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How Cosmetics Companies Can Improve the Credibility of Green Marketing – A Consumer Perspective

Emma Mäkiä

Author(s) Emma Mäkiä	
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AN ABSTRACT

This thesis was conducted to provide information for consumers and cosmetic companies about the credibility and improvement of green marketing in the cosmetics industry. Another objective was to give guidance for consumers who use color cosmetics on how to identify greenwashing companies from authentically sustainable cosmetics brands.

The theoretical framework of the thesis consists of three separate perspectives that influence the creation of green cosmetics claims. The company perspective focuses on different marketing practices, such as the 5 I's of Green Marketing. The consumer perspective aims to understand the mindset of consumers. The governing body perspective consists of different legislations and standards related to cosmetics marketing.

The empirical segment of the thesis was gathered from primary and secondary data that was obtained through an online survey and secondary data research. The online survey was quantitative with open-ended questions making it a mixed-mode survey. The secondary data was obtained from company websites, social media accounts, and product packages.

The results indicated that cosmetics companies could improve the credibility of green marketing by creating green claims that are truthful, clear, and specific. Companies should also be transparent about their operations and be certified by a responsible third party. Visual suggestions were associated with greenwashing; therefore, the focus should be on verbal marketing.

The results of this thesis could be utilized by cosmetics companies that are involved with sustainability. Additionally, the thesis can be helpful for consumers that are struggling to identify greenwashing from green marketing.

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1   Introduction

This is a research type of bachelor's thesis for the Degree Programme in International business in the major specialization of Customer Relationship Management and Communication in the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. In the first chapter of the thesis, the reader is introduced to the thesis topic and objectives. The first subchapter will explain the background of the thesis, while the second subchapter presents the main research question and investigative questions. At the end of the first chapter, the reader will learn about the thesis's risks, benefits, and key concepts.

1.1   Background

Sustainable development is defined as the act of operating without risking the current and future generations' resources (Bruntdland, G.H. 1987, 16). It has become an important part of doing business due to multiple reasons. First of all, public authorities such as governments have started introducing different mandatory and voluntary actions that encourage and guide companies to become socially responsible. (European Commission s.a.) Second, consumers have started to demand companies to reduce the negative environmental impacts their operations might cause (European Commission s.a.). According to a research conducted by IBM, eight out of 10 consumers find sustainability important. The same research figured out that six out of 10 of the respondents were ready to reduce their environmental footprint by changing their shopping habits. (Research Insights s.a., 1.)

The demand for sustainable and green products has increased in the cosmetics industry as well. According to a survey conducted by Deloitte, 43 percent of the respondents preferred cosmetics brands that have environmentally sustainable practices (2020). This has caused some cosmetics companies to start developing their operations towards more environmentally friendly. Simultaneously, the changing consumer demands have affected how cosmetics companies do marketing.

Green marketing, referred to as the act of marketing products by emphasizing sustainable and green attributes, has become popular (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 462). At its best, green marketing can help consumers identify cosmetics brands that share similar values and improve brand reputation. Unfortunately, the popularity of green marketing has caused companies that are not operating sustainably to adopt the practice. Greenwashing is a marketing practice that is referred to as the act of exaggerating a company's involvement in sustainability. If a company gets caught on practicing greenwashing, it can negatively impact its reputation.

Green marketing and greenwashing can seem similar in consumers' eyes which has created the problem of consumers struggling to identify green marketing from greenwashing. (Callaghan 2019, 134.) Similarly, cosmetics companies that are committed to operating sustainably can unwittingly be mixed with companies that are practicing greenwashing and vice versa.

This thesis explores in more depth the problem of consumers not being able to identify authentic green cosmetic companies and green cosmetics companies being mixed with greenwashing companies. The goal is to offer some suggestions to both consumers and cosmetic companies.

1.2 Research Question

The goal of the thesis was to understand what is perceived as credible green marketing in the cosmetics industry and how consumers can identify greenwashing. In order to reach the goal, a research question and a set of investigative questions were created.

The research question of the thesis was: **"How can cosmetics companies improve the credibility of green marketing from the perspective of the consumer? "** Investigative questions were created to support the main research question. The point of the investigative questions was to bring essential information related to the research question.
The investigative questions were:

IQ 1. How do cosmetics brands engage in green marketing/greenwashing?

IQ 2. What type of certifications cosmetics companies use to indicate commitment to sustainability?

IQ 3. What are the consumer perceptions of green marketing?

IQ 4. How to do credible green marketing for a cosmetics company?

IQ 5. How can consumers identify greenwashing of cosmetics companies?

Table 1. below explains what theories and research methods were used in order to answer the investigative questions. The results of each investigative question can be found in the mentioned chapters.

Table 1. Overlay Matrix

Investigative Question	Theoretical Framework	Research Methods	Results (chapter)
IQ 1. How do cosmetic brands engage in green marketing/greenwashing?	Green marketing, Greenwashing, Green cosmetic claims	Secondary data qualitative research	4.1

IQ 2. What type of certifications cosmetic companies use to indicate commitment to sustainability?	Standard certifications & Regulations	Secondary data qualitative research	4.2
IQ 3. What are the consumer perceptions of green marketing?	Customer mindset	Online survey	4.3
IQ 4. How to do credible green marketing for a cosmetic company?	The 5 I's of green marketing, Standards & certifications, Laws and regulations, and ISO Standards	Online survey	4.4
IQ 5. How can consumers identify greenwashing of cosmetic companies?	The 5 I's of green marketing, Standards & certifications, Laws and regulations, and ISO Standards	Online survey	4.5

1.3   Demarcation

The thesis focused on the green marketing of cosmetics products. The general definition of the term cosmetics is broad, but in this thesis, the term was demarcated to concern color cosmetics used in the face like foundation and eyeshadow. The term that is often used to describe color cosmetics is makeup, which is an established term to describe cosmetics used for the face. Makeup is a substance used on the human body and face to improve appearance (Terve.fi 2020).

The topic was demarcated so that it utilized three different perspectives; company, consumer, and governing body perspective.

The company's perspective focused on the different marketing practices companies can utilize to support their green claims. The company perspective did not speak out about the best way to be green or sustainable.

The consumer perspective focused on understanding what consumers perceive as greenwashing and what they perceive as credible green marketing. The target respondents were consumers that use color cosmetics.

The third and final perspective was governing bodies such as the European Union. The aim was to understand the laws and legislations related to cosmetics marketing. The perspective was demarcated to only focus on European legislation because other non-EU countries have similar legislations (Callaghan 2019, 94).

1.4   International Aspect

This thesis has an international aspect because it utilizes globally operating makeup brands and includes a survey aimed at globally situated cosmetics users. Additionally, the obtained data can be utilized by cosmetics companies operating internationally.

The secondary data collection includes analyzing globally operating cosmetics companies Mádara and Tarte, with the goal to understand how they practice green marketing. The primary data collection is done by creating an online survey. Respondents of the online survey are not demarcated geographically, and the survey is done in English to provide individuals from around the world the opportunity to respond.

1.5   Benefits

Due to the perhaps sensitive topic of the thesis, there is no commissioning company, but regardless of that, this thesis can be beneficial to multiple parties.

This thesis can be helpful for cosmetics companies that are authentically sustainable but not sure how to market their products without being perceived as conducting greenwashing. Simultaneously, the thesis can act as a manual for consumers eager to understand how to identify authentic, sustainable cosmetics brands.

The author can benefit from the thesis project by learning more about the cosmetics industry and green marketing practices. The thesis project can act as an example of the authors capabilities and can be used, for example, when applying for marketing-related jobs.

1.6   Risks and Risk Management

The most significant risks related to the making of the thesis were lack of usable data and low amount of responses in the survey.

In order to avoid the risk related to lack of responses and lack of usable data, the survey was conducted in English to make sure that people from around the world were able to respond. The survey link was published on various Websites and was open for responses for nearly two weeks.

Due to the risk related to lack of usable data, the thesis utilized secondary and primary data, meaning that the survey was not the only data resource used.

1.7 Key Concepts

The Average Consumer is described by the EU Cosmetic Regulations as observant, considerate, and well-informed consumers to whom cosmetics are marketed in the EU (Callaghan 2019, 18). In this thesis, the term was used to describe average consumers worldwide.

Brand associations refer to mental images of attributes, benefits, interests, celebrities, and attitudes that consumers associate with a brand. Associations can differentiate brands from each other, while they can also add or reduce the value of the brand. (Bhasin 2019.)

Certified organic is a term used to describe cosmetic products that have met the requirements set by a certifying party and been given the organic certificate. The term organic can be used by any cosmetic company, but certified organic is allowed to be used only if the company has been certified. (Dayan & Kromidas 2011, 21.)

Cosmetics products are defined as any substance or mixture of substances used to clean, enhance, protect, perfume, change appearance, or correct the human body externally or orally (EC Regulation 1223/2009 on cosmetics. Article 2.1.a).

Eco-friendly is a term often used to promote products that are not harmful to the environment. Eco-friendly is not a regulated term, meaning that it can be used even if the advertised product is harmful to the environment. (Holzer 2018.)

Green marketing is a marketing practice in which the company's true or perceived sustainable benefits are emphasized in the marketing (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 462).

Greenwashing refers to the marketing practice of misleading consumers by providing misleading or exaggerating information about a company's sustainability and environmental friendliness (Grant 2017, 62).

Natural often refers to substances that are not synthetically derived or synthetically processed. Because the term does not have a specific definition, it is not regulated in the European Union. (Dayan & Kromidas 2011, 5.) In this thesis, the term was used to describe products that include natural ingredients but might also include synthetical ingredients.

Perception is defined in the Cambridge Dictionary as a belief or opinion people have of something (Cambridge Dictionary s.a.). In this thesis, the term was used to describe the feelings, beliefs, and opinions consumers had towards green cosmetic claims, and green marketing.

Sustainability is an extensively used term that can have multiple definitions. In this thesis, sustainability was defined as: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (Bruntdland, G.H. 1987, p16.)

2 The Credibility and Consumer Perception of Green Cosmetic Marketing

The second chapter of the thesis will go through the theoretical framework. The reader and researcher need to understand the theoretical framework before going into the research and result phase. Each theory and concept have been carefully chosen for the framework and will be explained and justified in the chapter. As shown in Figure 1 below, the theoretical framework has been divided into four categories: commitment to sustainability, customers, and marketing practices, which all influence the central concept, green cosmetic claims. Each category has its focal point, which will help reach the research objectives.

Cosmetic claims

Commitment to sustainability
- o Standards and Certifications
- o Laws and Regulations
- o ISO Standards

Marketing practices
- o Green marketing
- o The 5 I's of green marketing
- o Greenwashing

Consumers
- o Customer mindset

Figure 1. Theoretical framework.

2.1 Green Marketing Methods

The first category of the theory framework focuses on green marketing practices from a company perspective. The category aims to explain how companies can communicate their involvement with sustainability in a credible way. Simultaneously it tackles the issues and challenges related to green marketing and greenwashing.

2.1.1 Green Marketing

Green marketing refers to the process of marketing products with their environmental benefits ahead. The goal is to make the products more attractive in consumers' eyes by emphasizing the environmentally friendly characteristics of the products. (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 462.) When green marketing is authentic and the products genuinely have existing environmental benefits, it can enhance brand image and competitiveness. Respectively it can backfire and result in negative publicity if consumers find the claims to be falsifying or exaggerative. (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 463.) Green marketing is part of cause marketing, a type of marketing. Companies that practice cause marketing aim to gain a competitive advantage by enhancing the issues of the environment and society and consumers' welfare. (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 596.)

Author John Grant writes that there is an existing risk that green marketing might work against green issues because the latter is about reducing consumption and the other one wants to increase it. According to Grant, green marketing represents a new kind of marketing, which is about getting involved with sustainability, rather than looking at it from the outside. (Grant 2007, 2.) It means that first, there should be a company that has adopted sustainable practices, and only after that, the company should practice green marketing. (Grant 2007, 32.) Even though it was suggested in the first paragraph that green marketing can improve brand image, it should not be the main objective. In fact, it is false to think that green marketing is about making company's look green. (Grant 2007, 56.) Green marketing should be considered to be a holistic approach to doing business, aiming to improve consumers' attitudes and lifestyle and willingness to go green. To change the attitudes towards green products and lifestyle, John Grant has created a list of activities that are the following: Educating consumers through marketing, making green normal instead of presenting it as a niche lifestyle, extending green to apply all classes, and acculturating green to fit different cultures and making current practices unattractive. (Grant 2007, 32.)

Some of the challenges of green marketing are the complexity of the topic and finding an approach that will have a positive impact commercially, environmentally, and culturally.

For consumers, the challenges of green marketing lie in identifying what authentic green marketing is and what it is not. Another consumer challenge is understanding when the overall product is considered green and when the product only contains a single green feature. Companies should be specific in their marketing, but that may not always be the case, leading to misleading consumers. (Ottman 2011, 133.)

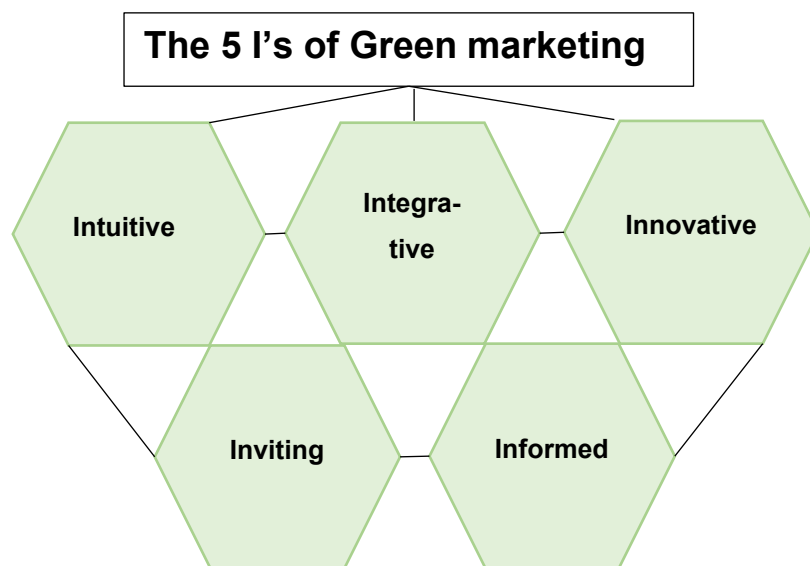### 2.1.2 The 5 I's of Green marketing

Figure 2. The 5 I's of Green marketing (Grant 2007, 56).

Figure 2 above introduces the 5 I's of green marketing that is mentioned in the book "The Green Marketing Manifesto" by author John Grant. John Grant explains that in order to succeed in green marketing, the said five elements should be utilized in the company's operations and marketing (2007, 56). In fact, the whole concept of the 5 I's of green marketing is based on the idea that being green should be a company principle rather than a proposition (Grant 2007, 56). The 5 I's are introduced in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Intuitive is about creating easily accessible green alternatives and making green seem normal rather than an alternative. Consumers might feel overwhelmed by the offering of green products because there are constantly new green inventions popping up in the markets. Especially if the consumer is not well educated on the subject matter, they might associate green products with negative and oppressive topics such as climate change. This

might cause consumers to avoid purchasing green products because they do not want to purchase products that create negative associations. The challenge lies in making green products sound tempting and inviting without intimidating or confusing consumers. John Grant suggests that marketers should think about the choice of words they use in marketing because they can make a huge difference in how consumers see the products. (Grant 2007, 51.)

Integrative as in adopting approaches that tackle multiple issues at the same time. Sustainability is a breakthrough example of the mentioned because it combines economic, social, and environmental development and focuses on the current and future situation. Suppose a company manages to adopt sustainability or create its own integrative approach. In that case, marketeers may not have to think about looking green because the company's actions speak louder than words. (Grant 2007, 51.)

Innovative, as in creating new green innovations and redesigning existing ones. By creating innovative products, companies may improve their efficiency and possibly enhance their competitiveness. The end-product does not necessarily have to be highly innovative, but the actual production phase could be. (Grant 2007, 52.)

Inviting products are attractive, efficient, durable, and affordable, which is why consumers want to purchase them. The issues are that, because green products in the past perhaps lacked quality and dysfunctional, it has remained so in the minds of people. The challenge and need are to market green products so that they are seen as better, affordable, and attractive. (Grant 2007, 53.)

Informed as in educating consumers about the subject matter, rather than aiming to create a brand image. Lack of knowledge often scares consumers away, which is why companies should inform their consumers. (Grant 2007, 53.)

John Grant mentions a sixth possible element, **image**, but explains why it is not included in the final list. The term image clearly refers to creating a reputation, but rather than focusing on looking green, companies should focus on doing green. (Grant 2007, 54.)

2.1.3   Greenwashing

Due to green being trendy, some companies practice green marketing without being green or exaggerating their involvement. Often, these companies are not changing the ways they operate towards more sustainably, but they are only aiming to create a greener

image by changing their marketing strategy. The mentioned example is called **green-washing.** As John Grant writes in his book "The Green Marketing Manifesto," being green requires companies to set new green standards instead of just making the company's existing practices look green. (Grant 2017, 62.) The term was originally created in 1986 when environmentalist Jay Westerveld used it to describe a situation where a company was trying to falsely ensure they were operating sustainably, when in fact, they had done nothing to improve their practices. (Ottman 2011, 133.)

Similarly, as in green marketing, one of the issues of greenwashing is the lack of knowledge companies and consumers might have. Consumers might have a false understanding of what being green or sustainable means. As John Grant mentions in his 5 I's of Green marketing, companies should aim to educate consumers about the topic. If consumers accept greenwashing claims as facts, it can result in a biased understanding of what green and sustainable is. (Grant 2007, 53.) Jacquelyn A. Ottman writes in her book "The New Rules of Green Marketing" that she does not believe all companies are practicing greenwashing intentionally. She believes that some companies do not simply understand what being green and sustainable means because sustainable practices are developing so fast. (2011.) All products affect the environment to some extent, but the point is to find ways to have a lesser impact. Therefore, companies must be specific in why and how their products are green or sustainable instead of exaggerating their involvement. (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 463.)

Adryan Corcione has listed examples of greenwashing methods in their article "What is Greenwashing?". The methods they listed are the following: unclear language, suggestive pictures, unreliable certifications, exaggerating claims, and unreliable claims. In addition to the mentioned methods, when a company lacks transparency, it often generates doubt about whether the company is hiding something. (Corcione 2020.) Thanks to the internet, it can be a lot more challenging to practice greenwashing nowadays because of the possibility to search for additional information regarding the company's claims (Ottman 2011, 134).

Regardless of the reasons for greenwashing, it not only harms the trust between consumers and companies, but it also makes it challenging for authentic, sustainable companies to earn credibility. Since green claims are so common nowadays, consumers have become doubtful of their validity. (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 463.) When consumers cannot trust the information companies provide, they might choose to purchase from competitors, which results in reduced revenues (Ottman 2011, 134). Simultaneously, if consumers

do not trust companies, it does not matter how factual the company's claims are because every claim will be taken in with doubt.

2.2   Green Cosmetics Claims

The second category talks about green cosmetics claims, which are an essential part of the theoretical framework. The aim is for the reader and researcher to understand what are green cosmetics claims and how they are made.

According to Theresa M Callaghan, cosmetics claims are statements used in the advertising of cosmetic products that address the benefits gained from using the product and positive aspects associated with the product's performance. Products are rarely sold using negative claims because they do not benefit consumers. (Callaghan 2019, 74.) Another definition for cosmetic claims is by the EU Cosmetics Directive Regulation No 655/2013. This amplifies the definition to include "texts, names, trademarks, pictures, and figurative or other signs that convey explicitly or implicitly product characteristics or functions in the labeling, making available on the market and advertising of cosmetic products." The EU Cosmetics Directive Regulation No 655/2013 also points out that claims are not always facts. (The European Union 2013, 2.) Nevertheless, there are regulations and legislation on what can be claimed to protect consumers and guide cosmetic companies. Laws and legislations will be covered in detail later on in the theory.

Creating a claim is a multipoint process that requires the company to consider what evidence is needed to back up the claim, how relevant is the claim, whether the claim fulfills legal requirements, and whether it makes sense to consumers (Callaghan 2019, 109). The first steps in creating cosmetics claims include identifying the target market and the needs of the target group and finally defining where the claim will be used. The mentioned steps will define what regulations and rules must be followed because regulations depend on where and to whom the claim is directed. In order to substantiate the claim, companies must have evidence they can refer to and which will strengthen the claim. (Callaghan 2019, 108.) Because claims are based on consumer needs, companies must understand what consumers want. For creating claims, Therese M Callaghan has made three key points that should be understood: what the consumer says, what the consumer actually does, and why the consumer does what they do. Using these three key points will help companies create effective product claims and produce products that address the needs of consumers. (Callaghan 2019, 77.) Once the creation process is done, the final claim should include clear and general language and terminology; otherwise, the message will not translate to average consumers (Callaghan 2019, 109).

Theresa M Callaghan has divided the anatomy of cosmetics claims into the three following key points: what the product says it does, what the product actually does, and why it does what it does (Callaghan 2019, 75). These three key points can be identified in cosmetics advertisements, such as Shiseido's self- refreshing foundation. All of Callaghan's key points can be found from the following statement "A weightless foundation, with ActiveForceTM technology, that synchronizes with skin and self-refreshes nonstop for a 24-hour just-applied look and flawless finish". (Shiseido 2021.) Average consumers might find the claim tempting, but after reading it a few times, the claim might turn out to be confusing and hard to understand.

The thesis focuses on identifying authentic green and sustainable claims from false claims. Green and sustainable claims are used in marketing with the goal to make the products seem more attractive and by emphasizing the green features of the products. There are multiple issues in green and sustainable claims, such as alternating levels of knowledge, lack of term legislations, and lack of methods to prove sustainability. Consumers might have a different level of knowledge on what is green and sustainable, which might cause them to think that false claims are true and factual claims are false. This creates challenges for cosmetic companies trying to create understandable and clear claims to average consumers. Another challenge is that many terms are not legislated, which means that cosmetic companies can use terms, such as natural, without having natural products. Because there are no definite methods to measure sustainability, it can be difficult for companies to justify their claims. Because there are no ways to measure sustainability, companies should not claim to be sustainable but rather point out the features in their products or processes that are green or environmentally friendly (Callaghan 2019, 135).

Some of the common mistakes that have been made in green cosmetics claims are claims related to animal testing, claims exaggerating the performance and benefits of the products, misleading claims, and denigrating claims (Callaghan 2019, 101-102). False or falsifying claims are not only misleading consumers, but they also harm a brand's reputation and credibility, which might then result in loss of business (Callaghan 2019, 101). On the other hand, third parties can also greatly impact how cosmetics claims are viewed. Theresa Callaghan points out that pseudoscience, the media, and influencers can threaten a cosmetics company's reputation. This is due to the phenomenon of the media and influencers spreading claims that are based on pseudoscience and other non-scientific sources. Just because a person believes in something does not make it a fact, and it should not be presented as a fact. Everyone from cosmetics companies to consumers has

the responsibility to clearly state when they are referring to a fact and when to their own opinion. When referring to a fact, it is according to fairness to state the source for the fact. (Callaghan 2019, 103.)

2.3 Customer Mindset

The third category of the theory framework focuses on understanding customers' mindsets. The aim is to form an idea for the reader and thesis writer of what is happening in a customer's mind when they think, see or hear about a brand.

Customer mindset is a concept that aims to explain all the experiences, images, perceptions, beliefs, feelings, thoughts, and attitudes customers have of a brand. The concept is the second stage of the brand value chain, a theory used to create brand value. This theoretical framework focuses on the customer mindset because the model can help companies understand their customers and bring value to them. Customer mindset includes the following five models: brand awareness, brand associations, brand attitudes, brand attachment, and brand activity. (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 129.)

Brand awareness indicates the recognition and recall of a brand. For example, Apple can undeniably consider being an extremely well-recognized brand. When a brand enjoys high recognition, it still does not mean that they are consumers' first choice. (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 129.)

Brand associations are mental images of attributes, benefits, interests, celebrities, and attitudes that consumers associate with a brand. Associations can differentiate brands from each other, while they can also add or reduce the brand's value. (Bhasin 2019a.) Everything associated with the brand can influence the brand value, which is why associations are one of the key sources of brand value (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 129).

Brand attitudes are evaluations of the satisfaction the brand brings and the quality its products hold. The attitudes towards a brand can vary between customers because each customer values different things. (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 129.)

Brand attachment measures the level of customer loyalty. Brands that have highly attached customers are more likely to stick with the brand, regardless of the type of news they hear concerning the brand. (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 130.)

Brand Activity refers to how actively customers interact with the brand or talk about the brand. A brand with active customers might bring more customers to the brand by spreading the word about the brand. (Keller & Swaminathan 2020, 130.)

2.4 Commitment to Sustainability

The fourth and final category of the theoretical framework focuses on measures cosmetic companies can take to demonstrate their level of commitment to sustainability and naturality. Some of the concepts are suggestions, while some are compulsory actions set by governing third parties. The theoretical framework focuses on laws and legislations, standards, and certifications that guide companies in creating cosmetics claims and that can be used to bring credibility to cosmetics claims.

2.4.1 Cosmetics Industry Standards and Certifications

Cosmetics certifications are attestations given to products or companies to ensure that they meet the specifically set standards (FINAS 2021). Companies use certifications as proof to support their claims and to bring more credibility to their products by demonstrating their involvement in whatever they are claiming. For consumers, certifications can act as evidence that the company's claims are reliable and help identify the different attributes the products hold.

Essentially, any party could create a certificate. Still, often the most credible certificates are provided by organizations, governments, and companies that have knowledge and experience from the industry and are not dependent on the companies that are applying for the certificates. The process of applying to a certification varies between different certificating parties, but what is similar with all is that they are not automatically awarded. It means that if a company wishes to get certified, they must independently apply for one. Once a company has been awarded a certificate, they will be continuously observed so that they indeed continue fulfilling the certification criteria. Depending on the certification, they might be admitted for a period of time, after which the company must apply again. (FINAS 2021.)

What might be unreliable for consumers is that some companies create certifications by themselves. It means that instead of having a third party providing the certification and observing the company's ability to follow the standards, the companies do everything on their own. Motivations behind creating a company's own certificate are variable. Some companies may not simply be able to meet the requirements, and other companies might

think that the certification process is too expensive, and some might disagree with the set standards. Regardless of the reason for creating a company's own certificate, it can seem suspicious for consumers' because no third party is observing if the company is doing what they are claiming.

Another challenge for consumers is identifying different certifications because multiple certificates use similar visual attributes. A great example is the use of bunnies in cruelty-free certificate logos. PETA, Coalition for Consumer Information on Cosmetic (CCIC), and Choose Cruelty-free are all independent organizations that use a bunny in their certificate logos. Choose cruelty-free requires companies to demonstrate that they have not been using animal-tested products or ingredients for the last five years before applying. The requirement concerns the whole company, manufacturers, and suppliers that the brand has been involved with. (Choose Cruelty-free s.a.) CICC requires, in their leaping bunny program, that companies only use ingredients or formulations that have not been tested on animals or purchased from third parties that have used animal-testing on the specific ingredient (Leaping Bunny program s.a). PETA's global beauty without bunnies' program requires companies never to be involved with animal testing in any stage of the development of the ingredients or the final products or with suppliers that have conducted animal tests (Peta s.a). The problem with three similar certificates is that consumers start may associate all bunny containing logos as a guarantee for animal-test-free products. This creates an opportunity for companies to put bunnies into their product packages and utilize the associations the bunnies make without actually having non-animal-tested products.

There are plenty of different cosmetics certificates concerning sustainability, naturalness, and animal testing. The following certifications are just a few examples mentioned in the book Formulating, packaging, and marketing of natural cosmetics products. (Dayan & Kromidas 2011.)

The COSMOS standard certifications are certificates for natural and organic cosmetics. The Cosmos standard was merged from six individual European organizations that provided their own certificates with their own standards. The goal in creating COSMOS was to harmonize the standards for natural and organic in Europe. (Dayan & Kromidas 2011, 36.) Nowadays, COSMOS certifications are being used in over 60+ countries in over 22 000 products. The COSMOS standard takes into account the "origin and processing of the ingredients, the composition of the total product, manufacturing and packaging, environmental management, labeling, and communication inspection and certification and control." (Cosmos s.a.A.) In addition to these, the final products must include a minimum of 20% percentage of organic ingredients (Dayan & Kromidas 2011, 79). After a company

meets the set standards, it can apply for multiple COSMOS certifications through individual certification bodies. The bodies are the following Australian Certified Organic, Bureau Veritas Certification, Ecocert Greenlife, Cosmecert Sasu, IONC, ICEA, Control Union Korea Co. Ltd., CAAE, Soil Association Certification, Ekolojik Tarim Kontrol Org, and Korea Testing and research institute. (COSMOS s.a.C.) *COSMOS Natural* and *COSMOS Organic* are meant for products, and *COSMOS Certified* or *COSMOS Approved* are meant for ingredients. (COSMOS s.a.B.)

ECOCERT is a French located non-governmental organization that is represented in multiple countries. The organization awards companies with Ecocert certificates such as *Natural Cosmetic* or *Natural and Organic Cosmetics*. Ecocert follows standards created by different organizations such as COSMOS and Organic Agriculture Europe. The standards have differences, but all focus on environmentally friendly practices. A cosmetic company that has obtained one of the certificates can use either the term *certified natural* or *certified natural and organic* in the product packaging. (Dayan & Kromidas 2011, 63.)

2.4.2 Laws and Legislations

Creating cosmetics claims is a process that must consider the laws and regulations of the country where the products are being sold and produced. Laws and regulations were created to monitor that products are being advertised with honesty, evident credibility, and integrity (Callaghan 2019, 94). Laws and regulations not only guide how cosmetics products can be marketed, but they also define what must be included and what cannot be in the product packaging (Callaghan 2019, 84). Regardless of the legislation, some cosmetics companies have chosen not to follow them. This often results in the company losing credibility (Callaghan 2019, 101).

In Europe, the governing law for cosmetics is called the cosmetic directive EU 1223/2009, and it includes six requirements or criteria's that must be met when developing a claim. Each criterion is linked with each other and, therefore, must be viewed as a whole. The following criterion and requirements are from the cosmetic directive of the EU, but similar ones exist in multiple other countries.

The first criterion is *legality*, which implicates that cosmetics products must meet the required legal requirements and be provably safe before entering any market. Regarding the product being considered safe, it must be authorized or approved by an authority within the EU, accepted based on the "average-consumers" perceptions, and finally proven to include the claimed benefits. (Callaghan 2019, 94.)

The second criterion is *truthfulness*, which indicates that companies must tell the truth and facts in their claims. This also means that companies cannot publish false or irrelevant claims. For example, a company cannot say that their product is vegan if the product should not typically include any animal origins ingredients. The claim would be irrelevant because it distorts the truth about the ingredients and gives the idea the product is animal friendly because it is vegan. This requirement links with the first one so that if a claim is not legal, it is not truthful. (Callaghan 2019, 95.)

The third criterion is *evidence,* which means that there must be evidence, such as studies and conducted tests, to justify the truthfulness of a claim that is made. This includes any sort of claims that are related to the performance or characteristics of the products. (Callaghan 2019, 96.)

The fourth criterion might sound similar to truthfulness, but when truthfulness focuses on facts, *honesty* refers to the credibility of the claims concerning average consumers. This means that the claims must be honest and clearly explain what the products do, without exaggeration. What should also be considered is the relevance of the claim. For example, if a company claims its foundation will last on the skin for 24 hours, it can be proven, but it may not be a relevant attribute. (Callaghan 2019, 96-97.)

Fairness, the fifth criteria, indicates that claims should be fair without denigrating any competitors. Callaghan uses the example of companies claiming their products are preservative-free, which suggests that preservatives might be harmful, even though they are not. This kind of claim might confuse average consumers, but it also denigrates competitors that might have products with preservatives in them. (Callaghan 2019, 97.) Generally, the claim free-from is considered misleading because it might confuse the consumer to think that the removed ingredient is harmful. Therefore, it is not recommended to be used (Callaghan 2019, 98).

The sixth and final requirement is *informed decision making,* which means that any claim that is made should be understandable and clear to average consumers. This means that claims should only contain information that average consumers can understand with common sense and without being an expert on the topic. (Callaghan 2019, 98.)

The EU cosmetic directive has also listed claims that are non-permitted to be used in cosmetics advertising in the EU. The non-permitted claims include chemical-free and cruelty-

free. Cosmetics products cannot be chemical-free because everything is made of chemicals (Callaghan 2019, 62.) A cruelty-free claim is considered illegal in the EU because it suggests that the product has been produced without animal testing. In reality, many cosmetics companies use data that has been acquired through tests performed on animals, meaning that the production process has required animal testing. (Callaghan 2019, 66-67.)

Regardless of the EU's mentioned non-permitted claims, there are unregulated terms, such as organic and natural terms. The problem is that unregulated terms do not require any proof, meaning that they can be used by any company without having to prove their claim. The difference is, if the company wishes to use the term certified organic, this requires the company to be certified. Some of the terms have not been regulated because the EU has not been able to create a specific definition of the terms. (Dayan & Kromidas 2011, 20.) This means that companies have a huge responsibility in determining when they are morally entitled to use the terms.

2.4.3   ISO Standards

International Organization for Standardization, shortened as ISO, is an international, independent, and non-governmental organization. ISO was formed in 1946 and nowadays consists of 165 member body countries with their own representative. Together all the member bodies have united their knowledge to consensually create international standards regarding business practices in technology and manufacturing. Some of ISO's goals are to provide standards and guidance that can help companies face global challenges and support innovation. (ISO s.a. A.) In 2021 there are over 23 705 international ISO standards consisting of multiple fields of business (ISO s.a. B).

ISO as an organization does not issue certifications, but they do have a Committee on Conformity Assessment that provides certification standards that third parties can utilize. Some certifying third parties are accredited by ISO, meaning they can be considered to be competent. Still, it is not an obligation to be accredited to use ISO standards for certification. If a company manages to get certified by a third party, the company can display the certificate in their content by clearly defining which ISO standard is in question. (ISO s.a. C.)

ISO 26000 is an international standard meant for companies that are committed to operating in a socially and environmentally responsible way. The standard was launched in

2010, and it aims to introduce guidance to help companies implement corporate social responsibility into their operations globally. (ISO s.a. D.) The guidance focuses on social responsibility comprehensively and includes implementing sustainable practices and principles to the whole organization, characteristics, and issues of social responsibility and communication about social responsibility. The standard also encourages companies to consider their locations' political, environmental, societal, legal, and cultural perspectives when implementing the ISO 26000 standards (Discovering ISO 26000 2018, 7).

Utilizing ISO 26000 can be beneficial in many ways. It can increase a company's competitive advantage, help earn a reliable reputation, improve relationships with different parties, and help prove its commitment to sustainable development (Discovering ISO 26000 2018, 5). Unlike some ISO standards, ISO 26000 cannot be certified, meaning that it can only be used as an example to address how the company practices corporate responsibility (ISO s.a. D).

2.5   Summary

The difference between green marketing and greenwashing is small but meaningful. Green marketing can be beneficial for a brand image when done correctly while greenwashing can cause reputational harm. Companies that wish to utilize green marketing should first develop their business practices and operations to be more ethical and sustainable - then create cosmetics claims utilizing the sustainable benefits of the products. Companies that exaggerate their sustainability or aim to look greener and do not change their practices towards actually more sustainable are conducting greenwashing.

For average consumers, it can be challenging to identify authentic green marketing from greenwashing. Therefore, companies should create cosmetic claims that are understandable and truthful for each individual regardless of their demographic background. Laws and regulations are continuously developed to guide businesses on how green cosmetic claims can be made. Despite that, there are still highly used terms such as natural and organic that are not regulated and can be very misleading. This means that consumers have to identify truthful claims from misleading ones.

Cosmetics companies can take different measures to demonstrate that their green claims are truthful. The measures include following sustainable standards and applying for a third-party certificate.

3 Research Methods

The next chapter goes through the research process of the thesis. The research process was done according to the steps mentioned in the book Marketing research by Alvin C. Burns (Burns et al. 2017, 69). The first step was to establish a need for a research and identify the main problem. This thesis has two main problems: consumers not identifying authentic green cosmetics companies and green cosmetics companies getting mixed with greenwashing companies. The main research question and investigative questions were created based on the problems. This thesis has five investigative questions and one main research question. Next, a suitable strategy was created based on the investigative question and main problem; this is called research design. This thesis's research design includes two individual phases that required secondary and primary data. Once the data was obtained, it was analyzed using suitable methods. (Burns et al. 2017, 70-77.)

3.1 Research Design

Research design is a plan that includes the methods used to collect data needed to solve the main problem of research (Burns et al. 2017, 92). The research design of this thesis included two individual phases. Figure 3 below reflects the whole research design, which was a **mixed-mode design**.
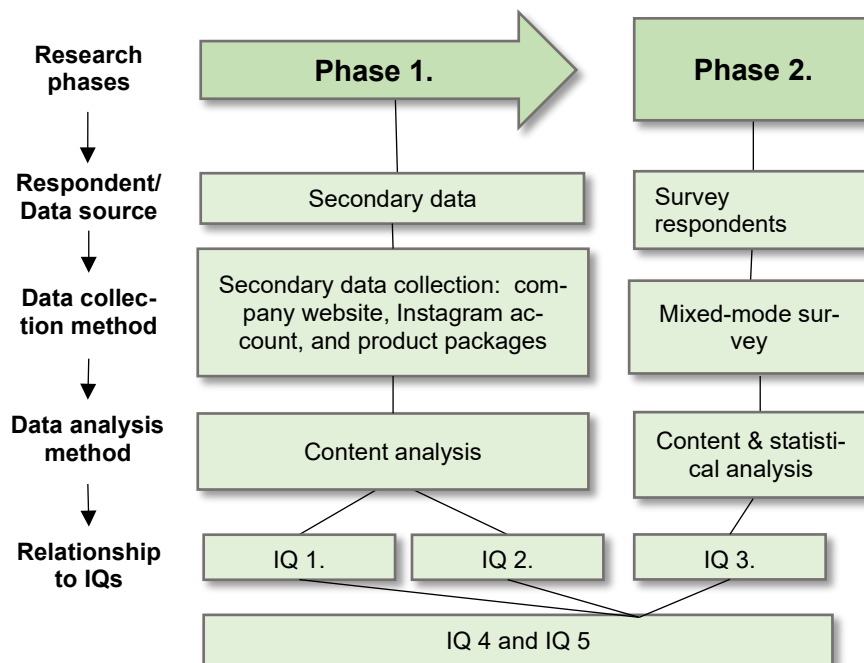
Figure 3. Research design.

Quantitative data collection refers to the collecting of measurable data in a standardized and structured way. Quantitative research includes observational methods and interrogative methods (McGivern 2013, 189.) Another way to collect data is to use qualitative methods. **Qualitative data collection** aims to gather more detailed and rich data from the respondents. When quantitative research provides measurable data, qualitative research primarily produces descriptive results. (McGivern 2013, 52.)

The first phase focused on collecting *secondary data* from company websites, social media accounts, and product packages. The data was collected from two individual cosmetic companies, Tarte Cosmetics, and Mádara. The secondary research was done by first identifying accessible and relevant data sources, reviewing and analyzing the data using content analysis, and then finally combining the data collected from multiple sources and using it to answer the first two investigative questions (McGivern 2013, 111). The research design's secondary data collection differed from the theoretical framework by being conducted later in the thesis process. The theoretical framework focused on existing literature, while the secondary data research focused on understanding existing company practices while it utilized the already gained knowledge from the theoretical framework. The first phase aimed to answer the first two investigative questions.

In the second phase of the research design, the collected data was *primary*. The data was collected through a **self-completion survey**, which is part of quantitative interrogative methods. A self-completion survey made in English and provided through Webropol allowed respondents worldwide to respond to the survey anonymously at their preferred time. The survey consisted of structured and open-ended questions, meaning that the data was analyzed using statistical and content analysis. A self-completion survey is the most effective when it is suitable in length, precise, and uses clear terminology. (McGivern 2013, 201.) The second phase aimed to answer the final three investigative questions.

This thesis is a **cross-sectional exploratory research** because it represents a point in time and investigates a problem. The design was a **mixed-mode design** because it utilizes qualitative and quantitative methods (McGivern 2013, 217).

3.2 Population and Sampling

A population is defined as the entire group studied in a research project defined by the research objectives. (Burns et al. 2017, 238.) The population for the thesis was consumers from all over the world that use makeup, such as foundation, lipstick, or mascara. There were no demographic requirements for the population because the thesis was not done for a specific cosmetic company with a target group.

Non-probability sampling is one of the two methods commonly used to select samples for research. Non-probability sampling is a suitable technique if the research is exploratory and does not require highly accurate estimates. If the research must acquire precise information from a sample, **probability sampling** is more suitable.

This thesis' research is quantitative, and for that, non-probability sampling has its weaknesses because it includes techniques that mainly provide subjective outlooks and perhaps vague information. On the other hand, the research aimed to provide generally applicable information for cosmetic companies rather than in-depth information about the sample unit, making non-probability the more suitable sampling method. (McGivern, 2013, 234.)

Volunteer sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is valuable when it is considered to be challenging to identify the wanted population. The sample of the thesis represented individual consumers within the population that voluntarily decided to respond to the survey. The sample unit was one person. The used volunteer sampling technique is called **self-selection sampling**, which requires that sample units individually identify their desire to respond to the survey. (Saunders et al. 2019, 323.) Self-selection sampling is useful for exploratory research, such as this thesis. The technique can provide useful information regarding the sample units because they voluntarily respond to the survey. Simultaneously, the data obtained through self-selection sampling should not be regarded as representative of the whole population's opinions and feelings because it requires that each sample individually evaluates their suitability to the population. (Saunders et al. 2019, 318.) It was essential for the research objectives that the respondents had opinions and some knowledge regarding makeup, and therefore self-selection sampling was considered the most suitable technique.

In non-probability sampling, there are no rules concerning the sample size. What should be taken into account is the purpose and objective of the research. (Saunders et al. 2019, 315.) The goal was to get at least 100 responses from individuals worldwide. Considering the lack of financial resources and tight schedule, it was thought to be challenging to obtain more than 100 responses. Because the research utilized secondary and primary data, around 100 responses from the survey were considered appropriate and realistic amount.

3.3   Data Collection

Data for the thesis was collected through a secondary data collection and self-completion online survey, which required no interviews and offered the respondents the opportunity to

answer anonymously (McGivern 2013, 201). Secondary data collection is beneficial because it provides quickly accessible data, is inexpensive, and can enhance the obtained primary data. On the other hand, secondary data has its disadvantages because it might be incompatible, lacking needed information, and utilize definitions differently (Burns et al., 2017, 124). To avoid the disadvantages, primary and secondary data were both utilized in the thesis.

A survey is an effective collection method because it provides standardization, is easily administrable and analyzable, and provides somewhat detailed information (Burns et al. 2017, 173). An online survey should be used if the topic is considered interesting enough for individuals to respond to it and if it provides a suitable way to reach the target population. Using an online survey method includes the risk of having a low response rate. (McGivern 2013, 201.) Self-selection sampling is considered a suitable technique to avoid a low response rate risk. As was mentioned, self-selection sampling requires that sample units individually identify their desire to respond to the survey, meaning that most likely individuals interested in the topic will respond. (Saunders et al. 2019, 323.)

The secondary data collection was done by analyzing the company website, social media accounts, and product packages of Tarte Cosmetics and Mádara. These are internationally operating cosmetics companies that have used green cosmetics claims in their marketing, which is why they were chosen for the analysis. The data collection was done in April 2021, meaning that the data was collected from sources published before that.

The survey was open for responses from the 7th of April until the 16th of April. A link to the survey was posted to social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. The posts included a short introduction of the survey topic and information about whom the survey was aimed at. The goal was to gain the attention of the individuals that are part of the thesis population to maximize the response rate. Additionally, the researcher sent the survey through WhatsApp to individuals believed to be part of the thesis population. The survey included statements with response options that the respondents were asked to rate. A few open-ended questions were included, but none were compulsory to ensure that respondents would finish the survey. The survey was designed to be easy to follow and quick to complete (McGivern 2013, 201). The respondents were not expected to be familiar with some of the used terminology, which could have caused a bias in the data. Therefore, some terminology was explained in the survey.

The survey was open for responses from the 7th of April 2021 until the 19th of April 2021. Eventually, the survey was opened by 365 individuals, from whom 145 started replying.

Ultimately, the survey was finished by 107 individuals, meaning that the response rate was 29,4%. Of all of the 107 respondents who started responding, 91 were eligible to continue after the respondents were divided into two groups by the first question. The survey ended for those who answered that they do not use color cosmetics.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

The acquired secondary qualitative data were analyzed using **content analysis methods**. The secondary data included text and pictures, making content analysis a suitable method. First, the data was collected and organized. Then the data was analyzed using categorizing. Then the researcher aimed to identify themes, patterns, and possible relationships between the data. Finally, the data was compared with concepts from the theoretical framework, and the findings were introduced. (Saunders et al. 2019, 573-574.)

The primary data acquired from the online survey was analyzed using quantitative & statistical methods. The statistical analysis was performed using Webropol and Microsoft Excel. Open-ended questions were analyzed using content analysis methods and compared with concepts from the theoretical framework.

3.5 Reliability, Validity, and Relevance

The research design aimed to provide reliable, valid, and relevant data. In order to minimize the risk of obtaining or creating invalid or unreliable data, specific actions were taken during the secondary and primary data research.

The first step in the secondary data research was to identify the possible risks related to unreliability and invalidity. The most significant risks in obtaining the secondary data were that it would be biased, invalid, and of poor quality. In order to avoid the mentioned risks, the obtained data were evaluated. According to Burns et al., a researcher must consider the following questions when evaluating secondary data. What was the motivation for creating the data, who collected the information, how the data was collected, and the type of information provided. (Burns et al. 2017, 126-127.) The theoretical framework, which includes secondary data, was considered reliable if multiple literature sources provided similar information. The secondary data obtained from company websites, social media accounts, and product packages were considered to be prejudiced because the obtained data was used in marketing. Therefore it was recognized that the data had been created to advertise the companies and possibly only provided beneficial and positive information.

The first step in designing the online survey was identifying the possible risks related to unreliability and invalidity. The most significant risk was considered to be **question bias,** which refers to the act of influencing the way the respondents answer. Question bias can be avoided with four steps; determining what is measured and how, precise wording, organizing the questions logically, and testing the survey before launching. (Burns et al. 2017, 216.) The online survey was made using general terminology, and the questions were put in a logical order. The goal of the survey was explained in the beginning, and at times some terms were defined according to literature sources. Before the final survey was launched, it was sent to five individuals who gave feedback and improvement tips.

The thesis topic was considered to be relevant because positive attitudes towards green cosmetics products have increased (Deloitte 2020). The more consumers wish to purchase green and sustainable cosmetics, the more important it is that they learn to identify authentic green cosmetics companies.

4   Results and Data

The next chapter introduces the results and data obtained from the secondary data research and an online survey. The results were divided into four subchapters that represent the investigative questions. The first subchapter utilizes the data collected from qualitative secondary data research, and the last three utilize data collected from the online survey.

4.1   How Cosmetics Brands Practice Green Marketing

This first subchapter presents the results obtained from the secondary data research. The aim was to answer the first two investigative questions, *"How do cosmetic brands engage in green marketing/greenwashing?"* and *"What type of certifications cosmetic companies use to indicate commitment to sustainability?".* The point was not to measure the effectiveness of green marketing but to understand the methods the brands use to communicate their sustainability and if the brands hold any certifications to back up their claims. The theoretical framework was also utilized to point out some of the methods used.

The first company is **Mádara Cosmetics**, a Latvian certified natural cosmetics brand founded in 2006. Mádara cosmetics claims that their products are natural, organic, and packed in 100% recyclable packages. They also aim to reduce their carbon emission, provide energy-efficient manufacturing and shorten the pay cap between male and female employees. In 2019 the brand offered over 400 legal and psychological consultation sessions to those in need due to their contribution to the non-governmental organization MARTA. (Issuu s.a.)

As is seen in Figure 4 below, Mádara's logo includes the sentence "Mádara organic skincare" written in a simple black font. The logo does seem to utilize any attributes that suggest that the brand is green, other than the name "organic skincare."

Figure 4. Mádara logo (Mádara organic skincare s.a.).

Mádara's Instagram feed includes pictures of their products, nature, and people using their products. As shown in Figure 5 below, the color theme of the feed is primarily green,

with lots of pictures of nature, plants, and Mádara products. People in the pictures are mainly supposed females dressed in neutral clothes with natural hair colors. The feed seems to suggest that the products are natural, which is also seen in some of the product packages that include illustrations of plants.
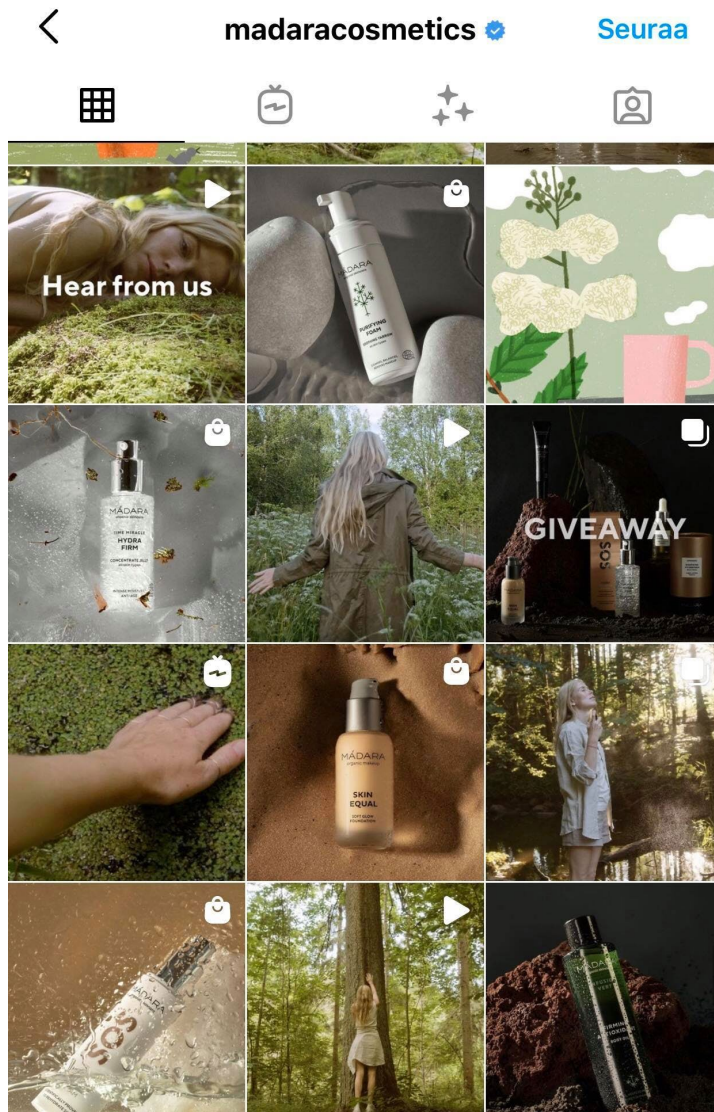

Figure 5. Screenshot of Mádara Cosmetics Instagram page (madaracosmetics s.a.).

As was defined in the theoretical framework, cosmetics claims are not only verbal statements but also names, trademarks, pictures, and other symbolic statements utilized in the marketing of cosmetics products. (The European Union 2013, 2). Although the Instagram feed of Mádara does not provide any specific information regarding how the products are green, it clearly includes green claims in the form of pictures, product labeling, and figuratively. Because the feed promotes nature so heavily, it can start shaping the mindset of

consumers towards Mádara. If consumers look at the feed and are then asked to describe, they most likely remember the colors, nature, and other green attributes. Next time when they see the brand, they might remember the green claims they saw on Instagram, which might then meant that they have started associating the brand with nature. The associations have nothing to do with facts because, as was said, the feed did not include any specific information regarding how the brand might be green. On the other hand, the brand's logo suggests that Mádara is an organic brand. Consumers that value nature and organic cosmetics products most likely develop a positive brand attitude towards Mádara, while those who do not value those things might not find it attractive.

A simple color theme is repeated on Mádaras website/online store, which utilizes black and white colors and a minimalistic theme. The website includes symbols suggesting that the brand is green. (Mádara organic skincare s.a.). Mádara advertises their foundation *Skin Equal Soft Glow Foundation SPF15* as follows: "Born from organic skincare expertise, this light as air mineral foundation worships your skin and shares your values". The claim emphasizes the product's green attributes while also following the anatomy of cosmetic claims; what the product says it does, what the product actually does, and why it does what it does (Callaghan 2019, 75). The product is packed in a simple glass bottle with no suggestive symbols. The claim can be considered to be done according to the EU Cosmetics Directive because it is; legal, truthful, honest, provable, and fair. To confirm the claim that the product is organic, Mádara has been issued the *COSMOS Natural* certification by Ecocert.

The second company, **Tarte Cosmetics**, is an American cosmetics brand founded in 1999. Tarte uses *high-performing natural ingredients*, their self-created trademarked term, and has been a subsidiary of Japanese cosmetics Group KOSÉ since 2014. The brand claims that all of its products are formulated from clinically proven naturally-derived ingredients and are paraben-free, mineral oil-free, and gluten-free. Tarte holds PETA´s cruelty-free certificate, although they are owned by KOSÉ that is not cruelty-free. Tarte has an online shop that offers consumers the opportunity to purchase their products worldwide (Tarte s.a.)

Tartes has a simple logo, as shown in Figure 6, which includes the word "Tarte high-performance naturals" written in a simple purple font. The logo is visible on the brand's website that utilizes the colors white and purple similarly. Similarly, with Mádara, the brand logo includes a green claim because it suggests that the products are high-performing and natural.

Figure 6. Tarte Cosmetics logo (Tarte s.a).

Tartes' Instagram feed includes pictures of their products and people using their products, as shown in Figure 7 below. The color theme of the feed is similar to the purple shade Tarte has in their logo. Similarly, with Mádara, Tarte has figurative claims in their Instagram posts because they include plants and fruits, which are easily associated with nature. The product packages that are seen on the Instagram page do not seem to include any green claims. The overall feeling of the feed does not create as strong associations to nature as Mádara. (Tartecosmetics s.a).
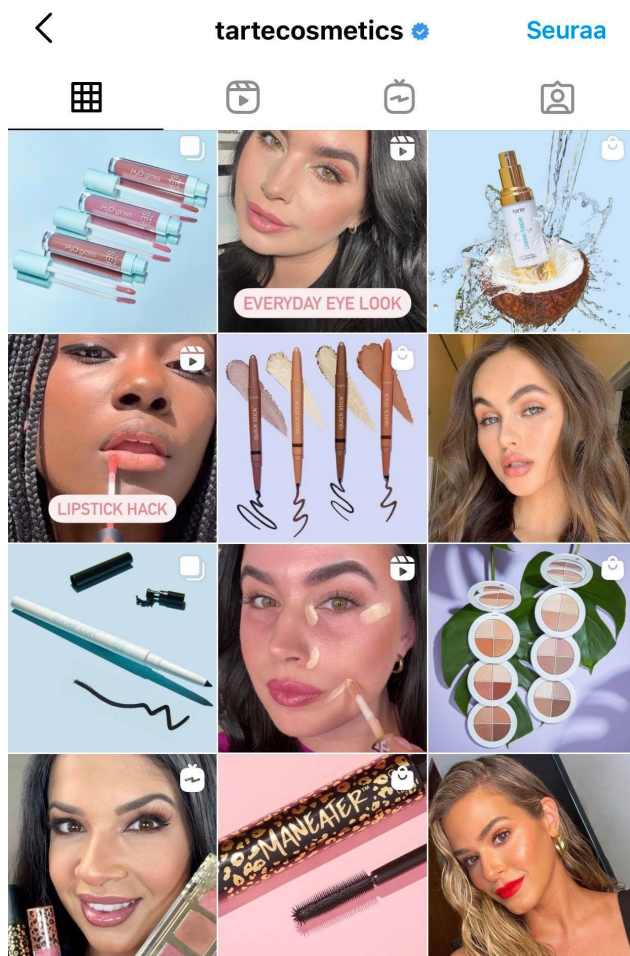
Figure 7. Screenshot of Tarte Cosmetics Instagram page (Tartecosmetics s.a).

On Tarte's website, they use similar tones of purple as they have in their logo and Insta-gram feed. The product packages that are on display on their website include little details like wooden-looking corks. Additionally, the names of the products include terms that sug-gest that the products contain organic ingredients such as clay, water, and bamboo. Tarte advertises their foundation Amazonian clay as follows: "12-hour full coverage foundation - This oil-free, vegan, matte liquid foundation will breathe life back into your skin". In addi-tion, the brands' website says that a dermatologist has tested the product. (Tarte s.a. a.) The product is packed in a brown tube, with a leaf symbol and a cork that looks like wood. Once again, the claim and packaging follow the anatomy of cosmetic claims and empha-size the products' green attributes (Callaghan 2019, 75). The claim includes the statement oil-free, which, as we know from the theoretical framework, is considered misleading be-cause it might create an idea that the removed ingredient is harmful. On the other hand, free-from claims are not illegal in the EU. (Callaghan 2019, 98.) The claim can be consid-ered to be done according to the EU Cosmetics Directive because it is; legal, truthful, hon-est, provable, and fair, even though the product does not have any certifications to prove that it is vegan.

Overall, both companies use similarly pictures, terms, and symbols to create green asso-ciations, although they are targeted at different audiences. One thing that separates the two brands is that one of them holds certifications by a third-party provider and the other one has none. Consumers might still find both brands credible because Mádara does not visibly advertise that they hold such certifications. The mentioned two brands are just two examples among many cosmetics companies that provide green cosmetics claims in their marketing.

4.2   Respondent Background

The second subchapter focuses on the background of the respondents. Because the only requirement was that the respondents are individuals who use makeup, the background questions were placed at the end of the survey.

As shown in Figure 8, the age distribution was relatively even. Most respondents were be-tween the age of 19 to 24. The following largest age groups were individuals between the age of 25 to 29 and individuals between the ages of 35 or older. Perhaps surprisingly, only 7% of the respondents were between the age of 30 to 35, making the age distribution rela-tively broad.
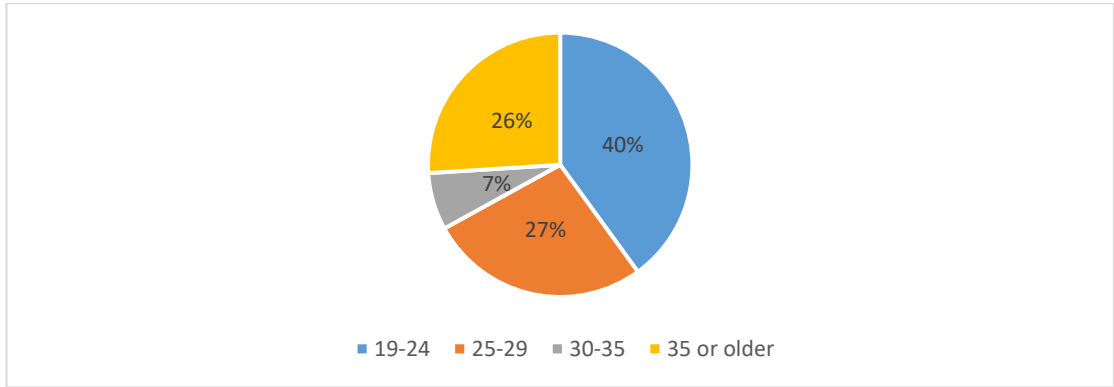
Figure 8. Age distribution.

The second background question was about gender identification. Females clearly over-powered the gender distribution of the respondents, as is shown in Figure 9. Of all the respondents, 98% identified themselves as females, while only 2% identified themselves as males.
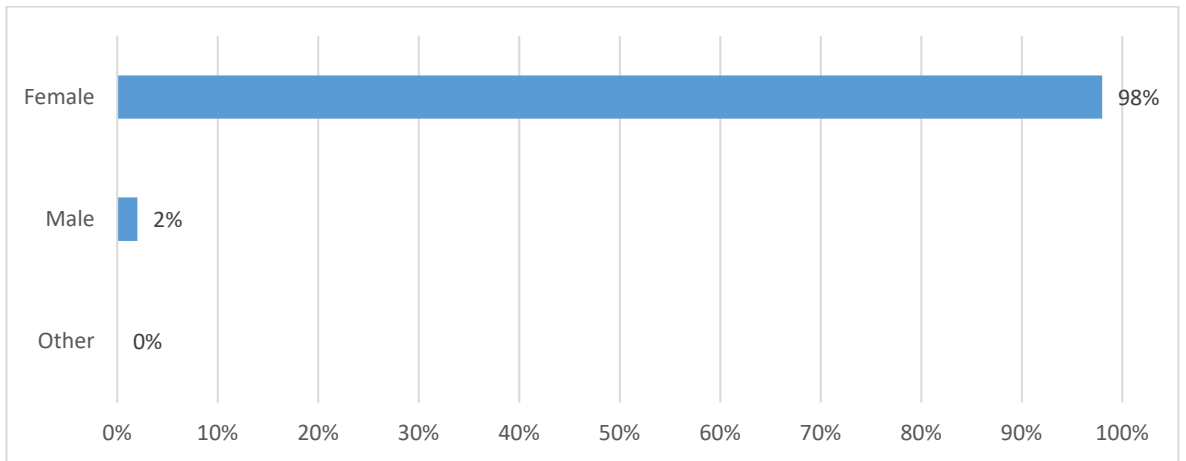

Figure 9. Gender distribution.

The next question was about location. The survey was shared on internationally used platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, with the hope that individuals around the world would reply to it. As the Figure 10 below indicates, of all the respondents, 93% were located in Europe, 5% were located in America, and 2% were located in Asia.
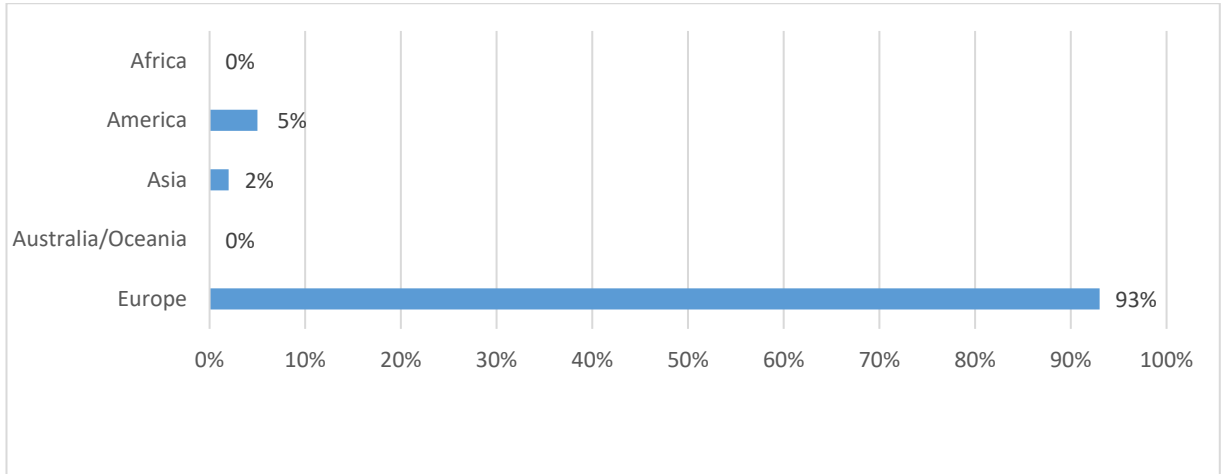
Figure 10. Content of origin.

The final question in the whole survey was "What is your educational background?". Figure 11 indicates that the results were dominated by respondents with bachelor's degrees/undergraduates by 73%. The rest of the responses were nearly equal together, with 14% of respondents having a Master's degree or higher and 13% of respondents having graduated from secondary school. What can be said regarding the respondents is that all of them had obtained at least a secondary level education.
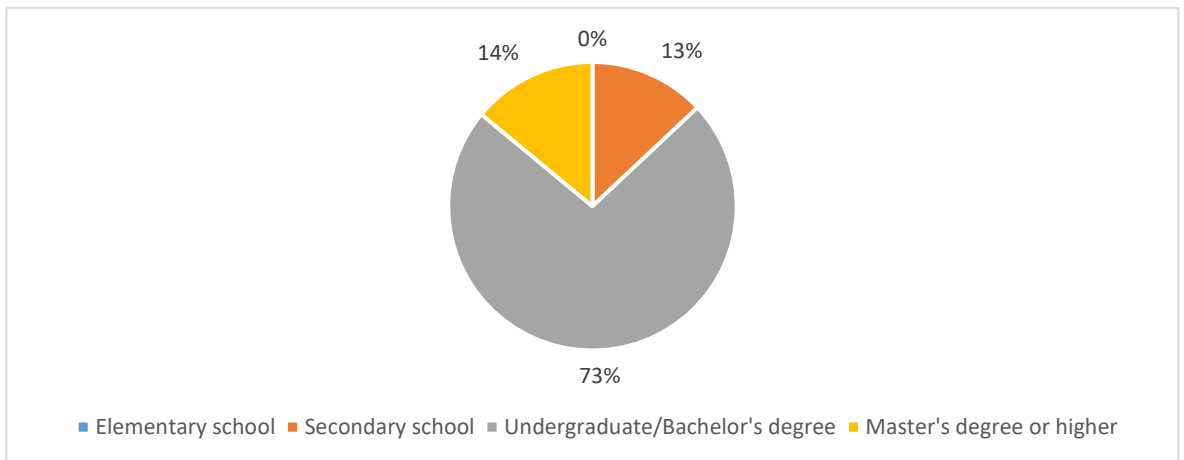
Figure 11. Educational background of respondents.

4.3   Consumer Perceptions of Green Marketing and Greenwashing

The third subchapter presents the responses obtained from the online survey. The investigative question of the subchapter answers was: *"What are the consumer perceptions of green marketing in the cosmetic industry?"*

The survey was open for replies from the 7th of April 2021 until the 19th of April 2021. As Table 1 below indicates, the survey was opened by 362 respondents from whom 145 individuals started responding. The first page of the survey included an introductory text that explained to whom the survey is aimed at. Out of all the individuals who opened the survey link and started responding, 107 submitted their responses, making the response rate 73% if only the ones who began responding were included. If the individuals who opened the survey were included as well, the response rate was 29%, making it relatively low. It was expected that the response rate could be relatively low because of the nature of the topic. It was considered essential to obtain responses from individuals that are interested in the topic.

Table 1. Survey follow-up statistics.

Follow-up statistics	Total	Percent-age
	(N)	%
Submitted responses: Public weblink	107	73
Survey opened by respondents	362	249
Started responding	145	100

The first question in the survey was, "Do you use any color cosmetics?" Below the question was a definition of what was meant with color cosmetics in the survey. As shown in Figure 12, 88% of respondents answered yes, while 12% answered no. The survey ended for those who answered no because the wanted unit was individuals who use makeup.
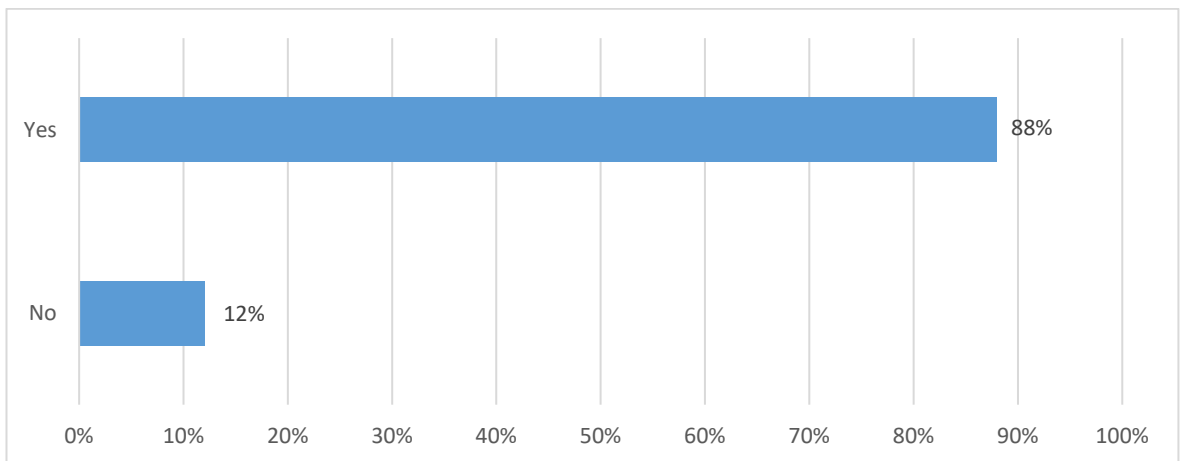

Figure 12. Distribution of makeup users.

The next question was about purchasing makeup and what affects the respondents' decision. The question was intended to work as a warm-up question so that the respondents would not be asked too heavy questions right away. Of all the respondents, the three

clearly most important attributes when purchasing makeup were price (76% of respondents), brand (65% of respondents, and recommendations (59% of respondents).
The results indicate that green attributes were more important than tempting advertising, certifications, or country of origin but still not the top reasons for purchases.
As can be seen from Figure 13, Natural ingredients and no animal testing were the fifth and sixth most important attributes.
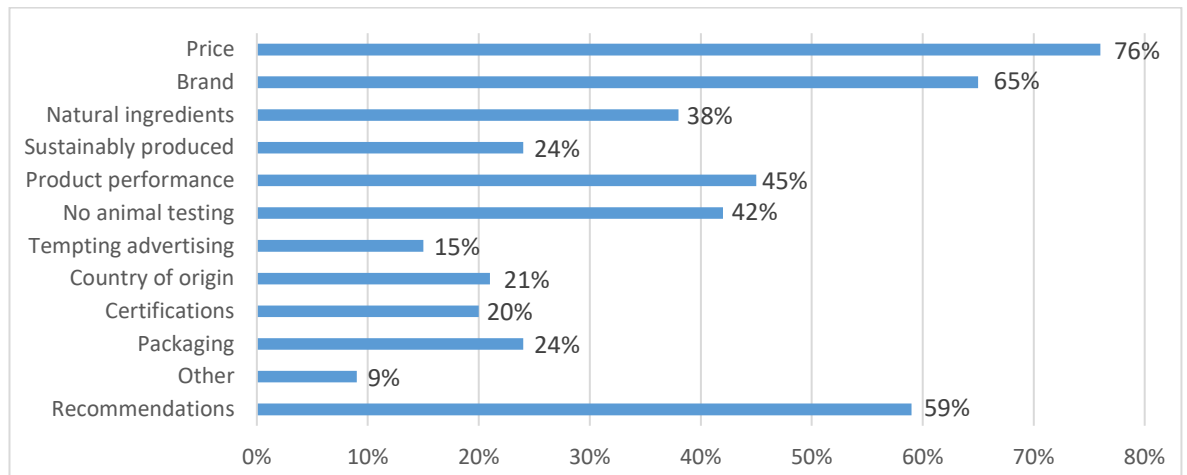

Figure 13. Effects on the purchasing decisions regarding makeup.

In the next question, the respondents were asked to rate statements utilizing a 5 point Likert scale. 1 was equal to Strongly Disagree, and 5 was equal to Strongly Agree, while 3 represented a neutral opinion. The statements can be seen in Figure 14 below and were designed to help understand the respondents' attitudes towards green marketing.

First, the respondents were asked if they know what green marketing is. The mean of the statement was 3,9, indicating that most of the respondents had quite a neutral opinion. The most agreed statement was, "Cosmetic companies should be specific in how they are green/sustainable," with a mean of 4,6. The next most agreed statements indicate that the respondents believe that cosmetic companies are more attractive if they are green or sustainable (mean of 4,0) and that their green claims are reliable if they can prove them to be true (mean of 4,1).

The overall results of Figure 14 indicate that the respondents care whether a cosmetic company is green or not and that their attitudes towards green claims are skeptical. On the other hand, if a company can specify how they are green or prove its green claims, the respondents trust them more.

Figure 14. Attitudes towards green marketing.

The following question was about attitudes towards greenwashing. To ensure that the respondents understood what greenwashing is, they were explained the term before the question.

Once again, the respondents were asked to rate statements utilizing a 5 point Likert scale. As shown in Figure 15, the results strengthen what was already indicated in the results of the previous question, that the respondents are doubtful over green claims. With a mean of 4,5, the respondents believe that cosmetic companies are using misleading attributes in their marketing to create a greener or sustainable image. The respondents found greenwashing to be unethical (mean of 4,3), and some agreed that they avoided purchasing products from greenwashing cosmetic companies (mean of 3,5). Perhaps surprisingly, the respondents were neutral regarding whether they could identify greenwashing (mean of 3,0) or if they struggle understanding green claims such as vegan or natural (mean of 2,6). What can be said of the results overall is that the respondents believed that some cosmetic companies are practicing greenwashing but that were not necessarily able to identify it.
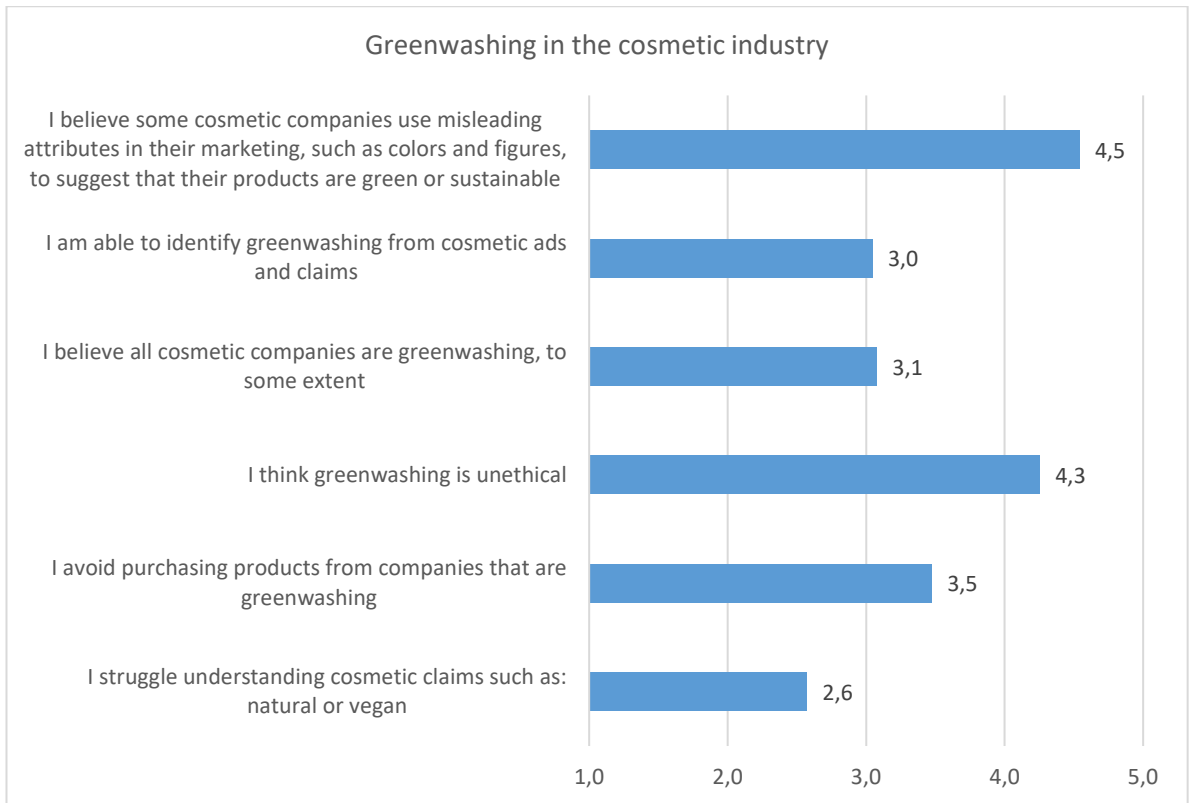
Figure 15. Attitudes towards greenwashing in the cosmetic industry.

Figure 16 presents the result obtained from the statement "I search information about cosmetic products and their sustainable and green attributes." The aim was to understand how many of the respondents are willing to search for more specific information regarding companies' practices. The results were relatively equal, with 55% of the respondents answering yes and 45% answering no.
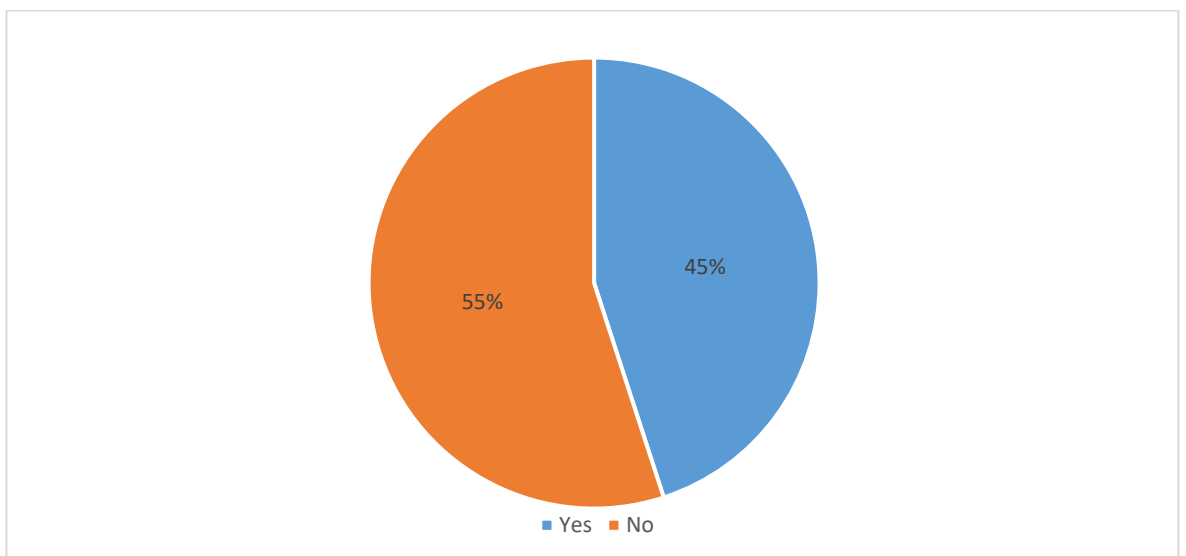

Figure 16. The distribution between consumers looking for information about cosmetics products and their sustainable and green attributes.

Next, a follow-up question was asked, aimed at those who answered that they do search information about cosmetics products and their sustainable and green attributes. The question was open-ended, voluntary and requested the respondents to specify where they searched information from. The answers were analyzed using content analysis.

Thirty-seven respondents answered the question. All of the respondents looked for information from the internet, intending to find a source that could prove a point beyond the company's advertising. Twenty-four of the respondents mentioned third-party websites and product packages, and 12 cited the company's website as a source for information. Of all of the respondents who were using the company's website, nine said they used other third-party websites. Eight respondents mentioned that they used Peta or Animalia as sources when studying animal testing claims. Six respondents said that they also relied on the word of beauty influencers in addition to the company website. However, they did point out that they understand that the influencers might not be cosmetics professionals. To conclude the answers, it seems evident that most of the respondents used third-party sources, although some of the sources may not be considered scientific or reliable. The results of the open-ended question confirm the theory of John Grant that companies need to focus on being green rather than looking green (Grant 2017, 62). If a company has green and sustainable practices and mentions that in their marketing, no matter where consumers search for information, they will always come to the same results; the company has green and sustainable practices.

4.4   Practicing Credible Green Marketing

The fourth subchapter presents the rest of the data obtained from the survey. The aim was to answer the final investigative questions, *"How to do credible green marketing for a cosmetics company?"* and *"How can consumers identify greenwashing of cosmetics companies?"* The data obtained from this part can be modified and then used in practice.

The respondents were asked to name attributes that they associated with greenwashing. The question was open-ended and free of choice. 57 of all respondents replied, and the answers were analyzed using content analysis. Out of all respondents, 51 associated the terms natural, eco-friendly, cruelty-free, or vegan with greenwashing. Some respondents added that they found it especially suspicious if a product had all the mentioned attributes or if the product or brand did not have any certifications. One respondent specified that they disliked it when cosmetics companies used negative marketing by describing what is not in their products instead of advertising the included ingredients. Around 34 of the respondents mentioned that long ingredient lists and non-recyclable packages also created

associations with greenwashing. 9 respondents said that they associated suggestive visual attributes such as green colors, leaves, or bohemian fonts to greenwashing if they were used in the packaging without any other green claims. Another mentioned greenwashing association was ownership structures where large corporations own smaller companies committed to sustainability. Sometimes the owner corporations might not follow sustainable practices. Altogether, the respondents seemed to believe that any green claims that were not specified, explained in detail, or supported by certification caused associations to greenwashing.

Figure 16 below presents the results gained when the respondents were asked to rate statements regarding cosmetic claims. A 5-point Likert scale was utilized again, with five representing strongly agree and one representing strongly disagree. The results indicate that the most well-understood claim was Cruelty-free with a mean of 3,8. The following most understood claims were organic (mean of 3,5), eco-friendly (mean of 3,3), and paraben-free (mean of 3,2). All of the other claims were below the mean of 3 but over 2,1. The results indicate that the respondents had mostly neutral or understanding opinions about the listed claims.
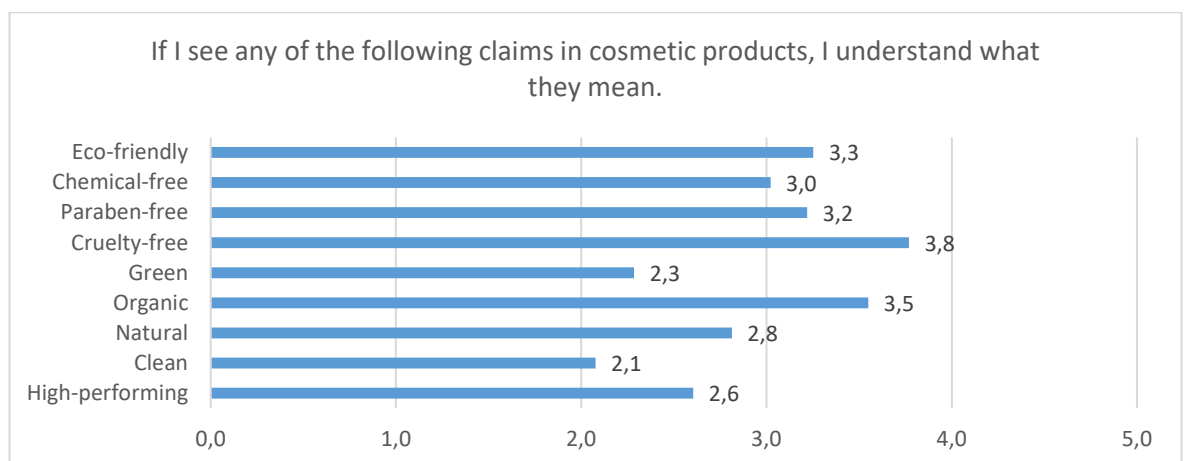

If I see any of the following claims in cosmetic products, I understand what they mean.

Claim	Mean
Eco-friendly	3,3
Chemical-free	3,0
Paraben-free	3,2
Cruelty-free	3,8
Green	2,3
Organic	3,5
Natural	2,8
Clean	2,1
High-performing	2,6

Figure 17. Understandability of cosmetics claims.

Figure 18 presents the results gained from the statement "I know what the ISO 2600 standard is". Regardless of what the respondents answered, they were explained the term afterward. Clearly, most of the respondents did not know the standard, with 81% of the respondents answering no.
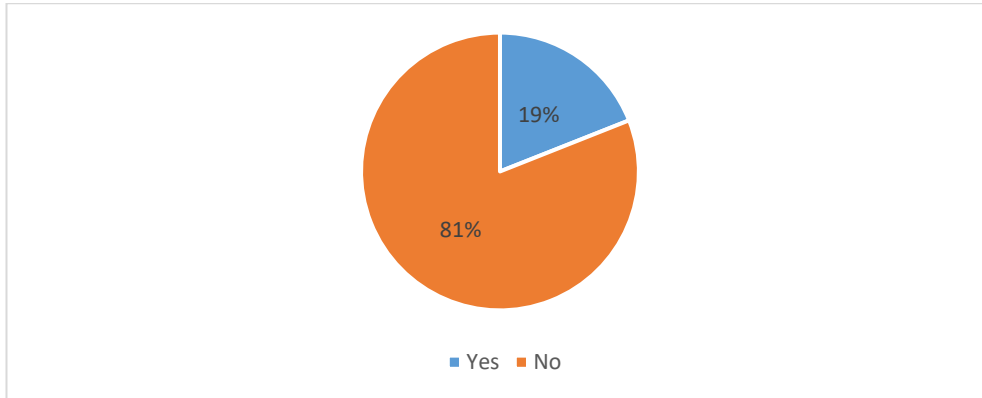
Figure 18. Knowledge regarding the ISO 26000 standard.

In the following question, the respondents were asked if they knew what cosmetics certifications are. As can be seen from Figure 19, this time, 63% of the respondents answered yes. Regardless of the answer, all of the respondents were defined the term cosmetics certification.
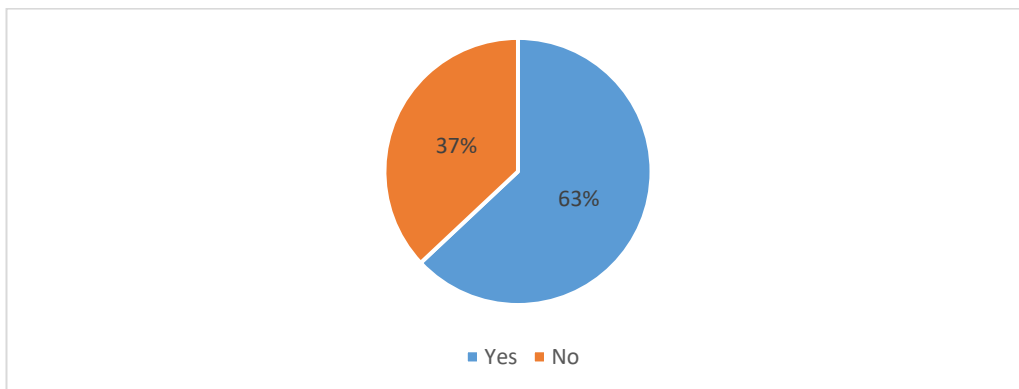

Figure 19. Knowledge regarding cosmetics certifications.

In the final question related to the actual topic, the respondents were asked to rate statements. This time the statements were about green cosmetic claims and the actions companies could take to make them more trustworthy in the eyes of consumers. Once again, a 5-point Likert scale was utilized, with 5 representing Strongly Agree and 1 representing Strongly Disagree. As Figure 20 presents, the results were considerably even. The three most agreed actions were clear and understandable language (mean of 4,5), being specific in how the brand is green or sustainable (mean of 4,4), and transparency (mean of 4,3). Following ISO 26000 Standards and having a certificate were also considered to be positive actions that improve trustworthiness.
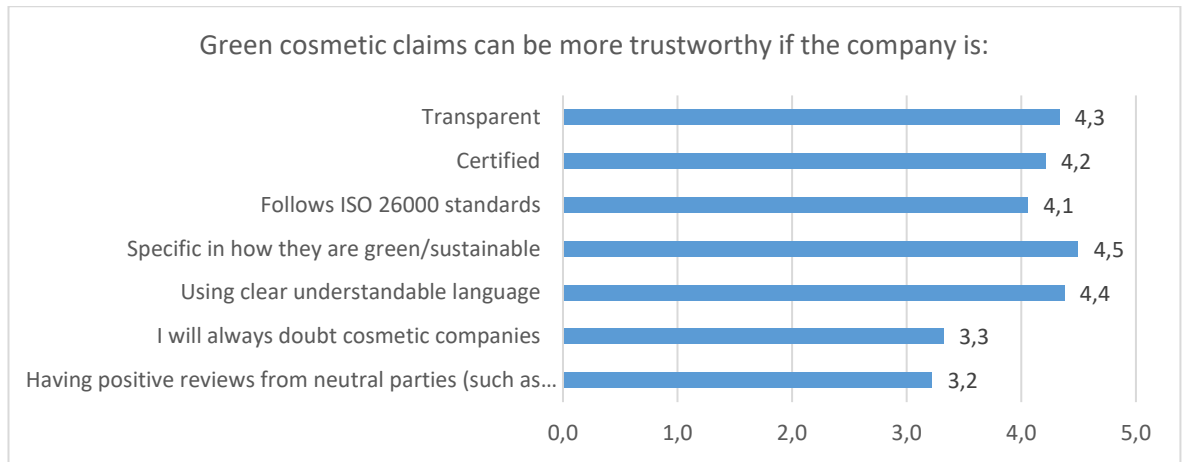
Figure 20. Trustworthiness of green cosmetic claims.

4.5 Summary of Results

In this subchapter, the results are summarized in the same order they were presented in the subchapters.

The results of the secondary data research pointed out that cosmetics brands engage in green marketing by using verbal statements, suggesting pictures and packages, symbols across different marketing channels, and certifications. Out of the two studied brands, only Mádara had a certificate to indicate their commitment to sustainability while Tarte was certified cruelty-free.

The online survey results indicate that the respondents found green marketing attractive but unreliable unless companies are specific about why they are considered green or had certifications to prove their claims. Greenwashing was perceived as negative, unethical, unattractive, common but hard to identify.

The results indicate that in order to do authentic green marketing, a cosmetics company needs to be transparent, specific, clear, and certified. Similarly, consumers could identify greenwashing if they see unrecyclable packages, long ingredient lists, unclear language, and suggestive symbols but no certifications or detailed information to support the claims. When a cosmetics company is not able or willing to share precisely how they are green or sustainable, the consumers should become suspicious. On the other hand, if the company is a subsidiary of a large corporation, consumers should research the owner corporation's sustainable practices.

5   Discussion

This is the final chapter of the thesis. The chapter goes through the key findings, recommendations, and reliability of the finished research process. In the last subchapter, the researcher will reflect on her own learning during the thesis process.

5.1   Key Findings

The research objective of the thesis was to understand what is perceived as credible green marketing in the cosmetics industry and how consumers can identify greenwashing cosmetics brands. The research question for the thesis was *"How can cosmetic companies improve the credibility of green marketing from the perspective of the consumer? "* In order to reach the research objectives, a set of investigative questions were created.

The first investigative question was*, "How do cosmetics brands engage in green marketing/greenwashing?".* The results of the secondary data research pointed out that the studied cosmetics brands engage in green marketing by using verbal green claims, suggestive pictures, and symbols. Green marketing was visible everywhere, starting from product packages and websites to the brands' Instagram profiles. The message was similar in all channels, and the aim was clearly to create associations with nature and point out the green attributes and benefits of the products.

The second investigative question was, *"What type of certifications cosmetics companies use to indicate commitment to sustainability?"* Out of the two studied cosmetics brands, only Mádara had a certification, and that was the *COSMOS Natural* certification by Ecocert. The certificate is provided to companies that meet the standards regarding natural ingredients. Tarte Cosmetics was provided with PETA's cruelty-free certificate that indicates that they do not have animal-tested products or ingredients. Both of these certifications are from third parties, so they can be considered credible. However, consumers should be careful when they see a brand with a certificate because numerous certificate logos look alike but might have very different standards.

The third investigative question was *"What are the consumer perceptions of green marketing?".* The results were obtained through an online survey. As explained in chapter 4, the results indicated that green marketing is a pretty well-known marketing practice that is seen as an attractive practice among the respondents. On the other hand, the respondents did not find green marketing credible because the results suggested that the respondents met green claims with suspicion. Cosmetics companies that are able to prove

their claims enjoy a higher degree of credibility. The methods to verify the claims included having a certificate, being transparent, avoiding vague claims, and using clear language. Greenwashing was perceived as an unethical marketing practice, although the respondents believed it to be common among the cosmetics industry. The respondents mostly felt that greenwashing was hard to identify, which is perhaps why so many of them perceived green marketing as a slightly uncredible practice. The results suggested that even though greenwashing was seen as a negative practice, it did not affect the respondents' purchasing decisions.

The fourth investigative question was *"How to do credible green marketing for a cosmetics company?"* The survey results indicate that in order to do authentic green marketing, the company needs to be transparent, reputable, and specific. Additionally, the green attributes of the products should be expanded to the product packaging. Most of the respondents said they looked for additional information from company websites and third-party sites to confirm the green claims. This points out the importance of having green practices rather than just aiming to look green because if a company is hiding something, it can get easily caught. Perhaps surprisingly, suggestive symbols were not seen as a credible method to do green marketing.

The final investigative question was *"How can consumers identify greenwashing of cosmetics companies?"* A good way to identify greenwashing is to look for unregulated terms, suggestive symbols, and vague claims in cosmetics advertising. Consumers should also be careful with certificates because sometimes companies might use suggestive symbols such as bunnies that look like certificates but are not.

The research question was answered based on the data obtained from the investigative questions. Companies can improve the credibility of green marketing by becoming transparent and specific in what they do.

First, the company should define what sustainability and being green means to them. As we know from the theoretical framework, the terms can have multiple meanings and mean different things to different individuals. After the terms have been defined, the companies should shift their focus on developing their practices towards more sustainable. Optionally, a company could start following sustainable standards such as the ISO 26000 that has been created by a third party. The ISO 26000 standard is meant to guide companies that want to get involved with sustainability.

Once the company practices are sustainable and constantly developed, the focus can shift to marketing. As we now know, consumers appreciate transparency and clarity. When the company practices are sustainable, the marketing team can focus on telling the truth about the green and sustainable benefits. The marketing should be informative but suitable for the target audience Certifications can be used to verify the claims, but most importantly, any green claims should be truthful. Too much information should not be shared simultaneously, but the company could create an easily accessible database to their website to provide more detailed information regarding their practices.

Overall, cosmetics companies should not exaggerate or share false information. Creating claims based on the actual green benefits of the products is considered wise. Truthful claims will help build trust between the company and its customers.

5.2   Reliability, Validity, and Relevance

The thesis's reliability, validity, and relevance were discussed in Chapter 3. The goal was to avoid the risks that could affect to the reliability and validity of the data. As was explained in Chapter 3, specific actions were taken during the secondary and primary data research to minimize the risks of obtaining or creating invalid or unreliable data.

The first source of data in the thesis was literature used in the theoretical framework. The researcher read multiple books about the thesis' topics. Each section of the framework included at least two individual literature sources. The theoretical framework can be considered reliable, valid, and relevant because multiple literature sources provided similar information that was used in it. The used literature was as new as possible, although some older literature was utilized.

The secondary data obtained from company websites, social media accounts, and product packages were evaluated. The goal of the secondary data resource was to understand the different green marketing practices of the studied cosmetics companies. The collected data was considered to be reliable, valid, and relevant because it was collected directly from the cosmetics companies' websites and social media accounts.

The most significant risk in the primary data collection online survey was question bias. Question bias was avoided by creating the survey using general terminology and by putting the questions in a logical order. Some terms were defined to ensure that the respondents understood what they were referring to in the survey. The answers were analyzed using Webropol and Microsoft Excel, which are reliable tools.

Overall the thesis can be considered reliable, valid, and relevant because it utilized secondary and primary data and had a current topic. Because the number of responses was not as high as the researcher hoped, the results represent the opinions of a small group of individuals.

5.3   Recommendations for Consumers

This subchapter presents recommendations for consumers that want to learn how to identify authentic green and sustainable cosmetics companies.

The first recommendation is to think about personal values regarding sustainability. Just because someone else thinks a company is not deeply enough involved in sustainability does not mean that everyone must feel the same way; everyone's values are different. Once the consumer is aware of their values, they can more easily identify what they consider to be acceptable green marketing and what not.

The second recommendation is to carefully think about what is said. Often, companies provide consumers with green claims that sound tempting, but when they really start to think about them, they might turn out to be vague claims that mean nothing. Especially terms vegan, eco-friendly, natural, organic, or free-from claims should be considered a warning sign unless the company has been certified. The mentioned terms are not regulated and therefore can be used by any company. Authentic green or sustainable cosmetics companies do not have to use unclear claims. Also, if what the company is saying sounds too good to be true, it most likely is.

The third recommendation is to look for additional information. Unfortunately, identifying authentic companies often requires additional work, but the information should not be difficult to find. The company website should include easily accessible information about the company's practices. If the company cannot clearly explain how they are sustainable or green, it should be considered alarming.

Sustainability is not only about the ingredients of the products. What should be considered is the source of the product packaging. If there is no mention of the packaging material, or the information is hard to find, consumers should question the products sustainability.

The final recommendation is to look for certifications provided by independent parties. Before a company is admitted with a certificate, it must meet the set requirements. Once a

company has been provided with a certification, it acts as proof that its practices are at least according to the specified requirements. Certificating bodies often share their requirements online, making it possible for consumers to read the requirements.

5.4 Recommendations for Companies

This subchapter presents recommendations for cosmetics companies that want to practice green marketing and be as credible as possible.

The first recommendation is to have actually sustainable practices. Green marketing should not be about aiming to look green but about doing green. When a company is just aiming to look green, they risk losing their reputation if they are caught greenwashing. When the practices are sustainable, it is easier to create green claims.

The next recommendation is to be transparent. Companies should be open about what they do, how they do it, and how they aim to develop their practices. Being transparent while practicing green marketing is easier when the company practices are authentically involve sustainability.

Green claims should be informative, clear to average consumers, concise and specific. Green claims should not be too long; otherwise, they might be ineffective. The company should provide more detailed information on their website so that those consumers that want to know more can easily access the data. Perhaps surprisingly, companies should avoid using suggestive symbols such as leaves, trees, or natural colors, because the survey respondents associated them with greenwashing.

Finally, companies should not use terms such as natural or vegan unless the company is certified. The survey results indicated that consumers find terms such as natural, organic, vegan, and eco-friendly suspicious. Similarly, using free-from claims was considered harmful because it sounds negative. Instead of using those terms, the company could explain what "good" is in the products, what makes them sustainable or green, and what value the product brings to the consumer.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Research

This subchapter introduces recommendations for people wanting to research the topic further.

First of all, further research could focus on individuals of one country or continent rather than the whole world. This way, the research would produce more detailed data that is perhaps easier to utilize in practice. Alternatively, the research could compare the differences between different countries or genders.

Greenwashing and green marketing is a relevant topic concerning any industry, so a similar study could be expanded to other industries as well. It would be interesting to analyze the green marketing practices of the food industry or fashion industry, for example.

Finally, to make sure that the further research is credible, any surveys should be done so that they reach at least 1000 individuals. This way, the obtained data can be considered to be more reliable and representative of the sample unit.

5.6 Reflection on Learning

The whole thesis process was challenging but interesting for the author. Since the author started her studies, she had known that she would want to do her thesis about greenwashing in the cosmetic industry. Overall the author believes that she managed to finalize the whole thesis well, although she understands that some things could have been done differently.

Covid-19 restrictions caused the biggest challenges for the author. During the writing process, the author worked full time at home and could not see any of her friends or go to the gym. Due to this unnormal situation, the author felt tired a lot of the time. On the other hand, because the author found the thesis topic so interesting, she learned many new things during the process. The author had a lot of opinions regarding the topic in the beginning but, during the process, learned that a lot of her opinions were shared by the respondents.

During the writing process, the author understood how important it is to have a flexible plan which can be easily modified. The more further the author got with the process, the more she understood that she needed to modify the original plan. The author understands that the writing process could have been scheduled better because it was very tight. Especially the survey was published a bit too late, meaning that the number of responses was low. On the other hand, the author finished the thesis by the deadline, meaning that she successfully carried out the thesis process within the set time.

The author is most proud of the theoretical framework for which she studied over ten books, although not all of them were utilized. She also got a lot of good feedback from the online survey respondents.

The overall level of the thesis is not as good as the author's previous level of work, but this was due to the challenging situation. In the end, the thesis did manage to reach its objectives making the author happy with the overall work.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Online survey

Green claims in cosmetic advertising

📄 Mandatory fields are marked with an asterisk (*) and must be filled in to complete the form.

This is a survey for a research type of Bachelor's thesis for the Degree Programme of International business in the Haaga-Helia UAS. The thesis aims to study how cosmetic companies can improve the credibility of their green marketing from the perspective of the consumer.

The survey is meant for individuals that use makeup. The data will be collected anonymously and will only be used for the thesis. The survey will take about 5 minutes to fill.
Thank you!

Background information:
Green and sustainable claims are used in cosmetic ads by emphasizing the green features of the products with the goal of making the products seem more attractive. Green claims are not only verbal, but they also include names, trademarks, pictures and figurative symbols used in cosmetic ads (Callaghan 2019, p74.) According to EU's regulations green claims must be legal, truthful, honest, provable and understandable to average consumers.

1. Do you use any color cosmetics? *
In this survey the word cosmetic is used to describe all kinds of color cosmetics such as foundation, mascara and lipstick.

○ Yes

○ No

2. What affects your purchasing decision when buying makeup? *

- [ ] Price
- [ ] Brand
- [ ] Natural ingredients
- [ ] Sustainably produced
- [ ] Product performance
- [ ] No animal testing
- [ ] Tempting advertising
- [ ] Country of origin
- [ ] Certifications
- [ ] Packaging
- [ ] Other
- [ ] Recommendations

In this survey the word green and sustainable are used to describe companies or products, that are environmentally friendly, use natural ingredients and are produced ethically. Companies that practice green marketing aim to point out these features.

3. Please rate the following statements (1= Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree) *

	1	2	3	4	5
I am aware of what green marketing is	○	○	○	○	○
Cosmetic companies are more attractive if they are green/ sustainable.	○	○	○	○	○
I don't care if a cosmetic company is green/sustainable	○	○	○	○	○
Cosmetic companies should be specific in how they are green/sustainable	○	○	○	○	○
I believe when cosmetic companies claim they are green/sustainable	○	○	○	○	○
I believe green cosmetic claims are reliable, if a company can prove them to be true	○	○	○	○	○

Sometimes companies are claiming to be green, or exaggerating their involvement in sustainability, without actually being green or sustainable, this is called greenwashing.

4. Greenwashing in the cosmetic industry *

Please rate the following statements (1= Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
I believe some cosmetic companies use misleading attributes in their marketing, such as colors and figures, to suggest that their products are green or sustainable	○	○	○	○	○
I am able to identify greenwashing from cosmetic ads and claims	○	○	○	○	○
I believe all cosmetic companies are greenwashing, to some extent	○	○	○	○	○
I think greenwashing is unethical	○	○	○	○	○
I avoid purchasing products from companies that are greenwashing	○	○	○	○	○
I struggle understanding cosmetic claims such as: natural or vegan	○	○	○	○	○

5. I search information about cosmetic products and their sustainable and green attributes *

○ Yes

○ No

6. If you answered yes, where do you search information from?

7. Name a few attributes that you see in cosmetic claims and advertisements, that make you question whether the company is greenwashing

8. If I see any of the following claims in cosmetic products, I understand what they mean. *

(1=Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
Eco-friendly	○	○	○	○	○
Chemical-free	○	○	○	○	○
Paraben-free	○	○	○	○	○
Cruelty-free	○	○	○	○	○
Green	○	○	○	○	○
Organic	○	○	○	○	○
Natural	○	○	○	○	○
Clean	○	○	○	○	○
High-performing	○	○	○	○	○

9. I knew what ISO 26000 standard is. *

○ Yes

○ No

10. I know what cosmetic certifications are. *

○ Yes

○ No

ISO 26000 is an international standard meant for companies that are committed to operating in a socially and environmentally responsible way. The standard was launched in 2010 and it aims to introduce guidance to help companies implement corporate social responsibility into their operations.

Cosmetic certifications are attestations that are given to products or companies to assure that they meet specifically set standards (FINAS 2021). A cosmetic brand can be for example, organically certified.

11. Green cosmetic claims can be more trustworthy if the company is: *

(1= Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
Transparent	○	○	○	○	○
Certified	○	○	○	○	○
Follows ISO 26000 standards	○	○	○	○	○
Specific in how they are green/sustainable	○	○	○	○	○
Using clear understandable language	○	○	○	○	○
I will always doubt cosmetic companies	○	○	○	○	○
Having positive reviews from neutral parties (such as magazines or bloggers)	○	○	○	○	○

12. If you have any suggestions how cosmetic companies could be more reliable with their green claims you can mention them here:

13. How old are you? *

○ 19-24

○ 25-29

○ 30-35

○ 35 or older

14. How do you identify yourself? *

○ Female

○ Male

○ Other

15. What continent are you from? *

- ◯ Africa
- ◯ America
- ◯ Asia
- ◯ Australia/Oceania
- ◯ Europe
- ◯ North America
- ◯ South America

16. What is your educational background? *

- ◯ Elementary school
- ◯ Secondary school
- ◯ Undergraduate/Bachelor's degree
- ◯ Master's degree or higher