The Communicative Potential of Hashtags on TikTok

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ABSTRAKT

Czech abstract

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá komunikativním potenciálem hashtagů na TikToku. Práce se skládá z teoretické a praktické části. Teoretická část vysvětluje základy internetového marketingu, diskurzu, TikToku a hashtagu. Praktická část obsahuje analýzu videí a jejich vizuální stránky s hashtagy jedenácti vybraných značek, které operují na TikToku. Závěr obsahuje zhodnocení poznatků.

Klíčová slova; propagace, TikTok, diskurz, analýza, hashtag, sociální media

ABSTRACT

English abstract

This bachelor's thesis deals with the communicative potential of hashtags on TikTok. The work consists of a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part explains the basics of internet marketing, internet discourse, TikTok and hashtag from a communicative standpoint. The analytical part discusses the hashtags used with videos representing products of eleven selected brands use TikTok platform for advertising. The conclusion contains an evaluation of findings.

Keywords; promotion, TikTok, discourse, analysis, hashtag, social media

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The internet these days is a place where individuals and businesses from all corners of the world can meet. It became an important part of day-to-day communication around the globe and especially, an essential part of all business activities, starting from setting up a business, finding the right product, the right customers and finally selling the product.

Online marketing has become the right hand of businesses, and it is essential to choose a suitable platform for product promotion. In the recent years due to the pandemic that escalated in the 2020 one particular social media platform became very popular, TikTok. The reason why businesses decided to use this platform is because they needed to find a new way how to communicate with potential customers, and TikTok gave them a new place and opportunity to do so.

From a communicative perspective, TikTok video promotions, which include multiple layers of content – visual, verbal, auditory – all part of a bigger multimodal discourse. Multimodal discourse was discussed by Machin (2013, 347), multimodality itself is also mentioned by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001, 1-4). The purpose and power of multimodal discourse was mentioned by Machin and Mayr (2012, 6) and the principles of multimodal discourse analysis were discussed by Kress (2012, 1).

To make communication and interaction with the user easier, social media are working with a very popular thing called hashtag. This small symbol "#" is often overlooked but what most people do not realize is the power it has when it comes to connecting content and connecting people; yet, for hashtag to play its role, the choice of the right words is crucial. Though hashtags have been used for about a decade now, linguistics and discourse analysis of hashtags is missing, the only exception is, perhaps, Bernard (2009), where he focuses on the history of hashtag, its function and purpose.

The aim of this thesis is to find out how hashtags are used by multiple brands to target audiences better, how these brands communicate with the customers and how successful they are in terms of promotion of products on TikTok. In Section I, I discuss the basics of internet marketing, online promotion and promotion done on social media platforms. I identify the linguistic characteristics of online discourse and multimodal discourse, in particular. I outline the features of TikTok discourse compared to other social media platforms. Lastly, I mention what a hashtag is, track its history and its usage and functionality. In Section II, I analyze the hashtag together with the multimodal context in which it appears in the selected corpus. I compare individual brands with each other

depending on the field in which they operate, e. g. fashion and beauty, and how successful or unsuccessful their promotion on TikTok is through hashtags.

I. THEORY

1 INTERNET MARKETING

Marketing is an activity that is helping businesses to promote their products and services. In the 1990s a new term "internet" or "digital marketing" appeared. Businesses since than can choose whether to operate on the internet or off the internet. There is almost no difference between the general marketing and the internet marketing, in both cases, the goals are the same and according to Roberts and Zahay (2013,10), there are four main goals when it comes to internet marketing. Number one is "customer acquisition" which is, in other words, attracting the right customers, and therefore gaining profits. Certain advantages come with the fact that it is all done through the internet and in this case, particularly it creates bigger opportunities to communicate with potential customers. Number two is "customer conversion" which deals with convincing those who have not yet bought any of the products or services presented on a certain website to become other purchasers. Number three is "customer retention" which deals with keeping every customer who has ever purchased something from the website and finally number four is "growth in customer value" which is distinguishing between those customers that bring higher profits and those who are not (Roberts and Zahay 2013, 10-11). Strauss and Frost in their book "E-marketing" (2014, 64), mention "customer perspective" in which they are addressing similar goals to those mentioned before, for example, "build awareness of a new Web site service", "appropriate target markets" or "high customer satisfaction with value of online purchasing" (Strauss and Frost 2014, 64).

Roberts and Zahay say that there is a certain "action" that heavily affects the four goals mentioned above (2013, 11), and the action concerned is "online advertising and promotion" (Roberts and Zahay 2013, 11-13).

This type of marketing can be done through regular websites or social media platforms, such as TikTok.

1.1 Marketing on social media

People use social media to communicate with other people, share ideas, content, and experiences as well as to earn. Companies promote their products or service on social media, the reason being so are the benefits that those platforms bring, such as reaching target customers easily, making friendlier environment around you brand, creating new relationships, and making your brand more recognizable (WorldStream, n.d.). Marketing on social media began around 2009 (Charlesworth 2018, 258). Nowadays, social media marketing falls into two categories: (1) it is based on preferences from customers that are

regularly following certain brands and companies, or (2) it is based on what the brand or the company wants to share (Charlesworth 2018, 263).

1.1.1 Promotion of products online

The online promotion has been an essential part of online marketing: it is about sharing information about the brand and spreading the knowledge about the product while interacting with potential customers. These days, many companies operate in the so-called "Business 3.0" (Owsinski 2013, chapter 1) or even "Industry 4.0", also relying on "Web 3.0" (Strauss and Frost 2014, 40). The former term refers to the third generation of business where the internet allows direct interaction between producer and final customer and instant feedback. "Industry 4.0" is a part of the fourth industrial revolution and it is about computers connected with each other and communicating between one another without the human element. What makes "Industry 4.0" work are "cyber-physical systems", "Internet of Things", and "Internet of Systems" (Forbes 2018). What is considered as an advantage is that a business can offer a product to a specific audience and therefore create a strong relationship for future purposes like repurchasing (Owsinski 2013, chapter 1).

The internet offers new opportunities for goods and services and according to Owsinski (2013), for any specific and unique product there is at least one customer who will buy it. Overall, online promotion of products strengthens the fluency of communication because of the absence of the third party, "the middleman" (Owsinski 2013, chapter 1). Additionally, on the internet the costs of promoting a product or service are much less compared to traditional channels. For example, setting up a budget at $1,000, with digital marketing business will pay only for certain amount of CPC – cost per click – how many customers clicked on the add, meanwhile with traditional marketing the business will spend the whole budget no matter how many customers saw the advertisement (Linkedin 2016). An easier reach of specific target groups not only locally, but also globally, eases finding the final customer. Platform mechanisms allow to narrow down the reach only to the customers who want a certain product, which saves the business a lot of resources. The nature of digital content allows easier adjustment to any changes, such as changes in the consumer behavior or new competition on the market. Platform tools, such as "Sprout Social" that helps to organize content on various social media, "Loomly" which additionally gives ideas for content based on trends, or "Audiense", all help to organize audience and therefore make it easier to find target customers (Sprout

Social 2022); overall these and other similar tools give the opportunity to perform better on the internet.

Online marketing is getting very popular among businesses. For instance, in 2021 total amount of money spent on online marketing was $436 billion, meanwhile spending on traditional marketing was $196 billion (WorldStream 2023). In 2022 digital marketing spending was $441 billion and in 2023 it is estimated at $485 billion (WorldStream 2023).

At the same time, online marketing has its disadvantages and online promotion can lead to some problems: (1) Although it has been mentioned that the costs are lower while promoting on the internet the initial costs that come with, for example, setting up a website, brings extra costs to the business that decides to operate on the internet. (2) Additionally, customers can be easily distracted or can find it hard to choose which product they will purchase, because of the competition offering similar products for lower price or due to the wide range of products, it may happen that the customer will not be able to choose (Owsinski 2013, chapter 1). (3) Another problem a business can face is not having experienced employees. An expert understands that it can take a lot of time to create content and keep up with trends, to take care of security and customers' rights, when it comes to using their data, or potentially damaging negative comments under posts; and last but not least the with the possibility to reach out new customers there is also new competition that businesses have to deal with (Nibusinessinfo.co.uk, n.d.).

1.1.2 Tools for online promotion

Promotion of products falls into two types. Based on where the promotion appears, there is: "traditional promotion" which uses tools like TV, radio, paper magazine, brochure etc., and "modern promotion" which uses the internet to promote products and includes social media, emails, banners or any website that is either specifically targeting product promotion, like an e-shop, or is occasionally reviewing a product, like a blog (Gold Promotion, n.d.).

While using social media for promoting products it is helpful to use tools designated to track overall performance on social media. Tools like "Hootsuite" or "Meta Business Suite" are designed to help to plan content in advance and also give the option to post automatically. "Google Analytics" is a recommended tool for collecting data from social networks, while "Hootsuite" or "Nexalogy" allow to get a better overview of what is being said about the business use (Hootsuite 2023). The range of modern tools is quite vast and new products are expected to be launched with the rolling out of the new AI products.

Unlike on Facebook or Instagram, advertisement on TikTok is still relatively new; yet, the way how the ads work is quite simple – it all depends on the algorithm in the end. Based on what the user likes and what interests him/her TikTok will show ads on their "For You" page. The length of advertisement videos is up to 60 seconds, and each video carries a link you can click on which will take you to the main page (Instapage 2023). Businesses can either manage their own account and crate content based on the newest trends, create content based on trending hashtags or reach out to the so-called influencers and start working with them on product promotion. Before reaching out to influencers, there are some variables that businesses should look at that will affect the price:

1) The number of followers – there are "nano-influencers" which have from 1,000-10,000 followers, "micro-influencers" with 10,000-50,000 followers, "mid-tier influencers" with 50,000-500,000 followers, "macro-influencers with 500,000-1,000,000 followers, and "mega-influencers" with 1,000,000+ followers.

2) How much the audience interact with the content posted by the influencer – unfortunately, a higher number of followers does not mean higher engagement rate.

3) The field they specialize in – for example fashion, food, skincare etc.

4) What type of promotion the business wants – meaning that the remuneration paid to the influencer will be also based on how much time and effort the influencer will put into creating the content.

5) The length of the post – in other words, whether it is a weekly post or a "seasonal campaign".

6) "Usage rights" will also affect the price because some businesses might use the influencer's post on their official page, which can increase the initial price.

7) "Exclusivity" is another surcharge to be paid if the business does not want a specific influencer to also promote products for the competitors (Influencer Marketing Hub 2022).

2   DISCOURSE CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERNET COMMUNICATION

The nature of online platforms and communities functioning online inevitably influences the language and communication of the internet (also online) discourse (Machin and Ledin 2020, 18). Internet discourse is a form of communication that gives people the opportunity to be formal or informal, grammatical or ungrammatical, and because it is easier to connect with people from different countries, it gives the opportunity to switch between languages and genres (Homoláč et al. 2022, 54-83).

Internet discourse encompasses both written and spoken communication. Written discourse includes such genres, often called "hybrid", as e-mails, blogs, group chats, tweets, hashtags and more (Crystal 2011, 9). Written communication on the internet differs from communication within other media; for example, the size of paragraphs, layout, or the sizing of letters can significantly differ. There are certain "rules" for certain aspects of written language use on the internet for example for the content to be easily found; and the same applies to spoken communication. Since written messages must be processed, the vocabulary needs to be precise so the content is easily found (Crystal 2011, 15).

When it comes to communication online as a whole it is considered predominantly as multimodal, merging different modalities which can include written text, pictures, videos and so on.

2.1 Multimodal nature of online discourse

The term "multimodality" was introduced by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen in their books *Multimodal Discourse* and *Reading Images* (Machin 2013, 347). Multimodality refers to a combination of individual means of communication such as pictures, texts, sounds, music or colors (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001, 1-4). According to Kress and Van Leeuwen, "multimodality" is not only about text that is communicating the information, but it is also about the visual aspects of discourse that has the power to tell a message (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001, 1).

The nature of online communication opens a wide range of possibilities for how to convey a message through easy access to the tools that merge various modalities: from plain text to more complicated virtual realities. Multimodal texts are specifically important for promoting a certain product, as the persuasive power of message can be significantly enhanced through a combination of several modalities. For example, the detailing: while

promoting a product for women, the product will usually be shown in colors stereotypically associated with women, like pink, red or violet (Machin and Mayr 2012, 6).

2.1.1 Multimodal discourse analysis

The nature of modern communication triggered a plethora of research into multimodal aspect of the discourse. Gunther Kress (2010) in his book *"Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication"* discusses a method that considers multiple modes of communication: texts, colors, images, smells, etc., used in various combinations for the representation of a certain idea or thought. This is a type of discourse analysis that examines not only how individual modes communicate, but how they interact with each other to produce meaning and what their function is (Kress 2010, 1).

2.2 Language on the Internet

A few studies focused on the specific features of speech on the internet. Crystal (2006, 31) claims that language on the internet, also termed Netspeak, is a combination of the features of both spoken and written modes. For example, when it comes to communicating via different existing messengers, there is an expectation of a quick response (feedback) which in a way imitates spoken communication. Additionally, Netspeak found a way to compensate for the lack of visual assessment of paralanguage, such as body posture, facial expressions, and gestures, by introducing emoticons, which help to render emotions and attitudes, such as irony. Another way how to express any kind of emotion, other than using emoticons, is adjusted spelling, for example, repeating letters or excessive use of question marks and exclamation marks or using of capital letters for creating a "shouting effect" (Crystal 2006, 31-39).

At the same time, Netspeak is still to some extent impersonal. The reason being so is the absence of instant reaction; for example in a face-to-face conversation there is the appearance of hesitation words and sounds like "hmm", "mmm" or "you know", in conversation happening on the internet those words and sound are omitted and therefore we do not know whether the person on the "other" side is paying attention (Crystal 2006, 43-44). Netspeak differs from a classical face-to-face communication in the usage of abbreviations. Acronyms are heavily represented in the internet communication. For example, websites use the acronym: "FAQ" – frequently asked questions. Young people use acronyms more frequently while messaging one another, for example, "BTW" – by the way, "BRB" – be right back, "JK" – just kidding (Crystal 2006, 89-92).

On social media the use of language helps to communicate with people, to form a community with shared interests, to find content and also to connect the content with people. The communication on social media is subjective, people might use different registers of language; messages can be formal or informal; there can be usage of slang and swear words (Page et al. 2014, 26-31).

3   OVERVIEW OF TIKTOK DISCOURSE

As stated in the previous chapter social media communication is mainly multimodal and so is the communication happening on a relatively new media platform such as TikTok.

TikTok is a platform that specializes in short videos recorded on mobile phone that are posted by creators on their account. The possibility to create short and often silly videos awakens in people the need to use this platform regularly (Investopedia 2023). People are communicating through pre-recorded and pre-edited or live-streaming videos. TikTok videos are created through the use of static or dynamic images with sound effects, music or voice added. Every post includes typical features, the main video with the content, which is from 15 seconds to 10 minutes long (Sprout Social 2022), then some description with a short summarization and hashtags with keywords, which can be as long as the user wants, though the caption can contain only 2,200 characters (Mashable 2022).

Since 2018 TikTok has grown its audience from 54.7 million users to 1.53 billion users as of 2023 (Demand Sage 2023).

3.1 History of TikTok

Before TikTok came to prominence Musical.ly occupied the front ranks. Musical.ly was launched in 2016 by a Chinese company called ByteDance and it focused on the so-called lip-syncing with the sound record; the dancing syncing feature was also available in the United States. In the same year the company also launched an app called Douyin, which is based on the same concept as TikTok, letting people post short videos of themselves and share it with others. Two years later, in 2018, these two apps were merged into TikTok.

TikTok was created so users could post short videos made/recorded with their phone which is also the reason why this app became so popular. Thanks to the algorithm the "For You" page is being continuously updated with personalized content. "For You" page is the first page that appears when the user first logs in. It shows content that is based on what a person likes. Nowadays, TikTok with over 1.5 billion users has become a rival to older platforms: 2 billion users are on Instagram and 2.5 billion on YouTube (DataReportal, n.d.).

TikTok raised to popularity during the pandemic, and there was a shift from it being used only by a teenage audience to a more diverse one (age under 18 - 28%, 19-29 - 35%, 30-39 - 18%, and 39+ - 19%), of all the users, females represent 57% and males 43% (Demand Stage 2023). Businesses are also entering this platform intending to draw

attention to the product and services provided by them and to keep up with all the innovations (Khan 2022, 452).

With the year 2022 came unexpected events. TikTok has been banned from India and Pakistan, and temporarily banned from Indonesia and Bangladesh because of inappropriate content. Today this ban is no longer valid and the reason being so is the agreement between China and the latter two countries that the content will be restricted. As of 2023, the government of the United States officially banned TikTok from federal mobile phones and other gadgets, while the European Union decided to ban this app on devices used by employees working in the European Parliament, European Commission and the European Council; Canada also joins in with similar restrictions to TikTok (CBS News 2023).

3.2 Differences from other social media platforms

TikTok functions as a video-sharing (up to ten minutes long) platform. This app has three main sections (1) "For You" page, (2) "Following" and (3) "Live. The content that is going to appear on "For You" page and "Live" is based on an algorithm that analyses the user's preferences, and the other users' content a person decides to follow will then appear on the "Following" page. There is also the possibility of finding new friends and communicating with them and sharing content with them. To be able to "go live" on TikTok, there is a rule that a person has to have at least a thousand followers which makes it different from Instagram and YouTube (TikTok 2020). At the same time, there are not many differences between TikTok and other social media platforms: they all share the same goal to connect people, share interests and entertain.

The TikTok's algorithm works is such a way as to automatically select what is going to appear on "For You" page. The content shown will be personalized based on the interests selected during setting up of the account and further interaction with content. The platform declares that there cannot be two people having the same content displayed on their page. The algorithm works based on (1) "user interactions" (following others, leaving comments under posts, liking, or sharing), (2) "video information" (what they are looking for through "Search"), (3) "device and account setting" (language choice, geographical choice). The algorithm would not show twice the videos that have already been watched by the users and block videos with inappropriate content (Hootsuite 2023).

To compare, the algorithm on YouTube also recommends the videos which are going to appear on the main page. It takes into consideration what the viewer is interested in and what the viewer has already searched for, then it accounts for the views, likes, comments,

and keywords and based on this analysis it will show the results. YouTube algorithm is also going to show only those videos that are considered irrespective of the number of views or shares; if the video contains any type of violence, it is going to be taken down from YouTube (SocialPilot 2023).

Instagram's algorithm is based on evaluation of the content that is being shown to the user and its order. It takes into consideration "metadata", "hashtags", and "engagement metrics"; these help to provide the user with the most desired content according to the algorithm. It will also evaluate the users' information such as behavior in terms of likes, shares, comments and follows, and based on all those factors, Instagram's algorithm also decides whether all the content available is relevant or not (Hootsuite 2023).

3.3 Communicative aspect of TikTok

From the beginning, the main intention behind TikTok was to entertain people through posted videos. In its early days, TikTok's main content were witty videos, often video sketches that made a certain topic funnier, for example, how God created Earth. These days the range of video content is quite varied: from the so-called "documentaries", telling someone's story or experience, often in a comic way, to "communal" video, the point of which is to create fun and entertaining content (recorded usually with some family member(s), friends or partners showing for example a dance routine or recreating old photos), to memes and so on. Another genre is "explanatory" videos such as make-up tutorials, hacks, recipes, or "how-to" art videos. Then there are "interactive" videos using filters and other effects on the platform; they are about challenges and collaboration such as: a split screen where your video is on one side and someone else's video is on the other and you are reacting to what you see. Finally, there are "meta" videos which are considered as the most unique and very typical for TikTok. They are about direct communication with those who are currently watching the video; the best example is video like "if you see this video". Those videos expect certain level of response in form of another video; in this case the response will be longer and more specific/accurate, or it can be in form of a comment which on the other hand is more straightforward or the response can be in form of hashtag which can connect all of those videos. All these communicative aspects are there since the beginning of TikTok. Quite a number of scientists and other professionals, such as doctors, also find the platform useful to share their "educational" videos. Minorities, such as immigrants, LGBTQ+ and others have also found their voices

on TikTok. However, comedy videos still trend on the platform (Schellewand 2021, 1443-1450).

4 HASHTAG

Nowadays a hashtag is quite common in the internet discourse. Hashtags can be seen on social media under photos, videos, or as part of a comment or message and not only that; they serve as a great tool for connection between people with the same interests and become a sign of social movements such as "MeToo" and "Black Lives Matter". A hashtag can be perceived as an ordinary word, phrase or another symbol that is used under a picture, video or even an article for easier access or searches by groupings together certain topics and content. It is always accompanied with the prefixed symbol "#", which gave it its name; nevertheless, it has more potential than one may think (Bernard 2019, 3).

4.1 History of hashtags

The use of the symbol "#" itself appeared for the first time, according to Andreas Bernard (2019, 3), in a message on Twitter by Chris Messina on the 23rd of August 2007, the name "hashtag", however, was later introduced by Stowe Boyd to the programming language (Bernard 2019, 8-9).

Earlier "#" was known as a keyword it was usually used as a sign put in front of numbers in American English or as a pound sign put behind a number. In the book *Theory of Hashtag*, Andreas Bernard (2019, 19) claims that the symbol emerged from two letters symbolizing the English pound "lb" with a line across the top of the letters. Then throughout the history of typography, it slowly transformed into the nowadays famous symbol "#" (Bernard 2019, 18-19).

4.2 Uses of hashtags on various social media

Hashtag is used in a similar manner across different social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. The hashtag has a similar purpose on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, with the exception being Facebook. The purpose of the hashtag on TikTok and Instagram is to link certain photos and videos with those that have the same or very similar content; thus, having a classificatory but also organizational function. It is also used to unite groups of people that share the same interest. On YouTube the purpose of a hashtag is the same as on TikTok and Instagram, the only difference is that on YouTube emojis cannot be used for the creation of hashtags (TubeRanker, n.d.).

4.3 Hashtags in Marketing

Hashtags are quite handy tools when it comes to marketing. What can be said is that hashtags are spreading well on their own and are somewhat successful and popular within social media. The role of hashtags in marketing is similar to an attention catcher in advertising and all sorts of headlines. Hashtags connect specific words, phrases and even sentences with specific pictures, videos, and products or they can also connect certain groups of people or individuals with the same interests (Bernard 2019, 55-56).

There are a few recommended steps to follow on how to use the right hashtag with content. (1) At the beginning, do a research on your competition, to find out what hashtags are and are not currently trending or (2) use tools like "TikTok Creative Centre" or "Trend Discovery" to see what hashtags are trending in any area (fashion, beauty, music). (3) Getting inspiration from brands that operate in the same area of interest. The recommendations for using hashtags include: (1) using hashtags that are as specific as possible (there are plenty of neutral hashtags that are commonly use like "fyp"); (2) mixing short and long hashtags (the higher number of hashtags increases the chance of the higher visibility of content); (3) mixing most popular hashtags and less popular ones (the most popular hashtags are often neutral key words) (The Leap 2023).

5 METHODOLOGY OF ANALYSIS OF HASHTAG

The analytical part will deal with the analysis of hashtags of selected brands. I chose eleven brands dealing with cosmetic products (The Ordinary, CeraVe, Rare Beauty, Fenty Beauty, and L'Oréal Paris) or fashion (Gymshark, SKIMS, Nike, Adidas, ASOS, and SHEIN). Of the latter, Asos and Shein are online websites that sell their clothes but also resell clothes from other brands.

The brands were chosen based on their popularity on the platform. The Ordinary, CeraVe, Gymshark, SKIMS are currently thriving on TikTok (The Ordinary – 689.5K followers and 322 posts, CeraVe – 1.1M followers and 262 posts, Gymshark – 4.6M and 742 posts, SKIMS – 1.1M followers and 1129 posts). Rare Beauty (3.0M followers) and Fenty Beauty (2.2M followers) are cosmetics brands targeting particularly female audience. L'Oréal Paris, Nike and Adidas are brands with long history adjusting their marketing strategies to reach wider audiences (L'Oréal Paris – 436.5K followers, Nike – 4.0M followers, Adidas – 4.7M followers). The reason for choosing L'Oréal Paris is purely personal, I know this brand since my childhood and I wanted to know how such brand is coping with the modern technologies that are among us. Finally, ASOS (1.8 million followers) and SHEIN (6.8 million followers) are mainly online resellers offering a wide range of products, including famous brands.

The analysis consists of the following steps: at first, the official accounts of each brand were found on TikTok. The accounts were accessed between April 9th and April 11th. My corpus consists of 100 videos from each brand (1.100 videos in total), and 100 videos from users using the most popular hashtag connected to the brands analyzed (1.100 videos in total). For a comparative analysis, most viral videos (with 1 million views and more) from each brand were selected. Content analysis of videos was performed which included the collection and analysis of the hashtags along with the visual message. Syntactical and statistical analysis of the hashtags was done with the aim of their prevailing structure analysis (single word, phrase, sentence, or only emoji). Also hashtags with millions of views (from one million to fifty one billion) used by amateurs were collected and analyzed. Qualitative analysis of the data is performed with the help of discourse analysis to understand how individual brands manage their videos and hashtags that they share on their profiles for the purpose of reaching their potential customers.

II. ANALYSIS

6   THE ORDINARY

In 2013 Brandon Truaxe founded the company called DECIEM and three years later this company launched a skincare line called The Ordinary. His goal was to create skincare products that would be filled with ingredients proven to be the best ingredients that will give your skin the most benefits. These products are sold at a surprisingly low price, considering the richness of the ingredients. The focus is skincare products like serums to hydrate your skin or serums for pigmented skin, but nowadays the customers can find beauty products like make-up and maybe in the future concealers and blushes (Gritty Pretty, n.d.).

6.1 Visual side

On the official TikTok account, there are plenty of videos showing individual products the brand is selling. When you visit the official account what can be noticed at first is the brand color. Every video has a very subtle tone, and the dominant color is white, which gives the impression of purity. The color palette coincides with the white or transparent packaging of the products. These products are introduced in a few different ways: showing the individual product with a voiceover describing its function and application; videos of similar kinds with no voice-over but only music; product endorsement by popular influencers shown applying the product and explaining its benefits for skin.

When it comes to the most viewed hashtag #theordinary, which has over 2.2 billion views, the videos found under the # are mainly amateur, showing the use of the product and sharing their experience or giving advice.

6.2 The language of hashtags

The hashtags used with the videos on the official site range from zero to approximately five, but most commonly there are zero hashtags per video (206 videos). The most common hashtag is #theordinary, this appears in most videos. Other hashtags are derived from the name of that particular product for example #caffeinesolution, #multipeptideeyeserum, or #niacinamide. From the syntactical point of view, the most common form of hashtags is typically a noun phrase, e.g. #theordinary (75 videos) or just a noun, e.g. #niacinamide (7 videos). No other syntactical variation of the hashtags used by the brand can be found.

Unlike the official brand videos, the users of The Ordinary endorsing the production tend to use five and more hashtags. Next to the main hashtag, #theordinery, there are

hashtags using words connected to beauty, for example, very popular #skincare (47 videos), #skincareroutine (10 videos), or #theordinaryskincare (14 videos).

7 CERAVE

CeraVe is a skincare line that was developed by dermatologists in 2005. It focuses on skin conditions like acne, eczema, psoriasis, and dry skin resulting from a compromised skin barrier. CeraVe offers a line of products whit three main ceramides that are helping to recover the natural skin barrier. Not only are the three ceramides unique, the company CeraVe has also a patented multivesicular emulsion technology which helps to the ingredients are absorbed gradually and thus have a longer-lasting effect. According to the company website this skincare line is recommended as number one by the dermatologists (CeraVe, n.d.).

7.1 Visual side

The first thing that is very noticeable while visiting CeraVe's official site is the dominance of blue color, and the reason why is that blue color is the main color of the brand. When it comes to the videos themselves there are a couple of different ways that the company uses to show the products. There is the classic way of showing a particular product usually without any voiceover, only with a piece of music playing in the background and with some bullet points highlighting the main functions of the formula (16 videos). Another very common way is to show people with specific skin problems applying a products and then feature some professional dermatologists describing the benefits for your skin and also giving advice on how to use it, and when to use it (33 videos).

The most viewed hashtag #cerave with 4.6 billion views is related to the videos which are similar in content to the ones found on the official TikTok page of the brand. Users' videos show the creators' skin with blemishes or other problems and then with the improvements after having used the product.

7.2 The language of hashtags

Apart from one video with no hashtags, the hashtag #cerave is present in all videos analyzed. It is also often accompanied either with the hashtags #skincare (50 videos), or #skincareroutine (36 videos) and also #clensing (once) appeared. Some videos also use hashtag #skintok (2 videos). Other than that, other popular hashtags are #shareskincare, #skincaretips, or #cleanslikedream. The number of hashtags occurring per video varies from one hashtag, usually the #cerave, to four or five hashtags per video.

Hashtags are mostly nouns and noun phrases, for example, #cerave, and #skincareroutine. There are also a few verbal phrases like #turnacneupsidedown, #developedwithderms, and #faceitlikeaderm (24 videos).

Under videos that are not directly from the brand CeraVe but with the most viewed hashtag there are other hashtags that are accompanying them; some repeat #skincare, but some are new, for example, #treatment, or #pores. What is also different is the number of longer phrases, for example, #skincareproductsfortransformation, #howtominimisepores, and the overall number of hashtags used. With those videos, there are five and more hashtags per video.

8 RARE BEAUTY

Rare Beauty was founded in 2020 by famous singer Selena Gomez. It is a make-up beauty brand launched by Selena Gomez to raise awareness about mental health and physical appearance. The celebrity herself was for quite some time struggling with self-image and she decided to use the brand to show how nowadays beauty standards are overrated and to some extent damaging. Selena Gomez said: "Being rare is about being comfortable with yourself. I've stopped trying to be perfect. I just want to be me" (Rare Beauty, n.d.).

8.1 Visual side

The official TikTok page of the brand uses a variety of the so-called "girly" colors such as pink, red, and beige but also brown. Though in most of the videos (38 videos) women are promoting individual products, there are also videos showing men using those products (2 videos). Two types of videos are found in the corpus: (1) female models showing and using the products on themselves, and therefore giving advice on how to apply those, or (2) only the product or its formula is featured which is accompanied by a voiceover describing the function of the product.

Videos with the most viewed hashtag #rarebeauty with 3.4 billion views do not differ very much from those posted on the official site. Female creators show the product on their skin and explain the advantages of it (56 videos). Amateur videos showing the products alone are not numerous (25 videos) so as male content creators using the products (4 videos).

8.2 The language of hashtags

When it comes to hashtags there is a certain pattern that is repeating. The brand name hashtag #rarebeauty is found under every video in my corpus. Other common hashtags name the type of product that is presented, for example, #blush, #foundation, #concelar, or #eyeshadow. The number of hashtags appearing per video is from one hashtag per video to five or more. Since the brand belongs to a celebrity, when there is a video of a certain product promoted by the founder herself, there is also a hashtag related to her, #selenagomez (15 videos).

The hashtags do not change when it comes to the videos with the most viewed hashtag. There still is the same pattern where next to the #rarebeauty there are hashtags like #rarebeautyblush or #rarebeautymakeup, but what does occur more often almost under every video is the hashtag #selenagomez.

From the syntactical point of view the hashtags on the official page and hashtags that were posted by other users, are typically represented by a noun or noun phrase, e.g. #lipoil (16 videos). There are occasionally verb phrases like #usekindwords or #nothingsgoingoninmylife, but these were used only once.

9 FENTY BEAUTY

In 2017 another famous singer Rihanna launched her beauty brand, Fenty Beauty. When she was younger and started to work with make-up, she struggled to find the shades which would match her dark skin, so she decided that she will be one of the first beauty brand founders to concentrate on all skin types. Nowadays, the brand claims to provide beauty products that could match up to fifty shades of skin (Fenty Beauty, n.d.).

9.1 Visual side

The first thing to notice while going through the official TikTok page of Fenty Beauty is that there are mostly women pictured in the videos. Color-wise, the videos do not make use of any specific color range but are rather colorful. The brand is promoting its products in somewhat different ways compared to the other videos analyzed. There are typical videos where women are showing how they us individual products on themselves; there are full-face make-up tutorial videos; there are videos that are showing only the products from several angles; there are videos that are not only showing the products but also doing so-called swatches for better representation of the product's color.

Two types of videos with the most popular hashtag #fentybeauty (2.5 billion views) present either women showing how they are using the beauty products (62 videos) or the product alone (12 videos).

9.2 The language of hashtags

There is no one main hashtag used in every video, on the other hand, there are hashtags that are derived from the product that is being promoted. Usually, those hashtags are the names of the products, for example, #iconvelvet (17 videos), #hellathicc (9 videos), or #fentyparfum (9 videos), or they are more general like #fentyface (6 videos), #fentybeauty (17 videos), or #fentyfam (5 videos). When it comes to the number of hashtags per video, the range from no hashtags to three and more, (number of videos with two hashtags per video is 17).

The most common hashtag used by amateur creators is #fentybeauty. Other hashtags typically identify the individual products: #makeup, #invisimatte, #diamondbomb, or #lipgloss. The number of hashtags under each video is four (5 videos) and more.

Hashtags are mostly nouns like #makeup (23 videos). We can also come across a few abbreviations like #ASMR, which means "autonomous sensory meridian response".

10 L'ORÉAL PARIS

This worldwide brand has been around since 1909. It started with a hair dye and nowadays the portfolio of this brand has thousands of products from beauty to haircare. L'Oréal Paris is divided into four divisions (1) L'Oréal Luxe, (2) Consumer Products, (3) Active Cosmetics, and (4) Professional Products. The main goal of this company is to bring each person, whether a man or a woman, high-quality products that guarantee safety and transparency (L'Oréal, n.d.).

10.1 Visual side

TikTok videos on the official page feature both women and men. Compared to other brands discussed above, there are slightly more videos with males (9 videos). As far as the color palette is concerned, not very bright but varied colors are used. Another very noticeable thing is a celebrity endorsement of products (6 videos). The style of the videos is not very different from advertisements that would be played on television; a celebrity introducing the products and mentioning the main ingredients and/or functions of the product. There are also videos of female models using the products on their faces to show how to use them and how they look. There are 59 videos showing beauty products and 24 videos advertising hair products.

    #lorealparis is the most popular hashtag with about 3.6 billion views. There are amateur videos (63) where young women are showing how they are using particular products, whether a beauty product or hair product. There are also 11 videos featuring male influencers applying their favorite product, and explaining what those products are good for.

10.2 The language of hashtags

The most common hashtag that appears very frequently is #lorealparis (79 videos) which is then accompanied by various hashtags that are derived from the product that is being introduced in the video, for example, #midnightserum, #lorealpurevitaminc, or #menexpert – the latter is observed especially in videos that are presenting products targeted for men. The number of hashtags per video varies, it is usually from three to six and more.

    #lorealparis is also the most popular hashtag in the amateur videos (97); it is usually accompanied by hashtags that either name the products pictured or mention its purpose in the video, for example, #skincare (8 videos), #makeup (15 videos), or #telescopiclift (6

videos). The number of hashtags also does not change very much it ranges from around three (13 videos) to more hashtags per video.

From the syntactical point of view there are mostly nouns and 2 component noun phrases (#skincareroutine), rather than longer and more complex phrases.

11 GYMSHARK

In 2012 Ben Francis founded a brand that sells athletic clothing and accessories for men and women. The main goal of this brand is to create a type of gym clothes that is comfortable in every way and to make people feel confident and therefore enjoy working out (Gymshark, n.d.).

11.1 Visual side

At first, what is very noticeable is that the official brand videos have been taken predominantly in the gym (73 videos). Another very significant thing is that though there are women in videos, the male presentation is higher. There are the following groups of videos: (1) men or women clad in brand sportswear working out; (2) videos of individuals discussing personal progress or sharing personal advice in Gymshark outfit. I would say there is no particular choice of colors, it is mostly greyish but that is because the videos are mainly recorded in the gym. Some videos (62 videos) have music accompanying physical exercises, while others are styled as interviews.

The most popular hashtag #gymshark has 9.4 billion views. Amateur videos show try-on hauls done mostly by women at home (23 videos), the rest of the videos show people exercising in the gym.

11.2 The language of hashtags

Apart from the hashtag #gymshark being very popular among users supporting Gymshark, this hashtag is also heavily used with videos posted by the brand itself on its official site. Another very popular hashtag is #gym, which appears with most videos that are recorded in the gym (64 videos). The other hashtags do not refer to the products that are being promoted in the video, for example, #wholesome, #gymmeme, #meme, #fyp. The number of hashtags varies, but most often there are videos with three hashtags (93 videos).

In videos posted by users, other hashtags used along with the most popular ones are more specific and refer to what is being displayed in the videos: for example, #haul, #gymwardrobe, #tryonhaul or #plussizeedition. The number of hashtags occurring per video varies a lot; there are videos with four hashtags (12 videos), five hashtags (10 videos), six hashtags (10 videos), seven hashtags (11 videos), but also with eight (4 videos), nine (7 videos) and even ten hashtags (3 videos).

Syntactically the hashtags are mainly nouns like #bodybuilding, or noun phrases, but there are also verb phrases like and #mentalhealthmatters.

12 SKIMS

In 2019 Kim Kardashian and other cofounders launched the brand called SKIMS. This sells clothes only for women and specifically underwear, loungewear, and shapewear. The main goal is to provide clothes to every body size and type, the sizes go from XXS to 4XL (SKIMS, n.d.).

12.1 Visual side

This brand focuses mainly on women and therefore on the official page there are videos where only women are presenting the products. What is being shown in the videos varies, yet, there is always a woman showing a particular piece of clothing either while she is recording her daily routine or just showing the clothing fit on her – in a certain way even though she is not a professional model she is modelling. There are no signature colors, the only colors that are standing out are the colors of the clothes, but the range is wide. There are also some small commentaries but usually, those are personal thoughts and opinions on the product.

Amateur videos that appeared with the most popular hashtag #skims with 3.1 billion views are the same ones posted on the official site. The reviews seem to be based on the subjective experiences: women are sharing more of their personal preferences.

12.2 The language of hashtags

The main hashtag used with videos on the official site is #skims. This one appears almost under every video (91 videos), there is one video with no hashtags, and the other hashtags are derived from the type of presented product, for example, #skimsdress, #skimsswim or #skimstshirt. The number of hashtags under a video varies but the very common amount was around six hashtags per video (26 videos) and five hashtags per video (24 videos).

Hashtags under users' videos do not differ, there is still the hashtag #skims and other hashtags reflecting the product like #skimsdress or #skimsbodysuit, but with those videos, which are mostly reviews, hashtags referring to the activities like #tryonhaul, #unboxing, #skimsreview, are also common. When it comes to the number of hashtags there are videos with one or two hashtags, but also videos with five and more.

Looking at those hashtags from the syntactical point of view there are nouns like #skims, noun phrases and also verbs like #unboxing, and verb phrases like #tryonhaul.

13 NIKE

Nike got its name in 1964 by Bill Bowerman and Phil Knight after rebranding of Blue Ribbon Sports. It started with shoes and nowadays Nike has a wide range of clothing and accessories, some of the accessories are sports-technology accessories, for example, portable heart-rate monitors and high-altitude wrist compasses. Nike sponsors many athletes like Cristiano Ronaldo, Rafael Nadal, and LeBron James, and thanks to those sportspeople Nike still has its popularity (Britannica, n.d.).

13.1 Visual side

Visually Nike's official TikTok page is very diverse, there are plenty of videos with very different content. It ranges from an advertisement showing shoes or other piece of clothing to videos showing people wearing Nike's clothes, to interviews with users or those who work for Nike. Videos seem not to be particularly professional, meaning that many of them seem to be recorded on phone using front camera. A number of the videos (64 videos) are those with no commentary only music playing in the background; and the other group of videos (33 videos) includes some sort of commentary, whether it is about personal experience or people sharing some advice. When it comes to colors there is no adherence to specific color pallet; videos are recorded either inside or outside, so it is very multifarious.

Nike's most viewed hashtag #nike has around 45.2 billion views. Videos (66 videos) posted by users fall in the following categories: videos by those who bought Nike's product, whether shoes or clothes, which are at some point very similar to those posted by Nike. People in the videos are still showing Nike's products, talking about them and recommending them.

13.2 The language of hashtags

On the official site there are videos that have no hashtags (11 videos). Many of the hashtags do not reflect what the brand is and what it sells, for example, #chill, #behindthescene or #snowboarder. Videos where people are wearing and showing Nike's clothes are usually accompanied by a hashtag #nikefitcheck (19 videos); those hashtags reflect only what is happening in the videos. There are very few hashtags that on the other hand do refer to the products like #leggings (3 videos). As mentioned before there are videos with no hashtags and the number of hashtags per video varies; it goes from one

hashtag (35 videos), two hashtags (30 videos), and three hashtags (13 videos), the maximum is eight hashtags per videos (4 videos).

On the other hand, the usage of hashtags from users differs a lot. Not only are there more specific hashtags, for example, #jordan3, #sneakers, #dunks, but the number of them also varies from three (10 videos), four (13 videos), to nine (12 videos). There are also videos with thirteen hashtags (3 videos) and even one video with fifteen hashtags.

From thy syntactical point of view there are nouns like #leggings, #skateboarding and noun phrases.

14 ADIDAS

In Germany, in 1949 a man called Adi Dassler started a company called Adidas. With only 47 employees he began to sell shoes with the nowadays famous 3-Stripes, and it did not take long before Adidas became one of the most popular brands in the world. Adidas was the very first company that created and therefore changed the history of football by adding screw-in studs on football boots. In the new century, Adidas was again the very first company that next to its sports clothing and accessories introduced new streetwear (Adidas, n.d.).

14.1 Visual side

On the official TikTok page there are the following types of videos: (1) ones that show "ordinary" people using and wearing Adidas's products, (2) ones with famous people like Messi wearing Adidas, and (3) a few videos of the products themselves. The videos that are most frequent (57 videos) are those with people wearing the clothes but mostly those videos do not directly address the products – they show people playing football, working out, running or doing yoga. Considering colors there are no signature colors; videos are recorded inside and outside, so the colors depend on it.

#adidas has about 12.1 billion views and videos posted by users do not differ very much: they are very similar to those posted on the official page. There are more videos of the unboxing (11 compared to 2) and first impression (3 compared to 0) videos. Additionally, there are more personal videos (67 compared to 16). Some videos posted by the users can be classified as "random", meaning that some videos are not related to Adidas or its products, for example there were videos about football and world cup not necessarily showing Adidas but because this brand is associated with sport, its name is used as a hashtag.

14.2 The language of hashtags

The main hashtag used with the videos posted on the official TikTok page is #adidas. It is not necessarily added under every video, but it is the most frequent one (87 of 100 videos altogether). Other hashtags used describe, for example, the sport that can be seen in the video like #rugby, #football, #americanfootball or #basketball. There are also videos with no hashtags and a few videos with hashtags that are not related to Adidas at all, for example, #whatdoyoudoforliving, or hashtags with celebrities' names like #jennaortega or #davidbeckham. A few hashtags address the product's purpose, meaning what the product

is intended for; for example a football suit, so the hashtag is #football (35 videos). When it comes to the number of hashtags per video, it is around three to four hashtags per video (50 videos); some videos have five hashtags (14 videos).

The biggest difference when it comes to the hashtags added by the users is the number of them per video. The number is not lower than four (13 videos), but there are videos with eight hashtags (10 videos), nine (9 videos) and ten (8 videos). It can climb up to twelve (6 videos). The most frequent hashtag is #adidas (81 videos), and then it is accompanied with all sorts of hashtags like #shoes, #worldcup, #goalkeepergloves, #unboxing or #fyp.

Syntactically we are dealing with nouns like #yoga, noun phrase like #downsyndromeawarenesmonth, verbs like #unboxing and a full interrogative sentence like #whatdoyoudoforliving.

15 ASOS

ASOS is an online seller of clothing and accessories for men and women. The main message of this company is that they want to give people the confidence to express themselves and experiment with a lot of different pieces of clothes or accessories. ASOS Brands are available in more than 30 sizes, and the whole company is working with more than 200 models of all body types to support body positivity. Finally ASOS is a part of the British Paralympic Association and supports this association with ceremony outfits (ASOS, n.d.).

15.1 Visual side

Visually the first thing to notice in comparison to the previous clothing brands is that there are more vivid colors used in the videos. There is still no single color pattern, but the color are more vibrant. There are all sorts of videos, mainly try-on hauls where men and women are reviewing individual pieces, clothes or accessories, and usually with commentaries giving personal experience and reviews, sometimes supplemented with advice like what to wear with a certain piece or how to combine.

There are videos (77 videos) posted by users with hashtag #asos, which is the most popular one with 1.7 billion views, that are more casual; though they do not differ from those posted on the official site. There are still try-on hauls and reviews given by people.

15.2 The language of hashtags

When it comes to hashtags, there are plenty that appear under the videos on the official page. The main one is #asos (48 videos), the rest are derived from what is being shown in the videos. As it was mentioned above, ASOS not only sells their own brand but also resells other brands and so there are hashtags like #nike or #thenorthface, and there are also videos with no hashtags. The number of hashtags varies, from zero up to nine hashtags (2 videos), yet, three to five hashtags are the most common number (48 videos).

What is quite noticeable when it comes to hashtags that appear with amateur videos, is the number of them used under videos. The most common number is from two to three hashtags per video (24 videos), but there are still videos with four (14 videos) to six hashtags (14 videos). Most frequent is the hashtag #asos (97 videos), as well as #asoshaul (12 videos) or #haul (15 videos). More specific hashtags like #shoes, #wintercoat occur but more general hashtag is preferred.

When looking at the hashtags from the syntactical point of view, there are nouns like #haul, noun phrases like #asoshaul or #tryonhaul.

16 SHEIN

This electronic retailer was founded in 2012 and is selling fashion items and accessories for home. Its main goal is to make those products financially available. SHEIN operates on social media, mobile devices, and online. The range of clothing this company offers to customers is very wide: from casual clothes people wear at home to elegant dresses for attending a wedding. SHEIN uses digital technology to keep in touch with what is currently trending and thanks to the digital supply chain it is capable to keep low inventory and waste and to prevent long waiting periods (SHEIN, n.d.).

16.1 Visual side

On the SHEIN's official TikTok page there are videos promoting several of their products at once, for example, by having women try them on, showing how to pair those promoted pieces, or by including the accessories that SHEIN sells, such as clothes organizers or home decorations. Most of those videos (81) do not have any commentaries from the women wearing the products, only music is played in the background. Some videos (12) show a woman either reviewing the product or sharing her experience with the product. In terms of colors, there are no signature colors found in the videos.

There are two hashtags that are most popular; #shein with 51 billion views and #sheinhaul with 8.5 billion views. The first hashtag occurs under videos (62) that are about try-on hauls, unboxing or reviewing products. This hashtag is more general. The second one is a bit more specific and so it occurs only with videos that are about try-on hauls (90).

16.2 The language of hashtags

With hashtags on the official page there are three main ones that are repeated frequently, #sheinhaul, #sheinforal, and #sheinss23. Then there are some that are a bit more specific in terms of what the video is about, for example, #storage or #organization and also we can find few videos with no hashtags (3 videos). The number of hashtags occurring per videos ranges from zero to three (13 videos) and more (84 videos).

Hashtags posted by users are not very different from the ones posted on the official page – they repeat – but the hashtag #fyp does not occurs that often (43 compared to 87) which would be expected considering the fact that #fyp is a general hashtag. What is on the other hand different is the number of hashtags per video. There are no videos that have no hashtags. The number of hashtags varies; five hashtags (17 videos), four (10 videos) and three (8 videos), but there are also videos with ten and more (16 videos).

SHEIN uses more nouns and noun phrases with their hashtags (97 videos) than verb phrases, but there are also verbals like #unboxing.

17 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In this chapter, first, I will compare brands focusing on beauty and skincare with one another. I will compare brands concentrating on fashion, and lastly, I will compare beauty/skincare brands with fashion brands. Out of 1.100 brand videos, I selected those with the highest views (over one million and more). Of the brands discussed below, the Rare Beauty brand has the highest number of videos with millions of views, and Nike has the lowest.

17.1 Promotional strategies of the brands on TikTok

In this chapter, I will discuss the promotional strategies of each brand. In other words, what each brand focuses on while promoting their products. The Ordinary aims for transparency, which is something preferable when it comes to skincare. The brand's products are financially affordable, and the packaging is in neutral colors, which signals gender inclusivity. The brand uses content creators of different ethnicity to gain popularity (35 videos). This strategy draws attention to a specific video, although it does not reflect in the hashtags. CeraVe aims to achieve financial affordability, efficiency, and simplicity in product packaging, which is supposed to help customers to differentiate between products; for example, white and blue packaging is for moisturizing lotions. The brand also employs dermatologists to gain customers' trust; 45 videos had these professionals giving advice and educating others. Focusing on the authenticity of its products, Rare Beauty also focuses on the customer relationship with its founder Selena Gomez, who also shares her journey for customers to empathize with – videos with her in the frame appeared thirteen times. Fenty Beauty is about inclusivity and diversity; the brand also uses content creators (48 videos) to spread awareness of its products. The strategy of L'Oréal Paris consists of free samples distributed into stores and celebrity presence in TikTok videos (14 videos in total with famous people, such as Eva Longoria or Camila Cabello, and hashtags that do not reflect the celebrity name, there were hashtags #lorealparis, #skincare, #westandup). Gymshark uses mainly influencers for product endorsement (11 videos, some hashtags are #behzinga, #vikkstar or #davidlaid); it also approaches regular users to become ambassadors of the brand (appear in 60 videos, some hashtags are #gym, #bodybuilding), and it also engages users/visitors in various challenges (15 videos). SKIMS communicates with customers via a video newsletter (90% of videos posted) with new products; the brand aims at inclusivity regarding colors and size. Nike and Adidas use similar simple strategies. They approach celebrities or influencers for product promotion (37 videos). For

product endorsement, ASOS uses content creators (36 videos) and collaborates with a brand called Byte and TikTok (FashionUnited 2020). The promotional strategy SHEIN uses differs from the rest; instead of "big" influencers, SHEIN approaches so-called "micro-influencers" (such as @kittenn.jpg_ or @33.n.44), which are those with a couple of thousand followers.

17.2 The usage of the brand hashtag

When comparing beauty/skincare brands, all brands typically use a brand name as a hashtag, #theordinary, #cerave, #rarebeatuy, #fentybeauty, and #lorealparis.

In promotion of multi-brand retailer SHEIN, apart from #shein, every brand used a hashtag with their name individually, like #gymshark, #skims, #nike, #adidas, #asos; SHEIN was the only brand that used their name in combination with other words like #sheinforall, #sheinstyle, #sheinhaul, #sheinfinds, #sheinbeauty. Those types of hashtags are particular; for those looking for clothing hauls from SHEIN, these hashtags will help them find the right content.

Using brand hashtags is very useful for brand awareness because it is simple and recognizable, it helps to categorize and differentiate the brand's products from other brands, and it also helps simplify the search of what customers want. Nowadays, consumers care more about physical and mental health; they seek information and help on the internet. Thanks to the pandemic, consumers want to be more socialized than before; they want to interact through the internet. Also, they tend to shop online more often, and products traditionally bought in the store are now purchased online, for example, groceries. Lastly, consumers focus on products that represent sustainability and transparency and are preferably eco-friendly, for example, The Ordinary, Rare Beauty, or Nike (Freedman, n.d.).

17.3 Product identification through hashtags

Such brands as Rare Beauty, The Ordinary, Fenty Beauty, and L'Oréal Paris also combined the brand name hashtag with particular hashtags related to products featured in the videos, for example (for Rare Beauty) #blush, #liquidblush, #viralblush, #heartapplicator, #blushheart, #grwm, #lipoil, #softpinchtintedlipoil, #softpinch, #rarebeautylipoil, (for The Ordinary) #retinol, #niacinamide, #lashandbrowserum, #glycolicacid, (for Fenty Beauty) #invisimate, #diamondbomb, #fentyparfume, and (for L'Oréal Paris) #lorealblondrepair. As mentioned above, combining a brand name and

a specific product is concrete, and it helps the consumer find what they are looking for. Unlike Rare Beauty, L'Oréal Paris, and The Ordinary, the brands CeraVe and Fenty Beauty used specific but not product-related hashtags. These hashtags were connected with an event hosted by CeraVe, #21daysofSPF, #faceitlikeaderm, #AAD2023, #AAD23, and with Fenty Beauty, on the other hand, describing something else like #glitterhair, #loveisblind, #stitch. Hashtag #stitch refers to the opportunity to connect one video with another. In other words, an author of one video can permit another author to use a part of his/hers video in their video.

Overall, the length of hashtags varies. There are one-worded hashtags like #blush and longer ones like #softpinchtintedlipoil, and nouns and noun phrases were used (#retinol, #skincareroutine), and so were verb phrases (#faceitlikeaderm). These hashtags are successful because they narrow down and make selection easier. Choosing from a small number of products is more straightforward than choosing from a large pool (Digital Marketing Institute 2022).

17.4 Group identification through hashtags

Since trendy brands used endorsement, the hashtags with the celebrities' names appeared under the respective videos. Using these hashtags, the brand reaches new customers who follow the celebrities in question. For example, Rare Beauty used the hashtag with the name of its creator, #selenagomez (10 videos, most viewed video – 12,1M).

Nike, Adidas, and ASOS used featured celebrity names as hashtags, for example, #giannis, #messi, #benzema, #aronpriper, #julianalvarez, #judebellingham, #kounde, #lewiscapaldi, #rihanna, and Gymshark used the name of a content creator #davidlaid. Collaboration with celebrities, content creators, or influencers is essential because it makes the brand more visible and trustworthy, can help the brand be more memorable, and can also help the brand stay afloat. According to TikTok statistics, product endorsement with a collaboration reached "65% higher 2-second view rates, 91% higher 6-second view rates, and 83% higher engagement rates" (TikTok 2022).

General hashtags Gymshark used also help to reach the so-called "internet groups/communities": e.g., Gymshark used #gym and #gymbro to get those interested in either working out, learning new techniques, or looking at someone's progress. Nike used #golftiktok, #NBA, #rapidfire to reach a wider audience – those interested in golf, basketball, or simply interviews; Adidas used #worldcup, #womensworldcup to get fans of the world cup, and those interested in women's football, SHEIN used #fyp, #chic, #fashion,

#homedecor to reach higher views and also to approach those looking for inspiration whether in style or home design.

Regarding specific hashtags, which again help the user to find as factual content as possible, Gymshark used ##ishowspeed, #ishowspeedclipz, #speed (these were connected to accurate content featured in videos), Adidas – #ballondor, #football, #tourbus, #tourbustour, #guesstheplayer, #argentina, #spain, #brazil, #dontflinchchallange, ASOS – #asosdesign, #asos4505, #halftimeshow, #nike, #nikesportwear, #thestraysnetflix, #y2kfashion, #parisfashionweek, #streetstyle, #paris, #reclaimedvintage, #packwithme, #skiingholiday, #ASMRpacking, #minimalstyle (some were not product related). Syntactically, nouns and noun phrases were used (#football, #womenswordlcup) and verb phrases (#dontflinchchallange). These hashtags are used to collect unique content, to create groups of people of the same interest so that they can share experiences, and to make this type of content more attainable.

17.5 Sale statistics on TikTok

Globally, the spending on TikTok reached $2.5 billion; it is also proven that 61% of TikTok users tend to buy products from brands that advertise on TikTok. In 2021, revenue yielded from ads was around $4.6 billion, and in the last year, it grew by 142%; this year, revenues are expected to reach $18 billion. According to Social Pilot, 90% of branded hashtags yield twice the ROI on ad spend. TikTok is considered beneficial for advertising not only because of the revenues but also because of the reach the app has; supposedly, ads on TikTok reach 885 million people. Many brands are using female represents in their videos because 57% of TikTok users are women between the ages of 18-24 (SocialPilot 2023). That is also the reason why brands should use multiple social media platforms. TikTok is still relatively "new," and older generations might not like/use this app; having other social media platforms can help the brand reach a wider audience. Other reasons why to use multiple platforms are: (1) eliminating competition, (2) providing better services, and (3) keeping up with trends (Business 2023). In terms of earnings per post of each brand is as follows: The Ordinary – $414-$690, CeraVe – $647-$1,078, Rare Beauty – $1,793-$2,989, Fenty Beauty – $1,294-$2,157, L'Oréal Paris – $262-$436, Gymshark – $2,735-$4,559, SKIMS – $647-$1,079, Nike – $2,332-$3,887, Adidas – $2,830-$4,717, ASOS – $1,039-$1,731, SHEIN – $4,155-$6,858 (Influence Marketing Hub 2023). According to these numbers, The Ordinary and L'Oreal Paris are less profitable than the other brands. Out of beauty brands, it is Rare Beauty and Fenty Beauty that earns the most.

Fashion brands are generally more successful than beauty and skincare brands, and out of fashion brands, the top earner is SHEIN, followed closely by Gymshark and Adidas. There are many factors to consider while deciding who is most successful. One must remember how long the brand has been on the market or its relationship with its customers.

CONCLUSION

The thesis deals with the issue of internet marketing on such social media as TikTok, namely the promotion of the brand and its products online through the use of hashtags as a tool for online promotion. The paper focuses on the place of hashtags in the discourse of internet communication aimed explicitly at advertising products.

To show how brands communicate with customers through hashtags, eleven official accounts of the most popular brands on TikTok with audiences from 689.5K up to 6.8M were selected. Accounts belonging to selected brands were accessed on TikTok, and one hundred videos with hashtags used along from each brand posted on their official pages were viewed and analyzed, as well as one hundred videos posted from users with hashtags carrying the brand's name per each brand. The focus was on the visual side of promotional videos and the hashtags, meaning how many hashtags were used under each video and what linguistic elements constituted the hashtags, such as a noun, noun phrase, verb, or verb phrase. Overall, the go-to for all brands is the usage of brand names as hashtags; it is helpful for brand recognition and a more straightforward search. Another thing that is common among brands is the use of specific hashtags. In all cases, these hashtags are more describing particular products. Lastly, all brands used more general hashtags to approach a wider audience and for their content to appear on as many "for you" pages as possible.

At the end of the analytical part, a comparative analysis focused on viral videos, from official accounts, with millions of views. A popular hashtag, such as a celebrity name, is recommended, and most fashion brands use this type of hashtag among the beauty and skincare brands; only Rare Beauty uses it as well. What else is the usage of general hashtags. They are used more often, but that doesn't mean our content will be seen more. More general hashtags mean more content in which ours can get lost. That is why it is recommended to use specific hashtags to concretize and simplify the search.

According to the theoretical part, Rare Beaty is the only brand following the steps. It uses specific (product names or product-related), popular, short, and long hashtags. What is essential to keep in mind are other factors that could bring attention to the product. (1) the function of the product, (2) the packaging, or (3) the relationship that the founder and the customers have. Considering Rare Beauty as the most successful, the specificity in the hashtags makes the content in videos stand out.

Overall, more than the usage of hashtags with the brand name on its own is needed considering the mention of Adidas and random videos having hashtags with the brand

name. It is advised to combine specific and more general hashtags so that the content is as much as possible known to both regular customers and those who may just become customers..

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BRB   Be right back

BTW   By the way

FAQ   Frequently asked questions

FYP   For you page

GRWM   Get ready with me

JK   Just kidding

lb.   Pound

ROI   Return of Investment