borremans' book in the campaigns. By relating their impression of the campaigns to that of physical discomfort, the user might have chosen the adjective "nauseous" to emphasize their negative perception of "this whole thing", meaning Balenciaga and its campaigns. This is supported by another user in comment 9 (App. 3, 9), where the adjective "disgusting" is used to describe "it", which refers to the elements that was presented throughout the TikTok video. This choice of words indicates that the user experienced disgust when they watched the TikTok video, which refers to a negative emotional reaction. This is because the user believes that "they knew what they were doing", referring to Balenciaga, and this statement supports the same belief presented in comment 2 as well as in the video.

The vocabulary of both comments contains expressive value because the choice of words suggests that the users perceive Balenciaga and the campaigns negatively; the adjectives "nauseous" and "disgusting" highlight the negative effect the campaigns have on the users. Therefore, these comments present a negative opinion of Balenciaga's campaigns. In relation to this, it is evident that

they establish emotional proximization, because they seek to limit the distance between their own perception and the perception of the creator, by also expressing a hostile attitude towards the campaigns.

In relation to this, the adjective “sick” is also used to describe the case, which is seen in comment 7; “this is sick” (App. 3, 7). Here, “sick” is used to describe the article “this”, which refers to the claims presented in the TikTok video, and therefore it also refers to Balenciaga’s ad campaigns. Contrary to the previous comment, “sick” does not concern emotional and physical discomfort, but rather abnormal and wrong behavior. Further, in the sentence “why are people hurting children”, the adverb “why” indicates that the user is stating a question, however, as a question mark is omitted, the sentence is a rhetorical question to state the perception of the user. The perception is that children are being hurt, and it is considered that Balenciaga is referred to through the noun “people”. This comment can indicate that this user shares the creator’s hostility towards Balenciaga, and that the perceived perspectives of both campaigns are threatening their morals and values. Therefore, the question is used to emphasize their moral position to the campaign, which is that it condemns it by calling it sick. This comment therefore uses emotional proximization to eliminate the distance between themselves and users with similar values and beliefs, by stating that their perception is that it is sick to hurt children. This is supported by the experiential value that is expressed in the article “this” and the adjective “sick”, which emphasizes that, due to the user’s reality and ideological common sense, they perceive the “easter eggs” in the ad campaigns to be abnormal and not right.

These comments therefore establish a discourse that concern their emotional and physical reaction, and the discourse is therefore made salient due to their shared negative perception of Balenciaga’s ad campaign, and their choice of words that are related to physical and emotional discomfort.

.

In comment 8, (App. 3, 8) another user put emphasis on the adjective “sick” when describing how they feel after watching the TikTok video, which indicate that this word is used to describe their physical discomfort. The user’s perception is negative, as their perception of the case is compared to physical sickness, which is a negative experience. The emotional state of the user is emphasized in the accessory emoji, which depicts anger, and the comment therefore illustrates that the TikTok video has caused the user to feel anger, which is a high arousal emotion, and that they reacted to the video based on their emotion. The user’s opinion is further described with the adjective “satanic”, which is emphasized by the emoji. “Satanic” is used to describe “it”, which refers to the artefacts found in Balenciaga’s campaigns, and the adjective therefore indicates that the user perceives the campaign to

portray evil and wicked elements. The same perception is found in comment 5, 16, and 17, in which users portray Balenciaga as evil and as devil worshippers (App. 3).

In comment 5, the user emphasizes that “they” are evil, referring to Balenciaga, which is further emphasized by the exclamation statement “fuck then” (App. 3, 5). The use of the exclamation emphasizes the hostile position of the user, and it therefore contain an expressive value which illustrate that the user has a negative perception of Balenciaga. However, it is believed that “then” is an error, and that it should have been “them” instead, which would have further emphasized that the user express contempt towards the brand by referring to it as “they” and “them”.

In comment 16 (App. 3), the term “devil worshipers” is used to describe what is perceived to be Balenciaga and the people responsible for the ad campaigns. With this term, the user indicate that they believe that the company worship the devil, which indicate that they perceive the company to be promoting satanism. The same portrayal is evident in comment 17, in which the user states that “Balenciaga is evil Satanists run” (App. 3). This supports the claims presented in the two previous comments, and the vocabulary in these comments therefore indicate a negative perception of Balenciaga. The adjective “evil” along with the nouns “devil” and “Satanists” emphasize that the users’ share a negative perception of the company, however, it is necessary that others also perceive satanism to be negative for the comments to meet social recognition and support. The vocabulary therefore contains expressive values, because their negative perceptions are embedded in the choice of words. Further, an experiential value is present as well, because by relating the company to satanism, the user’s reveal that in their perception of reality the company is evil. Therefore, they draw on the ideational metafunction, because each user’s perception of reality is exposed due to their choice of words; they believe that the portrayed elements in the campaigns are sick and satanic, which emphasizes that they have a hostile opinion of them. Further, the personal pronouns “they” and “them” in comment 5 and 16 contain relational value and suggest axiological proximization, because they illustrate a relational gap between the user and Balenciaga. With axiological proximization the user can limit the distance between themselves and other users, by illuminating the perceived distance to the “others”, which is Balenciaga. Therefore, these comments establish a salient discourse of satanism, which portray a shared negative perception of Balenciaga as evil and satanic.

Another salient discourse in the comment section concerns pedophilia. This is seen in comment 1 (App. 3), where the user refers to Balenciaga as “those sneaky pervs”, which means that the user perceives the producers of both Balenciaga campaigns to be cunning and perverted. Further, the

acronym “omg”, which means “oh my God”, is repeated three times, and it therefore indicates that the user is choked. Also, by relating Balenciaga to the abbreviated noun “pervs”, the user indicates that they perceive the company to portray deviating sexual elements in the campaign. The negative load in this statement is further emphasized by the adjective “fucking”, which is often used in emotional venting, and especially in relation to anger and aggressive sentiments. This adjective discloses that the comment stems from a feeling of anger, which means that the TikTok video evoked a high arousal emotion. This emotional involvement is also seen in comment 13, where a user states that Balenciaga consists of pedophiles, and that they should be going to jail (App. 3). Here, the company is mentioned by name, which means that the user's statement refers directly to the company; “Balenciaga are bunch of pedophiles”. The adjective “pedophiles” functions as an accusation, which discloses that the user perceives that the company takes advantage of and abuses children sexually. This claim therefore expresses a negative perception of the company and its campaigns, however, the claim is not supported by any evidence, and it is therefore perceived to be an affective reaction to the video. Further, the suggestion that Balenciaga should be “lock the f up”, the user's perception of reality is disclosed, meaning that the user perceives that the brand should be in jail for being pedophiles, and it is thereby stated that the user believes that Balenciaga has engaged in criminal activities. Therefore, this comment contains expressive and experiential values that are supported by an ideational metafunction.

In comment 3, (App 3) the same claim is made; “Balenciaga is pure pedophilia”. Here, Balenciaga is being directly related to the concept of pedophilia, which discloses the user's personal perception of the company. This indicates that the user supports the claims presented in the TikTok video, which indicates that they share the same ideological common sense as the creator. Even though the comment does not leave any emotional clues, it still indicates that the user has been affected by the video, and that it has caused them to interact. Further, the comment does not contain expressive values like the other comments, however, it contains an experiential value, because it indicates that in the user's perception of reality, Balenciaga is a brand related to pedophilia.

Contrary to this comment, multiple users have left clues of high arousal emotions in their comments, which is seen because they express both hate and anger towards the brand. In comment 11 (App. 3), a user states the following “Fuck their apology. Burn the brand to the ground.”. In this statement, the words “fuck” and “burn” contain expressive value, because they are used to belittle the apology from the company, and to state that the user wants the brand to be destroyed. Therefore, this choice of

words emphasizes the user's negative opinion on the company, while also indicating that the comment is an emotional reaction to the TikTok video, because the words stem from an emotion of anger. This is evident, because the user resorts to an expression of violence by wanting the brand to be burned to the ground. In relation to proximization, the comment section on TikTok allows users to express such sentiments despite their graphic character, and this enables emotional proximization, because the users will then experience that their perceived distance to others with the same emotional reaction is limited.

However, two comments have been selected, because they contain violent and threatening statements that concern killing the "elite" (App. 3). The comments in question are number 14 and 15, in which the users have chosen words that suggest anger and hostility towards Balenciaga. In comment 14, the verb "hang" is used to describe what the user wants to do to "them all", and here it is perceived that the user might be referring to those responsible of Balenciaga's ad campaigns. In other words, the user wants them to be killed, which is emphasized by the phrase "if heads don't roll", which is related to the idiom "heads will roll" that is used to suggest severe punishment. This means that the user wants Balenciaga to be punished for the ad campaigns, which illustrates that the user perceives that the company is in the wrong. This is also seen in comment 15 (App. 3), where a user asks, "when are we going to hunt these down and kill them publicly", however, it is a rhetorical question because it is used as an affective statement rather than a literal question. The verbs "hunt" and "kill" establish a violent discourse, which emphasizes the hostile and affective character of the comment. This is believed to stem from an emotion of anger, which was awakened by the TikTok video, and therefore this comment indicates that the user has a negative opinion on the elite. Here, the elite is used to refer to a social group in society that is superior to others due to their political, economic, or social status. With this, the user portrays an axiological value, because the elite is perceived as "the other", which means a different social group. The user also indicates that they are not a part of the elite, and that the values and beliefs of the elite differ from their own. Instead, the pronoun "we" suggests that the user perceives participants on TikTok to constitute their own social group. Therefore, a relational value is embedded in this comment, because the vocabulary discloses how the user perceives their relationship with other likeminded individuals, being users on TikTok/the inferior social group, and the others, being the elite/the superior social group.

These comments therefore establish a discourse of violence as an emotional reaction to the TikTok video. Further, the users' perception of ideological and social status in society establishes another discourse, which is that Balenciaga is part of the elite, and that the public and consumers are the

inferior social group. This perception is also presented in comment 12, where a user states that wealthy individuals are always pedophiles (App. 3), which indicate a generalizing perception of wealthy people in society. The noun “pedophile” is used here to describe rich people, and because the meaning of the noun refers to criminal and abusive activities, this comparison suggests a negative perception of people with a superior ideological status in society. This statement therefore discloses the user's perception of reality, because the vocabulary differentiates the user's own social group from the “others”, which is the elite. However, this statement is not supported by any factual claims, and it is therefore perceived that it is based on the user's emotions, even though the vocabulary does not contain emotional clues. Therefore, an experiential value is embedded in the comment because it reflects how that in the user's perception of reality, the elite consist of individuals with pedophilic tendencies.

In this chapter, the analysis of the comments has illuminated which discourses that become salient as a result of the user's affective and hostile reactions. Here, it was found that the comments present discourses that concern both physical and emotional discomfort, satanism, pedophilia, violence, and social groupings. In the following chapter, these discourses will be related to those presented in the video, and the discursive practice processes will be discussed.

8.3 Discursive and social practice processes

In this second part of the analysis, the discursive and social practice processes will be investigated based on the findings of the previous visual and textual analysis. Here, the interrelation of the three dimensions will generate an understanding of how the discursive products and processes of TikTok content interfere with the social realities and the social practice (See Figure 3, Chapter 7.3).

In the previous chapter, it became evident that the video contains traces of the creator's ideological position, and therefore the perspective throughout the video is negative. This is seen in the salient discourses which concern ideology and pedophilia. The ideological discourse concern Balenciaga as the wrongful “other” and users on social media as a community of “us”. The discourse concerning claims of pedophilia is established by vocabulary links based on the words “child pornography”, and “bondage”, and “toddler”, “teddy bear”, and “children's toy”. Using these words to describe the company's ad campaigns, the creator indicates that he believes Balenciaga is exploiting children.

In the textual analysis of the comments, it was found that users express their affective and hostile opinions as a response to the TikTok video, because their high arousal emotions have been awakened. The social reality of the users as well as their emotional state have resulted in the saliency of several discourses concerning physical and emotional discomfort, satanism, pedophilia, violence, and social groupings. These discourses suggest that the creator's perceptions are being supported, and therefore the same discourses are made salient in the comments. Due to their similar perceptions of Balenciaga and the campaigns, the creator and the users construct a shared experience within the mediated constructed reality. Here, it is important to note that this ideological common sense is only established within the shared experience and does not apply to TikTok as a whole (See Figure 3, Chapter 7.3). Therefore, the mediated constructed reality in question only exists because the creator and the users construct it when they participate in meaning-making practices by sharing sentiments and hostile opinions on Balenciaga. The mediated constructed reality is based on the algorithms as well as the affordances of TikTok because these determine the users' behavior - for example, users are not able to write more than 150 characters in a comment, and they must not talk about illegal or incriminating topics to prevent the content from being deleted.

In the mediated constructed reality surrounding the TikTok video and its comment section, the presented discourses are supported, confirmed, and amplified because there is a lack of opposing opinions. Therefore, the concept of echo chambers can be applied here because the shared experience of the video allows users to create a grouping based on their similar opinions, attitudes, and beliefs towards Balenciaga and the two campaigns. This therefore indicate that the algorithmic processes of TikTok have influenced the shaping of the echo chamber, because the content has been distributed to users that share the same values and beliefs. In this echo chamber, the affective, hostile, and violent reactions suggest that the discourses of satanism and pedophilia are the most salient. However, these are perceived to stem from a moral panic which the creator and the users have constructed due to the echo chamber. Moral panic is a phrase that describe the social construction of a shared fear or panic that place a phenomenon or another social group in a threatening position (Pisciotta 2023). This fear is established in the shared experience because the sentiments of users, which express the perceptions that Balenciaga is evil, satanic, and child abusing, are being amplified in the echo chamber where opposing perspectives are limited. These sentiments cause the discourses of satanism and pedophilia to become salient in the echo chamber.

The echo chamber has been created due to mediatization, the techno-discursive design, and the salient discourses because these elements establish axiological status and axiological urgency. Axiological status is established because the creator and the users present their perceptions and beliefs regarding Balenciaga, and because these are similar, the shared experience create the foundation for a common axiological status. However, the video and the comments also present axiological urgency, because the participants seek to defend and support their own beliefs and values from Balenciaga whose actions and perceived values are considered a threat. In the echo chamber, this perceived threat is amplified which has caused the development of radicalization amongst the users and alienation of Balenciaga. This is seen in the comments that contain violence and claims of satanism and pedophilia. The affective and hostile reactions that are generated in the echo chamber is therefore perceived to be negative eWOM, and the salient discourses are perceived to be harmful to the image of the brand, especially because they stem from an emotional state of anger, which is a high arousal emotion.

In terms of axiological conflict, three comments with opposing opinions will be presented to illuminate that the video has also generated dispute, however, contradicting perceptions in the comment section is minimal. It is important to note that these comments will only serve a superficial insight to contradicting perceptions and will not be examined based on the textual analysis approach. By presenting these comments, the ideological struggles in the mediated constructed reality will be clarified and explained, while it will also allow for a critique of the established hegemonic discourse. Two of the three contradicting comments portray that these users believe that the video and the comment section present conspiracy theories – in comment 18, the user even states that it is “conspiracy bullshit” (App. 3, 18.). Another user supports this perception by stating that the comment section consists of “stupid conspiracy nonsense” (App, 3, 20). By comparing the statements in the video and the comment section with conspiracy theories, they indicate that the other users are supporting a theory that is not factually correct and that they intentionally reject Balenciaga’s official explanation and apology. In the third comment (App. 3, 19), another user states that “it is not that deep”, indicating that they believe that the other users are overly analyzing the ad campaigns. These three users indicate that the creator and the users have generated a shared experience based on an ideological common sense that they do not accept or support, and therefore their contradicting comment creates dispute. These comments establish axiological conflict, because they illuminate that the presented perceptions of the other participants are different from theirs, which suggest an

ideological struggle in the mediated constructed reality. This will be further described below, however, the influence of the techno-discursive design on TikTok will be established first.

In terms of the creation of an echo chamber, the algorithmic processes on TikTok have influenced which users have seen the content and when, and the algorithm has therefore participated in the distribution of the TikTok video. These processes are considered to be the techno-discursive design of TikTok, which means that they influence the discursive practice processes in the mediated constructed reality. The algorithm has distributed the video to users' FYP if they have previously shown interest in similar content. However, this process is not neutral, because the aim of these processes is to influence the users to generate more engagement and interaction on the video. Therefore, it can be said that the shared experience as well as the dispute generated from the video have been influenced by the algorithmic processes. The power relation of the techno-discursive design and the users on TikTok will be established below.

In the mediated constructed reality, the dispute as well as the shared experiences generated from the video participate in ideological struggles, where hegemonic discourses can be challenged, established, supported, or fractured. During these struggles, the participants' reality will be influenced, and thereby the discourses from within the mediated constructed reality will be transferred into the social practice due to the participants' social interactions outside of TikTok.

In terms of the power relations within the mediated constructed reality, the participants as well as the techno-discursive design are involved in the distribution processes of discursive products on TikTok. This makes the power relation twofold, in the sense that participants on TikTok hold the power of the content that they produce, consume, and distribute, however, it be in the settings established by the techno-discursive design. Therefore, algorithms on TikTok can be perceived to function as a gatekeeping tool, because it determines the overall distributional processes. In relation to the TikTok video, it is considered that it has been viral due to its number of likes, shares, views, and comments, which indicate that it has reached a large number of users on TikTok. This also indicates that the techno-discursive design has influenced the distribution of this video, which has allowed the video to gain more than 4,6 million users, whereas more than 469,100 users have liked the video. Once again, this emphasizes that the techno-discursive design has participated in the construction of an echo chamber, from which negative eWOM is harbored. However, the algorithmic processes happen automatically, and therefore it is believed that the power of the techno-discursive is hidden to users

on TikTok. The hidden techno-discursive power can become clear to users if they recognize when the algorithm suggests a new type of content or if a new update enables new features or limitations.

Moving on, ideological diversities are established in the comment section by both the supportive users and the opposing users, and these engage in an ideological struggle to gain hegemony. This is achieved when the ideology becomes adopted as common sense by most users that participate in the mediated constructed reality. The ideological position supporting the discourse of moral panic concerns the differentiation between “us” and “them”, being the public and the elite, and it is based on the perceived threats that the elite oppose on the values, beliefs, and morals of the public. This ideology has been supported due to a shared experience in the mediated constructed reality, which has caused it to achieve hegemony. However, the ideology is challenged by the opposing opinions because they indicate that the discourse is nonsense and based on conspiracy theories, and ideological diversities are established. It therefore emphasizes that the discourse is based on emotions and perceptions rather than officially accepted facts. The opposing comments also suggest that the discourse of moral panic is initiated as an attempt to gain power over Balenciaga by challenging the ideological position of the company. Despite providing a critique of the shared moral panic in the mediated constructed reality, the opposing ideological perception presented by the three opposing comments is not able to fracture the hegemonic ideology. As it was found above, the discourses of the TikTok video are supported and amplified in the comment section, and it is therefore believed that the opposing ideology was not powerful enough to establish a new ideological common sense. Further, the discourse of moral panic is also supported by the algorithmic processes, which are perceived to possess hidden power in terms of ideological struggles on TikTok. This is evident because they have enabled the TikTok video to be distributed to users that share the portrayed beliefs and perceptions of reality, and this has made it easier to achieve ideological common sense. Due to the hidden power in the techno-discursive design, the hostility towards Balenciaga is amplified in the echo chamber as negative eWOM, which has developed into a firestorm against the company. This firestorm is fueled by the sentiments of users in the comment section, which indicate that they have adopted the ideological common sense into their personal reality (App. 4, Fig. 4). This claim is supported by videos on TikTok that illustrate how former consumers of Balenciaga have destroyed their Balenciaga items (SingleMomAttorney 2022; DesignerCommunity 2022; Halessia 2022), which suggests that they share the belief that Balenciaga's perceived values are a threat to their own. These actions illustrate that the negative eWOM towards Balenciaga on TikTok were powerful enough to

impact the perceptions of previous consumers, which also supports the claim of hegemony. The negative eWOM therefore challenges the power position of Balenciaga, because participants were able to influence each other in the echo chamber to adopt a hostile opinion on Balenciaga into their social reality, which then becomes a threat to the company's image, and especially if they enact on the hostile opinion in the social practice.

The discourse of moral panics from the TikTok video is the most salient discourse within the mediated constructed reality because it is supported by an ideological position that has achieved ideological common sense. However, it is important to interpret, explain, and critique this discourse in relation to the social practice, to understand if and how this mediated and socially constructed discourse influence the external ideological struggles in society.

It is considered that the ideological common sense established in the mediated constructed reality stems from and is being supported by the participants' perception of reality, and it is therefore perceived to be an input from the social practice. This means that the hostile perception of the elite is based on the order of discourse in society which establish the power position of social groups. This societal order of discourse determined the power of social groups based on their economic, social, and political influence on society. By opposing this hegemonic ideology, the participants seek to challenge this position, and thereby ideological struggles are initiated. It is perceived that this hostility towards the elite along with claims of pedophilia have achieved hegemonic status in society due to previous cases of pedophilia that involved individuals with economic, political, ideological, or social power, such as the case of Jeffrey Epstein from 2019 (BBC 2021) and the case of R.Kelly (Stolworthy 2023). These cases within society are believed to have enabled a basis for the development of the firestorm because of a shared distrust in the public towards societal groups with these types of power. Therefore, the affective and hostile reactions in the comment section are a result of the participants' desire to protect their own morals from the threatening acts and beliefs of the elite. However, as this case concern an international fashion company and not an individual, it is important to emphasize that its activities are strictly limited in terms of laws and regulations, and it is perceived that a company like Balenciaga acts according to the public's best interest. Therefore, the established social norms that the company operates within limits the possibility of activities that can support the claims of satanism and pedophilia. In relation to this, it is necessary to criticize these discourses to understand their nature, and to understand how they shaped the firestorm against Balenciaga. To do so, it will be considered whether social media facilitate public discussions based on fake allegations and feelings

rather than publicly accepted facts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, verifiable misinformation, or so-called fake news, was spread rapidly and in such quantity, that the United Nations warned people about the consequences of the “infodemic” (Schuetz et al 2021, 376). Fake news is especially shared on social media, which some people tend to as their primary source of news, and this enables misinformation to spread faster and farther than correct information. This is due to the trust between people being greater than their ability or desire to do fact-checking on the information being shared with them (Schuetz et al 2012, 376). Also, fake news can fuel negative eWOM and the voicing of emotional and hostile reactions because it often appeals to users’ high arousal emotions (Schuetz et al 2012, 376). This illustrates that social media facilitate the processes that concern production, distribution, and consumption of fake news on the same conditions as all other content. Fake news can be a means to spread harmful information, which is done by generating as much interaction as possible. This means that the content will purposely seek to influence people’s feelings in order to make them engage with the content. It must therefore be considered that the sentiments in the video and the comment section stem from feelings of anger and disgust rather than publicly accepted information regarding the case, which was also stated in the opposing comments presented above.

Due to concepts like “corporate pedophilia”, which describe advertising that portray children and especially young girls in sexualizing manners (Rush & Nauze 2006, vii), users’ on TikTok emphasize that the two campaigns from Balenciaga contain discursive clues that suggest sexualization of children. Therefore, the economic and social status of Balenciaga in society is perceived negatively in the mediated constructed reality because it alienates the company from the users. This therefore enable the TikTok users to construct the perception that Balenciaga is portraying corporate pedophilia in the campaigns. Further, this discourse has influenced Balenciaga in the social practice because it became a salient discourse in the public firestorm. This emphasizes that the ideology concerning Balenciaga as a threat to the social group of the public were able to gain hegemonic status in society, because it supported the evident discourse of pedophilia in the firestorm. This is made evident by Balenciaga’s published apologies and public statements, which illustrate that the company have internally engaged in organizational communicative processes to address the claims of pedophilia. This indicate that it became necessary for the company to comment on the case, and by apologizing, the power of the discourse is emphasized, because it was able to influence an international company to react.

In this analysis, it became evident that the affective and hostile sentiments within the mediated constructed reality on TikTok generated a shared experience, which developed into an echo chamber. Here, users were able to vent their negative perceptions, which generated a salient discourse of pedophilia. This discourse became salient in the public firestorm against Balenciaga, which caused the company to react.

9. Discussion

As the previous chapter presented passages of discussion as part of the analysis of the discursive and social practice, this chapter will discuss the findings of the analysis with the purpose of adopting a corporate perspective on the case. In this chapter, the Balenciaga's corporate strategies in terms of the production of the ad campaigns as well as the company's response to the firestorm will be evaluated and discussed to present strengths and weaknesses from a corporate perspective.

As it was found in chapter 8.3, the discourse regarding concerns of pedophilia gained hegemony in the social practice, which influenced the corporate communication of Balenciaga. It also had an impact on the company's corporate activities and stakeholder relations. On February 8, 2023, Kering and Balenciaga announced a three-year program and partnership with a foundation named National Children's Alliance, which concern the protection of children to prevent child abuse (National Children's Alliance n.d.). With this partnership, Balenciaga stated that it would help promote welfare and safety of children and raise awareness on child abuse and protection (Balenciaga 2023). This was also announced on the company's Instagram account as a story, which is also still available (May 2023) (See picture 9 Appendix 1). Therefore, it is considered that Balenciaga had to establish new stakeholder relations to re-establish its image, contradict claims of pedophilia, and thereby seek to restore its damaged relationship to the consumers that were engaged in and influenced by the negative eWOM on TikTok. However, it is perceived that Balenciaga could have tried to deescalate the development of the firestorm. In terms of negative eWOM, which was presented in chapter 3, the company could have engaged in the communication on TikTok by addressing hostile claims and accusations and providing feedback in the mediated constructed reality. This means that the company would have benefitted from adopting a communicative strategy that allowed for an informative and open approach, which could have resulted in restored consumer relationship and regained satisfaction with the brand (Yang & Mundel 2022, 180; Holmgreen 2022, 3; Weitzl 2017, 5). Such strategy could

be based on the concept of webcare, meaning that the company could have actively searched on TikTok to find and approach negative e-WOM, or timely responded to comments on their own company profile(s) (Ghosh 2017, 149; Svarre 2019, 242). Another strategy could be to “(...) continuously keep abreast of social and cultural factors that drive users’s conceptualisations” (Holmgreen 2020, 104), which means that Balenciaga should be engaged on the social platforms where its consumers interact. These strategies emphasize that Balenciaga could have deescalated the development of the firestorm by being aware of and engaging in the public debate on TikTok. This would have enabled the company the opportunity to prevent the development of the hegemonic discourse of pedophilia. As it was found that the echo chamber enabled the development of this discourse due to the lack of opposing perspectives, it is considered that the company’s interference here would have prevented the development of the claims of pedophilia, satanism, and the violent sentiment.

Another important consideration is that the discourse of moral panic could have been challenged with axiological proximization, which means that Balenciaga could have eliminated the TikTok users’ perceived distance between themselves and the company. However, it is acknowledged that such communicative strategy would require both economic resources and strategic planning, and this could explain why Balenciaga closed its comment section on TikTok and Instagram, and later deleted all content (chapter 4.3). In relation to this, it must be noted that Balenciaga demonstrated hidden power by deleting and closing all available comment sections on its social media profiles, because it then limited the discursive practices of users on TikTok. In other words, Balenciaga can control the language processes of other users on its profile, and it is therefore important to acknowledge that despite the company did not actively participate in the discursive practices and processes on TikTok, it was still able to demonstrate power due to its communicative control its social media profiles.

In order to address the discourse concerning claims of pedophilia, it is important to understand why Balenciaga might have chosen to include children in the Gift Shop campaign. In the mediated constructed reality, it became evident that participants on TikTok perceived that the topics of sexuality and childhood clashed in the Gift-Shop campaign due to Balenciaga’s portrayal of child models along with the criticized teddy bear bags. In relation to this, it must be emphasized that children have, commercially, been portrayed as potential consumers for the last decades – especially in globalized societies (Vänskä 2011, 49; Calvert 2008). Therefore, the producers of the Balenciaga campaign might have included the children as models to target children as potential consumers, as

well as their parents. This portrayal of young children is often found in fashion magazines and advertising, where they are portrayed to have a specific taste in fashion, interior, accessories etc. The scholar AnnaMari Vänska points out that “(...) children have indeed become important players in global and local capitalism and childhood has become an essential point in the social formation of global consumers” (Vänska 2011, 50). However, AnnaMari also points at a common fear that children could lose their innocence due to their active participation in consumerism, and companies’ active portrayal of children in advertising (Vänska 2011, 50). This indicates that adults in globalized societies might be concerned that commodity culture, mass media, fashion, and general consumerism will have an influence on children, which could lead them to lose their childhood prematurely. Therefore, the users’ concern regarding the portrayal of children in Balenciaga’s advertising campaign is no new phenomenon, however, due to an increasingly commercial media culture, these concerns might stem from a perception that “(...) sexually explicit representations and themes infiltrate children’s lives and [...] sexually explicit imagery surrounds children ‘like wallpaper’” (Vänska 2020, 692). The portrayal of sexual appeals in marketing and advertising is a regularly used practice, however, studies have found that such appeals can also be implied in advertising that portray children and teenagers. Therefore, the hostile sentiments of users on TikTok might therefore stem from a hegemonic ideological common sense that children are innocent, and by portraying them alongside garments that adults ascribe sexual connotation, the children are perceived as victims. This perception is made even more evident due to the discourse of pedophilia. Therefore, it is perceived that Balenciaga was not successful in their portrayal of the children in the Gift-Shop campaign, because it did not have a positive effect on consumer behavior, instead, it caused users on TikTok, some being former consumers, to co-construct negative and hostile perceptions of the brand.

In this discussion it was found that, due to the firestorm, Balenciaga had to establish new stakeholder relations to re-establish its image and contradict claims of pedophilia. However, it is considered that communicative online strategies, presence in the echo chamber, and axiological proximization could have enabled the company to prevent or at least minimize the impact of the firestorm. Finally, it was found that Balenciaga have included children in the Gift Shop campaign to address them as customer, instead, the portrayal of the children caused users on TikTok to produce claims of pedophilia. In the final chapter, the findings of this thesis will be presented, and the research question will be answered.

10. Conclusion

In this final chapter, the research question of this thesis will be answered based on the findings of the thesis. The research has been based on the following question:

How does user sentiments and algorithms on TikTok contribute to the shaping of the firestorm concerning Balenciaga's ad campaigns?

Through the analysis of the TikTok video and the 20 selected comments from the comment section, it became evident that the sentiments and algorithms on TikTok created the firestorm against Balenciaga due to the development of salient discourses in the mediate echo-chamber.

In the analysis, it was found that the TikTok video was tainted by the creator's negative perception of Balenciaga's campaigns, and therefore the discourses of bondage and child pornography became evident. This awakened users' high arousal emotions, which caused them to interact with the video and vent their sentiments in the comment section. Meanwhile, the algorithm of TikTok distributed the video to users with similar beliefs, and this caused the development of an echo-chamber. Here, the users were able to "blow steam" and express hostile sentiments towards Balenciaga. These were amplified and supported due to limited opposing opinions and dispute.

Further, the discourses of bondage and child pornography presented in the video generated the shared experience that Balenciaga's campaigns posed a threat to the moral standards of society. This resulted in moral panic, which harbored the salient discourse of pedophilia. It can therefore be concluded that the sentiments of users on TikTok constructed the firestorm against Balenciaga. Especially the discourse of pedophilia gained hegemonic power because it was supported by people's outrage and hostile reactions to the campaigns in the echo-chamber on TikTok. Further, this discourse was also supported by the unequal power relation of the public and the elite, which, due to previous cases of pedophilia, has been tainted by moral panic as well as distrust. However, the public were able to challenge and briefly fracture this unequal power relation, as their claims of pedophilia achieved ideological common sense and constructed a firestorm. The power of the sentiments on TikTok was thereby materialized in the firestorm, which eventually caused the company to react to the claims of pedophilia.

11. Bibliography

A

Andersen, Ole E. 2014. "Forstå forbrugerne – og bliv en bedre markedsfører". Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Androutsopoulos, Jannis. 2008. "Potentials and Limitations of Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography". *Language@Internet*, Vol. 5, No. 9.

Androutsopoulos, Jannis. 2013. "Online Data Collection" In *Data Collection In Sociolinguistics: Methods and applications* (2nd Edition) edited by Christine Mallinson, Becky Childs & Gerard Van Herk. New York: Routledge.

Audreypeters. November 30th 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@audreypeters/video/7171654231018081582?_r=1&_t=8c8t18BXqah&social_sharing=v1.

B

Bai, Shizhen, Dingyao Yu, Mu Yang, Rui Tang, Hao He, Jiayuan Zhao & Peihua Huang. 2022. "Is negative -WOM more powerful? Multimodal data analysis on air passengers' perception of COVID-19 safety measures". *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 13; 1-17.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.983987>.

Balenciaga a. n.d. "Gift Shop". Balenciaga.com. Accessed April 15, 2023.

<https://www.balenciaga.com/en-gb/gift-shop>.

Balenciaga b. n.d. "Home". Balenciaga.com. Accessed April 15, 2023.

<https://www.balenciaga.com/en-us>.

Balenciaga c. N.d. "Store Locator". Balenciaga.com. Accessed April 15, 2023.

<https://www.balenciaga.com/en-us/storelocator>.

Balenciaga. 2023, 8. February. "National Children's Alliance". Balenciaga.com. Accessed April 15, 2023 <https://www.balenciaga.com/en-dk/national-children-s-alliance>.

BBC. December 29, 2021. "Who was Jeffrey Epstein? The financier charged with sex trafficking". BBC.com. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48913377>. Accessed May 20th, 2023.

Bethany Frankel. November 26th 2022. TikTok Video. Accessed May 8, 2023. https://www.tiktok.com/@bethennyfrankel/video/7170432903426346282?_r=1&_t=8c8t3OfGsrS&social_sharing=v1.

Boardman, Rosy, Marta Blazquez, Claudia E. Henninger & Daniella Ryding. 2019. "Social Commerce: Consumer Behaviour in Online Environments". Palgrave Macmillan.

Brutamerica. November 29th 2022. TikTok Video. Accessed May 8, 2023. https://www.tiktok.com/@brutamerica/video/7171568078457687338?_r=1&_t=8c8sX2hAEId&social_sharing=v1.

Burr, Vivien. 2015. "Social Constructionism". 3rd edition. New York: Routledge.

Burman, Christoph. 2010. "A call for 'User-Generated Branding'". Journal of Brand Management, Vol. 18; 1-4. <https://doi-org.zorac.aub.aau.dk/10.1057/bm.2010.30>

C

Calvert, Sandra L. 2008. "Children as Consumers: Advertising and Marketing". The future of children, Vol. 18, No. 1; 205-234. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20053125>.

Christodoulides, George. 2008. "Breaking free from the industrial paradigm of branding". Journal of Brand Management, Vol. 15; 291-293. <https://doi-org.zorac.aub.aau.dk/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2550134>.

Christodoulides, George, Nina Michaelidou & Nikoletta Theofania Siamagka. 2013. "A Typology of Internet Users Based on Comparative Affective States: Evidence from Eight Countries.". European journal of marketing Vol. 47, No. 1/2; 153–173. DOI 10.1108/03090561311285493.

Clark, Meredith. 2022, 2. December. The Independent. Accessed January 19, 2023.
<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/balenciaga-scandal-statement-lawsuit-b2237993.html>

Coombs, Timothy. 2018. "Revising Situational Crisis Communication Theory: The influences of Social Media on Crisis Communication Theory and Practice" in Social Media and Crisis Communication edited by Lucinda Austin & Yan Jin. New York: Routledge.

Craft. N.d. "Balenciaga headquarters and office locations". Craft.co. Accessed April 15, 2023.
<https://craft.co/balenciaga/locations>.

D

Danzy. 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.
https://www.tiktok.com/@its_danzy/video/7171131993982274821?_r=1&_t=8c8xj3ZnGzC&social_sharing=v1.

DBL. November 30th 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.
https://www.tiktok.com/@dailyblastlive/video/7171939418520014126?_r=1&_t=8c8qGpcbJSI&social_sharing=v1.

Decock, Sofie, Bernard DeClerck, Chloé Lybaert & Koen Plevoets. 2021. "Testing the Various Guises of Conversational Human Voice: The Impact of Formality and Personalization on Customer Outcomes in Online Complaint Management". Journal of Internet Commerce Vol. 20, No. 1; 1-24.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15332861.2020.1848060>.

DesignerCommunity. November 30th, 2022. TikTok Video. Accessed May 8, 2023.
https://www.tiktok.com/@designercommunity_/video/7171932312932797702?_r=1&_t=8c8p2HpvUH&social_sharing=v1.

E

Engstrom, Erika. 2007. "Selling with Sex in Sin City: The Case of Hard Rock Hotel Casino" in

Investigating the Use of Sex in Media Promotion and Advertising edited by Tom Reichert. New York: Routledge.

Etter, Michael & Oana Brindusa Albu. 2021. "Activists in the dark: Social media algorithms and collective action in two social movement organizations". *Organization*, Vol. 28, No. 1: 68-91.

F

Fairclough, Norman. 1992. "Discourse and Social Change". Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fairclough, Norman. 1995. "Media Discourse". New York: Oxford University Press.

Fairclough, Norman. 2001. "Language and Power". 2nd Edition. Harlow: Longman.

Fairclough, Norman. 2003. "Analysing Discourse: Textual analysis for social research". New York: Routledge.

Fairclough, Norman. 2015. "Language and Power" 3rd Edition. New York: Routledge.

Faulkner, Joanne. 2010. "The Innocence Fetish: The Commodification and Sexualisation of Children in the Media and Popular Culture." *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture & Policy* Vol. 135 No. 135: 106–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X1013500113>.

Fisher, A. Kristy, Raman Marwaha. March 6, 2023. "Paraphilia". National Library of Medicine. Accessed May 8th 2023. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK554425/>.

Forgas, Josep P. 2006. "Affective Influences on Interpersonal Behavior: Towards Understanding the Role of Affect in Everyday Interactions". In *Affect in Social Thinking and Behavior* edited by Josep P. Forgas, 269-289. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

Fuglsang, Lars, Poul Bitsch Olsen & Klaus Rasborg. 2013. *Videnskabsteori i samfundsvidenskaberne: på tværs af fagkulturer og paradigmer*. (3rd edition). Frederiksberg C: Samfundslitteratur.

G

Gergen, Kenneth J. 2015. "An invitation to Social Construction". (3rd edition). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Ghaffari, Soudeh. 2022. "Discourses of celebrities on Instagram: digital femininity, self-representation and hate-speech". *Critical Discourse Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2; 161-178. DOI: 10.1080/17405904.2020.1839923

Ghosh, Tathagata. 2017. "Managing Negative Reviews: The Persuasive Role of Webcare Characteristics". *Journal of Internet Commerce* Vol. 16, No. 2; 148-73.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15332861.2017.1305254>

Gregersen, Erik. April, 2023. "Social media". *Britannica.com*. Accessed April 17, 2023.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-media>.

H

Halessia. November 30th, 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@halessiar/video/7171631622222007557?_r=1&_t=8c8vINSXtMI&social_sharing=v1.

Halliday, Michael A. K.. 1994. "Language and social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning". London: Edward Arnold.

Halliday, Michael A. K. 2003. "On Language and Linguistics: Volume 3 in the Collected Works of M. A. K. Halliday". Edited by Jonathan Webster. New York: Continuum

Halliday, Michael A. K. 2014. "Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar". 4th edition. Revised by Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen. London: Routledge.

HeathermcDonald. November 29th, 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@heathermcDonald/video/7171511614594780462?_r=1&t=8c8qOd8I3vm&social_sharing=v1.

Hedalgo, C.T. Rodríguez, E.S.H Tan & P.W.J Verlegh. 2015. "The Social Sharing of Emotion (SSE) in online social networks: A case study in Live Journal". *Computer in Human Behavior*, Vol. 15; 364-372. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.05.009>.

Herrman, John. 2019. "How TikTok is Rewriting the World". *The New York Times*. Accessed April 24, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/10/style/what-is-tik-tok.html>.

Highsnobiety a. N.d. "Balenciaga". Highsnobiety.com. Accessed April 16, 2023. <https://www.highsnobiety.com/tag/balenciaga/>.

Highsnobiety b. N.d. "All the facts about Balenciaga's child ad conspiracy "scandal". Highsnobiety.com. Accessed April 18, 2023. <https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/balenciaga-child-ad-conspiracy-theory/>.

Holmgreen, Lise-Lotte. 2022. ""We're not proud of the cases we've been involved in": Crisis resolution on Facebook using conversational human voice". *International Journal of Business Communication*.

Holmgreen, Lise-Lotte. 2020. "Responding to organizational misbehaviour: The influence of public frames in social media" in *The Language of Crisis: Metaphors, frames and discourses* edited by Mimi Huang & Lise-Lotte Holmgreen, 69-107. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Huhmann, Bruce A. 2007. "A model of the Cognitive and Emotional Processing of Rhetorical Works in Advertising" in *Go Figure! New Directions in Advertising Rhetoric* edited by Edward F. McQuarrie & Barbare J. Phillips. New York: Routledge.

I

Instagram. 2020. "Introducing Instagram Reels". About.Instagram.com. Accessed March 23, 2023. <https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/introducing-instagram-reels-announcement>.

Itvnews. November 29th 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@itvnews/video/7171467359373331718?_r=1&_t=8c8q2KEIu3m&social_sharing=v1.

J

Jaworski, Adam & Crispin Thurlow. 2009. "Taking an elitist stance: Ideology and the discursive production of social distinction" edited by Alexandra Jaffe in *Stance: sociolinguistic perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jensen, Andreas Ebbesen. August 15, 2021. "Bitcoins har skabt digital guldfeber".

Illustreretvidenskab.dk. Accessed March 8th, 2023. <https://illvid.dk/teknologi/bitcoins-hvad-er-bitcoins>.

Judge, Lindsay. September 4, 2022. "The Legacy of Balenciaga". Aeworld.com. Accessed April 27, 2023. <https://aeworld.com/fashion/the-legacy-of-balenciaga/>.

Jung, Eva, Michael Lund & Simon Bendtsen. March 20, 2017. "Hvidvaskede milliarder fossede gennem danske banker". Berlingske.dk. Accessed March 23, 2023.

<https://www.berlingske.dk/virksomheder/hvidvaskede-milliarder-fossede-gennem-danske-banker>

Johnen, Marius, Marc Jungblut & Marc Ziegele. 2018. The digital outcry: What incites participation behavior in an online firestorm? *New Media & Society*, Vol. 20, No. 9; 3140–3160.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817741883>.

Jørgensen, Marianne Winther & Louise Phillips. 1991. "Diskursanalyse som teori og metode". Roskilde: Samfundslitteratur.

K

Kato, Brooke. November 21, 2022. New York Post. Accessed January 18, 2023.

<https://nypost.com/2022/11/21/balenciaga-under-fire-over-ads-with-kids-in-bondage-gear/>

Kenton, Will. March 24, 2022. "What is a Brand?". Investopedia.com.

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brand.asp>. Accessed 28 March 2023.

Kering. N.d. "Balenciaga". Kering.com. <https://www.kering.com/en/houses/couture-and-leather-goods/balenciaga/history/>. Accessed April 27, 2023.

Kess a. 2022. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@kes.io?_t=8cTcaCEZG6U&_r=1&fbclid=IwAR3OVNvfUS9ksiUjX63M0nj05zlGSdrQRkmjV4gAwcu-obLj55hYkTSkN4.

Kess b. 2022. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@kes.io/video/7171596165467704622?_r=1&_t=8cTcokYGRop.

KhosraviNik, Majid. 2017. "Right Wing Populism in the West: Social Media Discourse and Echo Chambers". *Insight Turkey*, Vol.19, No. 3; 53 – 68. DOI: 10.25253/99.2017193.04

KhosraviNik, Majid. 2017. "Social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS)" in *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies* edited by John Flowerdew & John E. Richardson. New York: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, Majid. 2018. "Social Media Techno-Discursive Design, Affective Communication and Contemporary Politics". *Fudan journal of the humanities and social sciences*, Vol. 11, No. 4: 427-442. DOI: 10.1007/s40647-018-0226-y.

KhosraviNik, Majid. 2022 "Digital meaning-making across content and practice in social media critical discourse studies". *Critical Discourse Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2: 119-123, DOI: 10.1080/17405904.2020.1835683.

KhosraviNik, Majid & Eleonora Esposito. 2018. "Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally-mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility". *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, Vol. 14, No. 1; 45-68. <https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2018-0003>.

Kopytowska, Monika. 2022. "Proximization, presumption and salience in digital discourse: on the interface of social media communicative dynamics and the spread of populist ideologies". *Critical Discourse Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2: 144-160. DOI:10.1080/17405904.2020.1842774.

Kopytowska, Monika, Łukasz Grabowski & Julita Woźniak. 2017. "Mobilizing against the Other: Cyberhate, refugee crisis and proximization" in *Contemporary Discourses of Hate and Radicalism Across Space and Genres*. Edited by Monika Kopytowska. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Kopytowksa, Monika. 2015. "Ideology of 'here and now': mediating distance in television news". *Critical discourse studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3; 347-365. DOI: 10.1080/17405904.2015.1013485.

Kopytowska, Monika. 2013. "Blogging as the mediatization of politics and a new form of social interaction: A case study of 'proximization dynamics' in Polish and British political blogs" in *Analyzing Genres in Political Communication: Theory and Practice* by Piotr Cap & Urszula Okulska. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Kotler, Philip & Gary Armstrong. 2016. (16th edition) "Principles of Marketing". Essex: Pearson Edition Limited.

Kress, Gunther & Theo Van Leeuwen. 2021. "Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design". 3rd Edition. London: Routledge.

L

Li, Charlene & Josh Bernoff. 2008. *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Lund, Michael, Eva Jung & Simon Bendtsen. October 25, 2019. "Hvad handler Danske Banks hvidvaskesag om?" Berlingske.dk. Accessed March 23, 2023.

M

Marcbaigent_. 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@marcbaigent/video/7170822236062993669?_r=1&_t=8c8xLIjtLgI&social_sharing=v1.

Megynkellyshow. November 29th 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@megynkellyshow/video/7171534336351669547?_r=1&_t=8c8qHuqQ29r&social_sharing=v1.

Michie, Natalie. 2022, 7. December. FASHION Magazine. Accessed January 18, 2023.

<https://fashionmagazine.com/style/balenciaga-scandal/>

Moussaïd, Mehdi, Juliane E. Kämmer, Pantelis P. Analytis & Hansjörg Neth. 2013. "Social Influence and the Collective Dynamics of Opinion Formation". PLoS ONE Vol. 8, NO. 11:e78433.

N

National Children's Alliance. N.d. "Out story". Nationalchildrensalliance.org. Accessed May 20, 2023. <https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/our-story/>.

NoahGlennCarter. November 28th 2022. TikTok Video. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@noahglennccarter/video/7170879839359257902?_r=1&_t=8c8sRK9cwhf&social_sharing=v1.

O

Olsen, Emil, Nicklas Andersen og Ida Zachrau. 2020. "Journalistisk dækning af danske shitstorme: Genmæle, vidensbidrag og kildekontakt". Journalistica No. 1. DOI:10.7146/journalistica.v0i1.12395.

Oyez. 2008. "United States v. Williams". Oyez.org. Accessed May 4, 2023.

<https://www.oyez.org/cases/2007/06-694>.

P

Paton, Elizabeth, Vanessa Friedman & Jessica Testa. 2022, 2. December. "When High Fashion and QAnon Collide". New York Times. Accessed January 18, 2023:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/28/style/balenciaga-campaign-controversy.html>

Pauly, Alexandra. November 2022. "For \$500 soap & \$900 dog bowls, exit through Balenciaga's gift shop". Highsnobiety.com. Accessed April 16 2023.

<https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/balenciaga-objects-gift-shop/>

Pisciotta, Alexander W. 2023. "Moral panic." Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed May 20, 2023.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/moral-panic>.

Presskorn-Thygesen, Thomas. 2012. "Samfundsvidenskabelige paradigmer - fire grundlæggende metodiske tendenser i moderne samfundsvidenskab" in Samfundsvidenskabelige analysemetoder, edited by Claus Nygaard, 21-48. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

R

Rag.report. November 23rd 2022. TikTok Video. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@rag.report/video/7169316588364090666?_r=1&_t=8c8sTXD3bi7&social_sharing=v1.

Ritschel, Chelsea, Peony Hirwani, Meredith Clark & Joana Whitehead. 2022, 3. December. The Independent. Accessed 19. January 2023.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/balenciaga-scandal-ad-child-campaign-news-b2237949.html>.

Redden, Shawna Malvini & Amy K. Way. 2019. "How social media discourses organize communication online: a multi-level discursive analysis of tensions and

contradictions in teens' online experiences". *Communication Quarterly* Vol. 67 No. 5; 477-505.
DOI:10.1080/01463373.2019.1668440

Reichert, Tom. 2007. "The Ageless Allure: Sex, Media, and Marketing" in *Investigating the Use of Sex in Media Promotion and Advertising* edited by Tom Reichert. New York: Routledge.

Rost, Katja, Lea Stahel & Bruno S. Frey. 2016. "Digital Social Norm Enforcement: Online Firestorms in Social Media. *PLoS ONE* Vol. 11, No. 6; e0155923
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0155923

Rush, Emma & Andea Le Nauze. 2006. "Corporate Paedophilia: Sexualisation of children in Australia". The Australian Institute. Discussion paper No. 90. ISSN 1322-5421.

S

Sarkhoh, Nadia & Majid KhosraviNik. 2020. "Social media discourses of Arabism and the negotiation of Self in the Middle East". *World Englishes*, Vol. 39; 609-622. DOI: 10.1111/weng.12502.

Schivinski, Bruno & Dariusz Dabrowski. 2016. "The effect of social media communication on consumer perceptions of brands". *Journal of Marketing Communications*, Vol. 22, No. 2; 189-214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2013.871323>.

Schuetz, Sebastian W, Tracy Ann Sykes & Viswanath Venkatesh. 2021. "Combating COVID-19 fake news on social media through fact checking: antecedents and consequences". *European Journal of Information Systems*, Vol. 30, No. 4; 376- 388.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0960085X.2021.1895682>.

Sensei Orlando. 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.
https://www.tiktok.com/@orlandokyngrreturns/video/7172398393350786310?_r=1&_t=8c8xa6K9upe&social_sharing=v1.

Sepstrup, Preben & Pernille Fruensgaard Øe. 2010. "Tilrettelæggelse af kommunikation: Kommunikations- og kampagneplanlægning". 4th Edition. Hans Reitzlers Forlag.

Shannon, Claude L. & Warren Weaver. 1949. "The mathematical theory of communication". Language, Vol. 29, No. 1; 69-93. <https://doi.org/10.2307/410457>.

Shoe. November 21st, 2022. Post on Twitter. Twitter.com. <https://twitter.com/shoe0nhead/status/1594532715126202368>. Accessed February 19, 2023.

SingleMomAttorney. November 27th 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023. https://www.tiktok.com/@singlemomattorney/video/7170802027294149934?_r=1&_t=8c8pDxOZxQQ&social_sharing=v1.

Smith, Jennifer. 2022, 28. November. The Daily Mail. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11478639/Balenciaga-claims-no-control-props-photoshoot-including-child-porn-ruling.html>. Accessed January 19, 2023.

Southerton, Dale. 2011. "Consumer Behavior". Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture Vol. 3: 2-5. doi:10.4135/9781412994248.

Spencer Nakamura. December 4th, 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023. https://www.tiktok.com/@spencer.nak/video/7173071693810912558?_r=1&_t=8c8t2XXASCY&social_sharing=v1.

Srivastava, Sonali, Terhi-Anna Wilska & Johanna Sjöberg. 2022. "Girls portrayals in fast fashion advertisements". Consumption Markets & Culture. Vol. 25, No. 6:501-524.

Statista.com a. 2022. "Number of social media users worldwide from 2017 to 2022". Accessed March 13, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>.

Statista.com b. 2022. "TikTok – Statistics and Facts". Accessed March 13, 2023.

https://www.statista.com/topics/6077/tiktok/#topicHeader__wrapper.

Stephaniesooyt a. 2023. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@stephaniesooyt/video/7188952561473309994?_r=1&_t=8c8xDqOM1CU&social_sharing=v.

Stephaniesooyt b. January 14st, 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@stephaniesooyt/video/7188584971760684330?_r=1&_t=8c8sfKZyEaR&social_sharing=v1.

Stieglitz, Stefan & Linh Dang-Xuan. 2013. "Emotions and Information Diffusion in Social Media – Sentiment of Microblogs and Sharing Behavior". Journal of Management Information Systems, Vol. 29, No. 4; 217-248. DOI: 10.2753/MIS0742-1222290408.

Stolworhty, Jacob. February 23th, 2023. "R. Kelly sentenced to 20 years in prison for child sex crimes". The independent.co.uk. Accessed May 20th, 2023. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/r-kelly-jail-sentence-trial-b2288428.html>.

Suzykazaryan. 2022. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@suzykazaryan/video/7172077596048444714?_r=1&_t=8c8xRr8ZEBm&social_sharing=v1.

Svarre, Peter. 2019. "Sociale medier" in Online kommunikation: en introduktion (2nd edition) edited by Hans-Christian Christiansen & Gitte B. Rose. Hans Reitzlers Forlag.

T

Thedailyaus. November 28th 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.

https://www.tiktok.com/@thedailyaus/video/7170958458001362177?_r=1&_t=8c8xUDFSjWs&social_sharing=v1.

Thorson, Esther & Shelly Rodgers. 2019. "Advertising Theory in the Digital Age". In Advertising Theory (2nd Edition) edited by Esther Thorson & Shelly Rodgers. New York: Routledge.

TikTok. 2022. "Our Mission". TikTok, N.d. <https://www.tiktok.com/about>. Accessed February 17, 2023.

TikTok a. N.d. "For You". TikTok.com. <https://support.tiktok.com/en/using-tiktok/exploring-videos/for-you>. Accessed March 12 2023.

Tiny Link. December 2nd 2022. TikTok video. Accessed May 8, 2023.
https://www.tiktok.com/@the_creeps_cosplays/video/7172454221827165483?_r=1&t=8c8wbOE2Me2&social_sharing=v1.

Twitter. N.d. "How to use hashtags". Twitter.com. <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/how-to-use-hashtags>. Accessed March 10, 2023.

V

Vermeulen, Anne, Heidi Vandebosch & Wannes Heirman. 2018. "#smiling, #venting, or both? Adolescents' social sharing of emotions on social media". Computer in Human Behavior, Vol. 84; 211-219. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CHB.2018.02.022>.

Vänskä, Annamari. 2011. "Virginal Innocence and Corporeal Sensuality: Reading meanings of childhood in contemporary fashion advertising". Barn – forskning om barn og barndom i Norden Vol. 29, No. 1: 49-66.

Vänskä, Annamari. 2020. "Sexualising fashion? An introduction to the special theme issue". Sexualities Vol. 23, No. 5-6: 692-701. DOI: 10.1177/1363460720939401.

W

Weitzl, Wolfgang. 2017. "Measuring Electronic Word-of-Mouth Effectiveness: Developing and Applying the eWOM Trust Scale". Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

Windahl, Sven, Benno H. Signitzer & Jean T. Olson. 2009. "Using Communication Theory: An Introduction to Planned Communication" (2nd edition). London: SAGE Publications.

Winther Jørgensen, Marianne & Louise Phillips. 1999. "Diskursanalyse som teori og metode. Frederiksberg C: Samfundslitteratur.

Y

Yang, Jing & Juan Mundel. 2022. "Effects of brand feedback to negative eWOM on brand love/hate: an expectancy violation approach". Journal of Product & Brand Management Vol. 31, No. 2: 279-292.

Z

Zheng Lu, Joseph E. Phelps & Daniel Pimentel. 2019. "Psychological Transportation in Narrative Advertising" in Advertising Theory (2nd Edition) edited by Esther Thorson & Shelly Rodgers. New York: Routledge.

Zhou, Shuang, Helen McCormick, Marta Blazquez & Liz Barnes. 2019. "eWOM – The Rise of the Opinion Leaders" in Social Commerce: Consumer Behaviour in Online Environments edited by Rosy Boardman, Marta Blazquez, Claudia E. Henninger & Daniella Ryding. Palgrave Macmillan.