Marimekko as a building block of online identity – Representations of the self and Marimekko in Instagram users' posts

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Tämä Pro Gradu -tutkielma on tehty tunnetun suomalaisen design-yrityksen, Marimekon, innoittamana mutta taloudellisesti riippumattomasti. Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää, millaisissa yhteyksissä Marimekko esiintyy globaalisti sosiaalisen median käyttäjien päivityksissä. Tarkasteltava sosiaalisen median kanava on visuaalista sisältöä painottava Instagram. Tutkimus pyrkii selvittämään, kuinka Instagram-käyttäjät tuovat Marimekkoa esiin osana identiteettiään ja minkä teemojen, mielipiteiden ja asenteiden yhteydessä Marimekko esiintyy Instagram-käyttäjien päivityksissä. Kvalitatiivinen ja multimodaalinen diskurssianalyysi selvittää, millaisia tunteita ja mielikuvia Marimekko-päivityksissä esiintyy, miten omaa persoonaa tuodaan esiin Marimekon avulla, millä kielellisillä keinoilla kannanottoja tehdään ja millaiseen elämänpiiriin tai ilmiöiden joukkoon Marimekko liitetään. Tutkimus pyrkii myös selvittämään, mikä puoli kansainvälisen suuryrityksen liiketoiminnoista painottuu kuluttajien viesteissä vahvimmin ja vastaako kuluttajien keskinäinen viestintä sosiaalisessa mediassa niitä pääviestejä, joita Marimekko lähettää yrityksenä omasta visiostaan, brändistään ja tuotteistaan.

Tutkielman alkupuolella esitetään lyhyt taustakatsaus Marimekon globaaleihin viesteihin ja Instagramiin sosiaalisen median välineenä sekä somepalvelun tyypillisiin sisältöihin. Teoriaosassa määritellään tutkimuksen keskeiset käsitteet ja tehdään katsaus aiempaan tutkimuskirjallisuuteen. Teoriaosuus keskittyy identiteettiin, hashtagien käyttöön ja kannanottoon liittyvään lingvistiseen tutkimukseen. Metodologian taustana käytetään Bucholtz & Hallin (2005) teoreettista kehystä kielestä sekä identiteetistä. Georgaloun (2017) tutkimusta identiteetin rakentamisesta Facebookissa sovelletaan Instagramiin, ja tutkielma hyödyntää Zappavignan (2015) hashtag-tutkimuksen jaottelua. Suuren hakutulosmäärän vuoksi tutkielman aineisto on kerätty Instagramista satunnaisotannalla #marimekko-hashtagia käyttäen vuosilta 2016–2018. Koska Instagram-päivitysten merkitykset muodostuvat tekstin, kuvan ja symbolisten emoji-elementtien yhteisvaikutuksesta, tutkimus käsittelee viestejä multimodaalisina kokonaisuuksina.

Tutkielman tulokset osoittavat, että Marimekko toimii osana Instagram-käyttäjien identiteetin rakentamista. Instagram-käyttäjät julkaisivat lähes pelkästään positiivista sisältöä, jossa he käsittelivät Marimekkoon liittyviä aiheita ja elämäntyylejä. Suosituimpina teemoina korostuivat muoti ja koti. Positiivisia kannanottoja ilmaistiin sanavalintojen, hashtagien ja emojien avulla. Instagram-käyttäjät kertoivat mielipiteitään Marimekon tuotteista aina vaatteista astiastoihin ja sisustuskankaisiin, mutta postausten pääosassa olivat henkilöt itse sekä heidän jokapäiväinen elämänsä ja kokemuspiirinsä. Hashtagia #marimekko käytettiin, kun haluttiin ilmaista henkilökohtaisia mieltymyksiä ja tyylejä – ja sitä kautta kertoa myös identiteeteistä.

Avainsanat: sosiaalinen media, diskurssianalyysi, Instagram, kielellinen identiteetti, Marimekko, hashtagit, kannanotto, multimodaalisuus.

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1 Introduction

Social network sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter have revolutionised the way we communicate and share content. Various digital social media technologies that did not exist 15 years ago have now become irreversibly embedded in our everyday routines. We communicate online more than ever and spend our days looking at screens of different sizes, searching for information on the web, reading, writing, sending messages and producing multimodal content on various social media platforms. As we publish status updates and share information on our social media walls, we also become involved in the process of creating online identities – narratives about how we live our lives and what kinds of things we appreciate or do not appreciate – either consciously or unconsciously.

Some decades ago, brand-related discourse was led by businesses and brand owners, as public commercial communication was one-way only (i.e. companies would send out promotional messages to consumers via mass media such as TV, radio, magazines or newspapers). Since then, and especially after the birth of the social media, the operating environment has changed dramatically. Now individuals can publicly discuss brands online and utilise their brand preferences or oppositions as building blocks of their own online identities. For companies, this has turned out to be both a positive and a negative phenomenon. On one hand, they cannot control what is written about them anymore. Social media platforms have made it very easy for anyone to gain and share information and form opinions about different brands with strangers across the globe. Disappointed customers can publicly post negative messages for anyone to see. A negative feedback can go viral in a matter of hours and, at its worst, cause a sensation. The power of consumers is unprecedented in that respect. On the other hand, the emergence of social media has also worked for companies' interests. People readily recommend brands that they love to their friends and acquaintances, and the potential audience of one person may be even thousands of people in social network sites. In addition to these positive word-of-mouth recommendations online, social network sites have worked for companies' interests in other ways as well. Big data has created an entirely new era for marketing strategists since people are willing to admit considerable amounts of personal information on platforms like Facebook. By combining that data with sophisticated predictive algorithms, marketers can gather detailed knowledge about social media users: who they are, where they live, what things they are interested in, what their life situation is, how they engage with brands and what kinds of products and services they will likely consume in the near future.

Although companies regularly monitor their own b-to-c communications, they still lack some interesting information, i.e. how consumers engage with each other on their personal social media

accounts and how people initiate discussions that include mentions of brands – when the messages are not directed at companies but solely at other consumers. One of the reasons why companies do not mine this type of data in great detail is that a thorough analysis would be very time-consuming and labour-intensive, and it would require a considerable amount of manual work. In this study, I wanted to shed some light on the subject.

1.1 The aim of this study

This Pro Gradu thesis is inspired and supported by Marimekko, a renowned Finnish design company. The aim is to perform a qualitative multimodal analysis on social media discourse that coincides with the hashtag *#marimekko* on the social media channel Instagram. The data consists of 200 randomly picked Instagram posts published by individual Instagram users around the world between February 26 and October 1, 2017. In addition, in one subchapter I will compare a Finnish Marimekko fan's posts and a German Marimekko fan's posts featuring the hashtag *#marimekko* more closely, using a data sample of 40 randomly picked Instagram posts (20 posts each) from years 2016—2018. Examining the global data set, my aim is to study the constructed identities of Marimekko fans. I will investigate the kinds of themes or spheres of life that Marimekko is frequently connected with and examine the manner in which Instagram users take stances and utilise hashtags to communicate opinions, evaluations, emotions and attitudes.

The posts examined in my study are made by individual Instagram users who do not have any obvious financial or work-related ties to the company. Since Instagram strongly emphasizes visual elements and the majority of Instagram posts are composed of images, texts, and emoji symbols, this multimodal study will consider all these elements and their impact on the conveyed messages.

I chose the topic of my study for several reasons. Social media discourse is of special interest to me and I am fascinated with how people discuss brands with each other online, how they express their opinions and create meanings and messages – both on a conscious and unconscious level. Multimodality and some relatively new features of communication technologies such as hashtags can shape discourse and I am interested in the ways in which individual social media users utilise brand hashtags as they create online identities. In this study, I will examine discourse concerning Marimekko on Instagram and aim to find out how the brand hashtag #marimekko is applied by Marimekko fans globally – whether they do it to comment on the company or its products, or if they mention #marimekko and possibly some other brand hashtags merely as secondary references,

perhaps as some kind of evidence of lifestyles that they wish to represent in order to cultivate certain desired self-images in front of their peers.

During the past decade, an abundance of linguistic studies has focused on different aspects of communication on Twitter and Facebook. Although a growing body of psychological studies on Instagram have been presented lately (e.g. Pittman and Reich 2016, Moon et al. 2016, Dumas et al. 2017), Instagram still seems to have gone rather unexamined by linguists. This may be due to the multimodal content and the strong emphasis on images. Yet Instagram is one of the fastest growing social media platforms in the world (ranking sixth in popularity as of the time of writing this thesis[1]), which makes it a relevant subject for linguistic investigation as well.

I was inspired to study Marimekko in my thesis since their brand is iconic and the name of the company is among the best-known ones in my home country. Finnish consumers from various age groups are very fond of Marimekko; we know the history of the company, we think of Marimekko as something very Finnish, and many of us can name a handful of famous prints or products without the help of search engines. The aim of this study is to examine how people around the world discuss Marimekko-related matters online, what those matters are, and what kinds of lifestyles #marimekko represents on individual Instagram users' posts.

My personal interest in this research subject is rooted in my present career within corporate communications but I am not financially compensated for my work and I do not have any work-related history with Marimekko or any other ties to the company. This study was conducted totally independently and impartially without assistance or guidance from Marimekko.

1.2 Research questions

The research questions and the supporting research questions of this Pro Gradu thesis are:

1. What kinds of themes are present in Instagram posts that include the hashtag *#marimekko*?
    - Which themes appear most frequently?
    - What kinds of lifestyles is Marimekko frequently connected with and what kinds of identities are constructed in the Instagram posts?
2. How do hashtags construct Marimekko-related online identities on Instagram?
2. How is the linguistic act of stance-taking performed in the posts?
    - Are the stances mostly positive, neutral, or negative?
    - What are the stance objects, i.e. the things under evaluation?

[1] Source: Statista. (https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/)

Since Instagram is a social media platform where positive expressions are generally perceived as more appropriate that negative expressions (Waterloo et al. 2016), my hypothesis is that majority of the Instagram posts randomly picked in this study will also be positive. I assume that Instagram users will mostly discuss themselves, their homes and their lives and not the company so much. I suspect that *#marimekko* functions as a building block of certain lifestyles that Instagram users wish to present to their peers – a kind of supporting actor in mini-stories where Instagram users themselves play the leading role. If my hypothesis is correct, *#marimekko* mostly serves as a reference or evidence of tastes and appreciations – and thus, of user identities.

In chapter 2, I will briefly discuss Marimekko as a global design company, its history and the current product lines. Chapter 3 will summarise the relevant linguistic theory and terms adopted for the study. Chapter 4 presents background information on Instagram as a social media platform and the ways in which it is typically used. Before proceeding to the analysis, results, and conclusions, I will present the data, the methodology and the categorizations applied in the study.

2 Marimekko as a global design company

Marimekko is an iconic Finnish company founded in 1951. Marimekko Corporation and its subsidiaries form a group that designs, manufactures and markets fashion items and interior decoration products. According to the company's annual report of 2017 (Marimekko 2018a, p. 3), the product portfolio includes "high-quality clothing, bags and accessories as well as home décor items ranging from textiles to tableware".

Marimekko is a global operator with products sold in about 40 countries. In 2017, brand sales of the products worldwide amounted to 193 million euros and net sales were 102 million euros. About 160 Marimekko stores serve customers around the world, the key markets being Northern Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific region. The group employs roughly 450 people and the company's share is quoted on Nasdaq Helsinki Ltd. (Marimekko 2018a).

2.1 A brief look into the history of Marimekko

Marimekko's story started in 1951, when Finnish Armi Ratia and her husband Viljo Ratia established the design house that is known for its original prints and colours (Marimekko 2018b). In the early 1950s, Armi Ratia envisioned a bold future for textile design and manufacturing and gathered some promising young Finnish designers such as Maija Isola, Riitta Immonen and Vuokko Eskolin-Nurmesniemi around her to create new and striking fabric prints. According to the company history (Marimekko 2018c), "what Vuokko did for Finnish women can be equivalent to what Coco[2] did for France; one should be able to move freely in one's clothes." The radical, loose-fitting Marimekko dress designs were born. Soon after the First Lady of the United States, Jacqueline Kennedy, had bought seven Marimekko dresses and worn one of them on the cover of Sports Illustrated in 1960, Marimekko became "an internationally renowned phenomenon and a way of life" (Marimekko 2018c). The company grew fast and included a variety of accessories and home items in their product range. Marimekko became known for its bold designs and colourful patterns such as Maija Isola's 1964 classic flower print Unikko (Poppy), which may still be the best-known print of the company.

Over five decades have passed since the beginning, and the company has seen many different phases, owners, and CEOs, but the essence of the Marimekko brand still lies in bold patterns and strong colours. The 67-year-old company is based in Finland and is now lead by its ninth CEO, Tiina Alahuhta-Kasko.

[2] Coco Chanel.

2.2 Three product lines and their dynamics

Marimekko has three distinct product lines: home, bags and accessories, and fashion. The company announces seasonal collections in every product line, but they also have their ongoing collections. In the fashion product line, Marimekko emphasises the "liberating practicality, aesthetic qualities and individuality"[3] of the clothes made for adults and children. The main interior decoration products of the Home product line are cotton and linen fabrics. They are sold by the meter, and there is also a ready-made collection of goods e.g. for the kitchen, living room, bedroom and bathroom. As the Fashion product line, also the interior decoration line features both classic products and new seasonal collections. The Bags and accessories product line comprises of classic and seasonal bags, umbrellas and accessories such as socks, scarves and gloves. Timelessness and durability are cornerstones of the design philosophy at Marimekko[4].

Despite the efforts, Marimekko has not been able to increase international sales on the clothing side on a large scale. As we examine the company's net sales by product lines in 2017, we see that home décor items together with accessories and bags composed almost 65 per cent of all sales (approximately 37 per cent and 28 per cent respectively), whereas fashion composed around 35 per cent of all sales (Marimekko 2018d, p. 18). Almost 55 per cent of the company's net sales still come from Finland (Marimekko 2018d, p. 17).

During the past few years, the greatest challenges of Marimekko seem to have been design and the fashion product line. Marimekko's last creative director, Swedish designer Anna Teurnell, joined Marimekko in 2014 to reinforce the international competitiveness of the company's design management, with special focus on building the ready-to-wear line as the lifestyle brand's spearhead. In February 2017, Teurnell stepped down from her position after only two and a half years in the post. Marimekko announced that the company's design and product development team would "continue the development of the company's ready-to-wear collections to serve an even wider group of customers around the world"[5]. The company also stated that Rebekka Bay, an esteemed American design professional in the international fashion industry, had been proposed as a new member of Marimekko's Board of Directors and that she would support Marimekko's design and product development team during transition until a new team leader would be appointed. Marimekko never announced a continuator for Teurnell's post, but in December 2017, designer Satu Maaranen was appointed head designer of Marimekko's ready-to-wear and bags and

[3] https://company.marimekko.com/en/investors/business-operations/product-lines/

[4] https://company.marimekko.com/en/sustainability/products/

[5] https://newsclient.omxgroup.com/cdsPublic/viewDisclosure.action?disclosureId=760274&lang=en

accessories[6]. According to Marimekko's President and CEO Tiina Alahuhta-Kasko, the company wanted to find the most suitable approach to design management for them. At that point, Marimekko had been missing a creative director for almost a year. Maaranen started in her position in January 2018.

2.3 Marimekko's latest annual report and corporate communications

In this subchapter, I will study Marimekko's annual report 2017 and the company's global messages on their corporate web pages in 2017 and 2018. Later, in the analysis section of this thesis, the content, ideas and lexicon of these corporate messages from Marimekko will be compared with the data under study, i.e. Instagram posts containing the hashtag *#marimekko*, published by individual Instagram users. I will investigate whether the corporate key messages and Instagram posts by individual users contain any similar features, i.e. whether the image of Marimekko (built by the company) is actualised in social media posts made by Instagram users.

On Marimekko's global corporate website, it is stated that the company is "said to be one of the world's first real lifestyle brands combining fashion, bags and accessories as well as home decoration into one unique point of view" (Marimekko 2018b). The annual report of 2017 described the company's design orientation as follows (Marimekko 2018a, p. 3).

> *Quality, functionality and timelessness are the cornerstones on which our recognisable design has always been built. When Marimekko was founded, its unparalleled printed fabrics gave it a strong and unique identity.*

The annual report of 2017 states Marimekko's vision to be "…the world's most inspiring lifestyle design brand renowned for bold prints" (Marimekko 2018a, p. 7). Following the megatrends of globalisation, changes in consumer values, empowered woman, and digitalisation, Marimekko is now focussing on growing and building a broader international target audience. The purpose of the company is to "empower people to be happy as they are and bring joy to their everyday lives through bold prints and colours" (ibid, p. 7). The emotions of joy and happiness are emphasised as a customer's right to her/his personality and way of living. To summarize the global company's vision and purpose, the key messages that Marimekko has highlighted in their corporate communications are as follows (Marimekko 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d):

- *Original prints and colours,*
- *High quality,*

[6] https://www.marimekko.com/com_en/the-brand/latest-news/satu-maaranen-is-appointed-head-designer-of-marimekko-s-ready-to-wear-bags-and-accessories

- *Strong and unique identity,*
- *The world's most inspiring lifestyle design brand,*
- *Renowned for bold prints,*
- *Beautiful everyday life,*
- *Authentic flavour of life,*
- *Empowering people to be happy as they are,*
- *Empowering people to express their personality boldly through the way that they dress themselves and their homes.*

The company has listed its key strategic success factors for the period of 2018–2022. Marimekko is continuing to build its lifestyle brand with fashion and bags as spearhead. The company is also trying to maximize sales by building omnichannel ecosystems (which include a strong presence on Instagram and Facebook). In addition, Marimekko is trying to "appeal to a broader global target audience", approach key markets through key cities and "increase awareness and loyalty through value-driven storytelling" (Marimekko 2018e). Since omnichannel ecosystems are one of the current focus areas, this study provides relevant information about the global consumer-driven Instagram presence of the company.

As Marimekko's fashion product line is now designated the spearhead of building the Marimekko lifestyle brand alongside with bags, it is of particular interest to me to investigate which product lines appear most often in consumer's Instagram posts and how different products are discussed by individual Instagram users, i.e. how frequently Marimekko is presented as a home decor company vs. how frequently fashion and clothes are mentioned in consumers' posts.

3 Theoretical background

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the linguistic theory of identity and identity construction through language. In this chapter, I introduce some theoretic models and terms relevant for this thesis. Section 3.1 discusses Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) view on identity that this study is based on, and the five principles of identity construction proposed by Bucholtz and Hall will be introduced in this subchapter. Section 3.2 will summarise some previous studies on identity construction in social media, and I will discuss Georgalou's (2017) study on Facebook users' online identity construction in particular since my thesis makes use of her findings. In section 3.3, I will investigate the notion of stance-taking (an act that is strongly linked with identity).

3.1 Identity is produced in linguistic interaction

In their framework for the analysis of identity, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) challenge static views of identity that they claim to have been popular in the social sciences. They propose that identity is anchored in interaction: it is not a primarily internal psychological phenomenon or a stable structure that is located in a person's mind or invariable social categories. Rather, identity is constructed in linguistic interactions within local contexts. Since it is "emergent in discourse and does not precede it" (2005, p. 607), identity is a social and cultural phenomenon, and centrally a linguistic one.

Bucholtz and Hall draw from a wide range of theories and research in the fields of social psychology, sosiolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. They label identity in a deliberately simple manner as "the social positioning of self and other" (p. 586). Bucholtz and Hall argue that identity emerges at multiple analytic levels simultaneously (they mention vowel quality, turn shape, code choice and ideological structure as examples of these levels). Their approach prioritises interaction, since all the analytic levels mentioned above do not gain social meaning without interaction.

The sociocultural linguistic approach of Bucholtz and Hall is based on five principles that aim to represent and bring together the varied ways in which scholars from different fields currently approach the notion of identity. These principles are: (1) the emergence principle, (2) the positionality principle, (3) the indexicality principle, (4) the relationality principle, and (5) the partialness principle. I will introduce the principles one by one.

The emergence principle challenges a more traditional scholarly view of identity that sees identity as something that resides in an individual's mind. In the traditional view, language has been seen as merely a tool that reflects a person's internal mental state, but according to Bucholtz and Hall, this kind of an inference may exclude the social ground and specific conditions on which

identity is built, maintained, and altered. To them, "identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon" (2005, p. 588). In other words, identity is something that emerges from specific conditions of linguistic interaction.

The positionality principle also deals with the ontological status of identity. Bucholtz and Hall challenge another traditional view of identity as a mere collection of broad social categories such as age, gender, and social class. According to them, also the micro details of identity should be investigated, as has been done in more recent sociocultural linguistic work. By micro details of identity Bucholtz and Hall mean the momentary positions that people take in conversations with others; identities are constantly shaped in interaction from moment to moment. People may take up temporary participant roles in discourse (here Bucholtz and Hall mention the roles of evaluator, joke teller and engaged listener), and the temporary roles "contribute to the formation of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in discourse" (2005, p. 591). These changing interactional positions may accumulate ideological associations of identity, and when those associations have been created, they in turn may shape the future roles of speakers to some extent, i.e. who does what and how in interaction (p. 591).

The third principle of Bucholtz and Hall's framework depicts indexicality, "the mechanism whereby identity is constituted" (2005, p. 593). Bucholtz and Hall draw on earlier research by Silverstein (1985) and Ochs (1992) on indexing and indexicality. Bucholtz and Hall list the types of linguistic tools or resources with which speakers or interactants "indexically position self and other in discourse" (2005, p. 587). They explain that indexicality relies on certain ideological structures that exist in societies. We tend to make associations between language and identity, i.e. we have presuppositions about what kinds of speakers normally produce particular types of language. According to Bucholtz and Hall, an index is a linguistic form that a speaker/interactant uses to construct identity positions (p. 594). It may be an overt mention of an identity category or label (in one of their examples, Bucholtz and Hall mention the derogatory racial label *whitey*), but an index may also be a more delicate implicature about oneself or others (here, Bucholtz and Hall give the example of gender-neutral references to lovers used by gay men or lesbians who do not wish to discuss their sexual orientation openly). An indexical process can also display evaluations about ongoing talk or participant roles, or it may use linguistic structures or systems that are ideologically linked to specific personas or groups. Bucholtz and Hall link indexicality with the linguistic act of stance-taking (discussed in more detail in section 3.4; see also Du Bois 2007, Keisanen & Kärkkäinen 2014, and Evans 2016).

The fourth principle is the relationality principle. It stresses that identity is a relational phenomenon: our identities do not exist in a vacuum; they co-exist with other identity positions and social actors. Bucholtz and Hall challenge the popular but simple view of identity relations that is mainly centred round sameness and difference. According to them, "[i]dentities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy" (2005, p. 598). In other words, by using certain expressions we make ourselves similar or different from certain groups we wish to identify with (or not). We also make ourselves sound 'genuine' for a specific purpose and authenticate ourselves as expressers of opinions or narratives.

The fifth principle is the partialness principle. This principle builds on the ethnographic view – also adopted by feminists – claiming that all representations of culture are always 'partial accounts' (see Clifford and Marcus 1986). Bucholtz and Hall claim that "any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation and contestation, in part an outcome of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an effect of larger ideological processes and material structures that may become relevant to interaction" (2005, p. 606). They are not as much concerned with meticulously defining the degree of autonomy or intentionality of any given act as they are in viewing the agency of an individual subject as the accomplishment of social action (for agency, see also Ahearn, 2001).

To summarise Bucholtz and Hall's framework and their five principles, they aim to integrate different approaches and research traditions within sociocultural linguistics to achieve an understanding of a complex, multifaceted identity. The approach stresses that an identity has multiple layers, and the layers range from momentary positions in conversations to more fixed demographic categories. Identity is co-constructed through acts and stances and it is a constantly shifting phenomenon. Because of its complexity and intersubjective nature, "identity can never be contained within a single analysis" (2005, p. 607). This view coincides with the discourse analytic view of a multifaceted identity proposed by Schiffrin (1996). According to her, "identity is neither categorical nor fixed: we may act more or less middle-class, more or less female, and so on, depending on what we are doing and with whom" (1996, p. 199).

The framework by Bucholtz and Hall takes into account "the microanalysis of conversation, the macroanalysis of ideological processes, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of linguistic structures, and the ethnographic focus on local cultural practices and social groupings" (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, p. 607). Bucholtz and Hall remind us that we should not choose one of the five principles over others but consider all of them together, even when they may seem to work against

one another in discourse. Gordon (2012) notes that the general perspective of Bucholtz and Hall is "currently the dominant paradigm in the analysis of identity in interaction".

3.2 Identity construction in social media

Since linguists have not yet done extensive research on Instagram, I have mostly applied linguistic studies on Facebook and Twitter for my thesis. Georgalou (2017) has examined discourse manifestations of identity among Facebook users. In this chapter, I will briefly discuss the parts in her comprehensive book that are relevant to my study and may be applied to Instagram users as well.

Social networking services "are dynamic sociocultural arenas which empower users to cement their identities through the meshing of language with other semiotic modes" (Georgalou 2017, p. 253). By identity Georgalou means basically who and what we are. Like Bucholtz and Hall (2005), Georgalou takes a constructionist approach to identity. She considers identity to be a constantly shifting phenomenon that is being produced and reproduced through language use every day. It is not a static notion. In other words, identity is not something one *is* but rather something one *does* via discourse. While summarising and discussing a wide range of identity theories, Georgalou states that identity "seems to have two analytically distinct aspects: social identity and personal/individual identity (personality)" (2017, p. 11), and these two should not be seen as independent or in contrast to each other. Social identity is related to groups that we do or do not belong to or identify with, whereas personal identity is more about our characters or attitudes. Georgalou notes that there is an in-built need in us all to represent ourselves to others: our identities are "mediated constituted and reconstituted, via the varied discursive practices in which we participate" (p. 12). The following list of premises (pp. 19-20) on which Georgalou builds her views of identity in her study is adopted in my thesis as well:

- *identity is the fusion of social identity and personality;*
- *identity is a form of socially meaningful practice;*
- *identity is constructed in discourse;*
- *the relationship between discourse and identity is reciprocal;*
- *identity involves a semiotic process of representation;*
- *identity is multifaceted and is not a single entity;*
- *identity is contextual;*
- *identity is an interactive task;*
- *analysis is interested in the discursive manifestation(s) of a given identity and not in its authenticity;*
- *identity online is not separate from identity offline;*

- *identity formation is enabled and restrained by available Facebook technologies*[7].

How are identities constructed, performed and experienced? In her study, Georgalou investigated how they are "typed, uploaded, shared, managed, and protected" to organise the chaos in our modern, digitally oriented lives (ibid., p. 3). Following Herring (2004), Georgalou believes that new features of communication technologies can shape discourse. She also mentions a fact pointed out by Androutsopoulos (2011): as communication on social media is integrated into visually organized environments, the multimodal content on social networking sites includes increasingly fragmented verbal exchanges that are often reliant on imagery, which is why social media studies should always take multimodality into account.

Like Instagram, also Facebook was initially designed as a self-report microblogging technology for sharing information on users' experiences and recent whereabouts, as Georgalou remarks. She points out that because of this, a lot of identity work is obviously performed in Facebook – "sometimes mundane, at other times overtly narcissistic and pretentious" (2017, p. 3). But the data in Georgalou's study also proves that Facebook is used for much more than a space for self-expression and literacy practices: it functions as an important social meeting place and a grassroots channel for people, a digital memory bank, and a common knowledge sharing forum – a "vibrant sociocultural arena that gives users unprecedented opportunities and affordances for self-presentation through the interplay of language and other semiotic means" (p. 3). Georgalou states that since Facebook users have limited access to face-to-face social cues in their communication, more conscious thought and planning is involved in initiating expressions of identity on the social networking service.

Georgalou focused on how identities are discursively constructed within Facebook, examining both how Facebook users construct themselves and how they are co-constructed by their Facebook friends. She also investigated the role of multimodality in these identity constructions and the textual practices that Facebook users adopted to construct their identities. Georgalou interviewed five Greek Facebook users and examined their Facebook posts. Her analysis combines identity theories, discourse analysis and computer-mediated discourse analysis, multimodality studies and online ethnography. Georgalou studied how the users discussed e.g. place, time and age as well as their professional and educational backgrounds and how these aspects functioned in identity construction. For instance, she concluded that "Facebook participants enact their identities by talking about and through places, seeing them not only as geographical, but also as social, political,

[7] In my thesis, Facebook technologies are obviously replaced by those of Instagram.

cultural and emotional entities" (p. 5), thereby telling something about themselves: through mentioning places they e.g. express belonging, show appreciation to other cultures, introduce local matters to others or use different languages to affiliate with certain places. Georgalou also investigated how Facebook users perform professional and educational identities. She noted that people use the social network service "to announce and inform about undertaken tasks, complain about work, chat about work and study topics, promote their work, publicize achievements, […] share expertise and bolster solidarity and collegiality with fellows" (2017., p. 6). The linguistic act of stance-taking was also investigated in detail. Although Georgalou examined Facebook and not Instagram, her study provides important insight for my thesis as well since Instagram and Facebook can be used in several similar ways.

In her article on language choice and self-presentation on social media, Carmen Lee (2014, p. 91) has paraphrased Goffman (1990 [1959]), stating that identities are like "masks that can be worn and taken off in different contexts of social interaction". According to Lee, identities are consciously managed online in order to give other social media users certain impressions and to highlight the ideal kind of self (for identity management, see also DiMicco & Millen, 2007). Georgalou's inferencing seems somewhat similar as she states that our identities online are "in essence a series of identities in our everyday lives that we engender in order to handle different contexts" (2017, p. 5). She notes that the ways in which we construct our identities may differ radically depending on the context and situation in which we are acting (p. 13). Lee (2014, p. 94) seems to agree:

> *"… social media participants constantly present different aspects of identity through careful choice of language according to their audience and the technological affordances of different platforms. This also implies that identity management online is always situated in, and must be interpreted with a reference to, a particular context."*

Researchers have begun to pay increasing attention to the role of multimodality in identity construction lately. Georgalou's study featured several images taken by the Facebook users themselves, and she states (p. 258–259) that via the images, the users:

- *"validated their experience, namely where they were and what they were doing (e.g. working, having fun, demonstrating, being on holidays, attending conferences) without necessarily posing always in front of the camera;*
- *gave visual proofs of accomplishments (e.g. having cooked* gemista*);*
- *showed cosmopolitanism;*
- *paid respect to other cultures;*
- *demonstrated artistic photographic skills;*
- *created professional portfolios;*
- *invoked regional identities;*

- *exercised citizen journalism with authentic first-hand material;*
- *made 'safe' and witty statements without spelling them out in words."*

I expect to find at least some of the above-mentioned functions in my data.

Instagram images and especially selfies (self-portraits) that people use for creating narrative autobiographies have been the focus of Fallon's analysis (2014). He reminds us of the fact that after the birth of Twitter and Facebook, Instagram emerged on Apple's mobile iOS platform to enable users to easily edit their iPhone photos and share them, not only on Instagram but also on other social networking sites. Fallon discusses the manner in which people use their Instagram accounts and particularly self-portraits to create narrative autobiographies:

> *The net effect of the interface and the tools that Instagram provides is that someone's stream can reveal an interesting, if idiosyncratic portrait of the person. […] For regular users (non-professional photographers) Instagram is […] a way to push lightly edited individual or group photos to Facebook, thereby curating a feed that chronicles personal relationships and individual experiences. Looking through these portraits may tell us who the person is or who they want to be, the things they like or what society tells them they should be like.*

Fallon notes that generalising too much about the nature of selfies or placing substantial weight on their documentary evidence would not be wise. But image making is now ubiquitous and camera-phones have enabled social media "to function to some extent as 'socialized media': inviting alternative, image driven forms of social interaction even as it profits large corporations through the free labor of its citizens". Considering companies like Marimekko, his statement is very interesting. Fallon finishes his conference paper as follows:

> *A cynical reading of filtering one's appearance and experiences for an amorphous audience of others would argue that these tools simply allow users to imperfectly replicate the look and feel of advertising images or parrot the surface appeal of celebrity culture. A more generous reading might argue that these tools open up the process to a broader set of practitioners, allowing them to engage in a creative play of identity and self-expression, what Amelia Jones argued was a "technology of embodiment" in more traditional self-portrait photography (Jones, 2002)[8]. Once again, we find the same mix of authenticity and commodification at work that has run throughout the history of photography, a potent combination that Instagram has apparently not escaped.*

3.3 Stance-taking and identity

Stance-taking has been studied increasingly during the last two decades in several sub-disciplines of linguistics. DuBois (2007) has explained his interest on the subject by stating that taking a stance is one of the most essential things we do with words. He defines the act of stance-taking in the

[8] Jones, Amelia. 2002. "The "Eternal Return": Self- Portrait Photography as a Technology of Embodiment". In *Signs*, 27(4), 947–978. The University of Chicago Press.

following manner: "the stancetaker (1) evaluates an object, (2) positions a subject (usually the self), and (3) aligns with other subjects" (2007, p. 163). Adopting the first-person point of view, DuBois defines the act simply as: *"I evaluate something, and thereby position myself, and thereby align with you"* (ibid.). DuBois states that stance is always a public linguistic act, a social and dialogical phenomenon, with which different objects are evaluated, subjects are positioned, and alignment (agreeing) is communicated.

Bucholtz and Hall define stance as "the display of evaluative, affective, and epistemic orientations in discourse" (2005, p. 595). They link stance-taking to identity construction by stating that "even in the most fleeting of interactional moves, speakers position themselves and others as particular kinds of people. Moreover, stances can build up into larger identity categories" (p. 595) and they can "accumulate into more durable structures of identity" (p. 596).

Keisanen and Kärkkäinen (2014) note that the term stance has been studied in various ways lately, but a consensus is still missing on how to define it, how to study it, what the term may comprise, and what levels of language or discourse it operates on. They see stance as a substitute or a solder for previously used linguistic terms such as modality, evaluation, attitude, affect and subjectivity. According to Keisanen and Kärkkäinen, there has been a shift during the last decades: studying single speakers' stances has been replaced with examining stances as constructs that are dialogic, intersubjective and interactionally organised (2014, p. 314).

Georgalou (2017) investigated what stance-taking on Facebook can tell us about identity. She considers stance a very important part of identity construction. Georgalou defines stance-taking simply as communicating "feelings, thoughts, opinions and evaluations" (p. 172). Following the ideas of Jaworski and Thurlow (2009), Georgalou considers stance to be pervasive in all kinds of communication. According to her, stances have found "fertile soil to thrive" in the contemporary social media landscape with its user-produced and user-consumed content (2017, p. 173). She found various different stance-taking modes in her data and argues that the social networking service has "stretched our conception of what stance-taking is as different Facebook affordances propel into different ways of developing stances within the medium" (p. 6). By this she means that stances can be found in status updates, intertextual and interdiscursive links, comments, tweets and retweets as well as combinations of text, videos and images. In addition, elements of typography, emoticons and punctuation can create emotional stances. According to Georgalou, posting a Facebook status is in itself a stance-taking act, quite like choosing a language with which to address the audience. Georgalou states that "the whole edifice of Facebook communication is founded upon acts of stance-taking" (p. 174).

In Georgalou's study, the Greek Facebook users found a variety of ways to communicate stances. Georgalou mentions seven different ways of stance-taking: direct stance-taking (e.g. examples of evaluating music), narrative stance-taking (i.e. taking stances to fortify small stories), CMC-specific stance-taking (computer-mediated discourse often includes elements like emojis that indicate stances), stance-taking with audience in mind (writing for specific groups of people and being careful not to say 'too much' e.g. in politically sensitive contexts), indirect stances (e.g. asking rhetorical questions to imply stances), cross-modal stance-taking (a text may be complemented with visuals to form a stance, the 'full message'), and recycling ready-made stances (sharing links or memes to show alignment). I will apply these seven categories in my analysis. As pointed out by Georgalou, these different ways of stance-taking may be intertwined.

The examples of stance-taking in Georgalou's Facebook data featured the use of the following (p. 204–205):

- *Evaluative adjectives (e.g.* amazing*)*
- *Evaluative adverbs (e.g.* unfortunately*)*
- *Affective verbs (e.g.* laugh, cry, love*)*
- *Cognitive verbs (e.g.* guess, consider, think*)*
- *Modality (e.g.* probably*)*
- *Generic versus specific use of pronouns*
- *Discourse representation (e.g. others' direct/indirect speech)*
- *Irony*
- *Rhetorical questions*
- *References to the 'Like' button*
- *Usage of song lyrics/titles to imply stances*
- *Typographical emphasis (e.g. smileys)*
- *Visual implications of stances (e.g. through memes, profile pictures)*

I will also apply these examples by Georgalou and discuss them in more detail in my analysis. Before presenting my data and methods, I will give a brief account of Instagram as a social networking service and the ways in which people are accustomed to using it.

4 Instagram as a social media platform

Instagram is a social networking application and service that allows users to share images and videos from their mobile devices. Since its launch on October 6, 2010, Instagram has grown to become one of the most widely used electronic social media platforms. Instagram follows a similar logic with Facebook and Twitter; a user who creates an Instagram account will have a personal profile and a feed that introduces recent posts by other users. Personal accounts may be private or public, and users can follow other users who may be people, companies, organisations or public figures acting in their professional roles.

Instagram posts may consist of two main elements: a visual element (an image or a video) and a caption. Users can apply digital filters to edit their images and they can add hashtags to their captions, which link their content to other Instagram content featuring the same hashtags. Posts can be geotagged to certain locations. A user can also tag another user in a caption by applying the @ symbol in front of a user name in the caption, thus creating a direct link from the post to the mentioned user's account. Instagram allows a user to follow any number of other users, and those users may or may not follow that person back.

Instagram differs from Facebook and Twitter in a few ways. Instagram users cannot add links that lead to content outside of Instagram in their posts. In addition, users can only share content from their mobile devices, whereas Facebook and Twitter posts can be sent from personal computers as well. Instagram strongly emphasises visuality, which means that all posts must feature at least an image or a video, but captions are optional.

Instagram users can participate in interactions in two ways: they can either create the initial post or they can comment on other users' posts. This study focuses on initial posts only, and comments will not be analysed. In addition, only still images and text are included in the data, leaving Instagram Stories (video stories with similar features as Snapchat Stories) out of the study.

4.1 The popularity, nature and typical contents of Instagram

Currently owned by Facebook, Instagram has over 800 million monthly visitors, of which over 500 million are daily active users (Instagram 2017a). As of October 2017, Instagram was the third most popular social media platform in the world (Dreamgrow 2017). To provide more scope concerning user figures, Facebook was most popular with over two billion monthly active users, and Youtube was ranked second with approximately 1.5 billion monthly active users. Instagram was ranked third with about 800 million monthly active users and Twitter was ranked fourth with about 300 million monthly active users.

Lately, Instagram has been the fastest growing social media network (Sheldon & Bryant 2016), which has raised the interest of companies and their marketing strategists. Instagram provides brands with great opportunities to gain visibility among customers and other stakeholders. Today, Instagram is not only a popular photo editing and sharing application for individual users, but it has also evolved to become a popular marketing channel for brands. According to statistics portal Statista, this is especially true in the beauty, fashion, and luxury segments (Statista 2017a). In 2016, as much as 98 per cent of fashion brands had an Instagram profile (Statista 2017b).

In a global comparison in April 2018, 50.7 per cent of Instagram users were female and 49.3 per cent of users were male (Statista 2018a). The social media platform is most popular with young adults from 18 to 34 years (Statista 2018b). Many young people have migrated to Instagram from the most popular social network site Facebook. In the United States, Instagram was the preferred social network of teens in 2017 (Statista 2017b).

Sheldon and Bryant (2016) have investigated motives for the use of Instagram. Their survey for college students revealed that the main reasons for Instagram use were "Surveillance/Knowledge about others," "Documentation," "Coolness," and "Creativity." Sheldon and Bryant noticed a positive relationship between users who scored high in interpersonal interaction and using the social media platform for coolness, creative purposes, and surveillance. The study also revealed a link between high levels of social activity (such as travelling, going to sporting events, or visiting friends) and being motivated to use Instagram for documentation.

In their study called "What we Instagram: A first analysis of Instagram photo content and user types", Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati (2014) examined photo content, user activities and user types on Instagram. They clustered a sample of 200 Instagram photos published by everyday Instagram users and found that the content shared was mainly positive. Their statement about positive content coincides with the fact that the ten most popular emojis in Instagram were all positive ones in 2015 (see figure 1 below): the single red heart, the heart-eyes, the face blowing a kiss, the face with tears of joy, the smiling face with smiling eyes, the smiling face with sunglasses, two hearts, the winking face, the kiss mark, and the thumbs up (the 100 most popular emojis in Instagram were analysed by Curalate[9]).

9 "Curalate, Inc. develops marketing tools for the visual Web market. The company specializes in solutions for brands and agencies to measure, monitor, and grow brand engagement on socially curated sites." (https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=206881584)

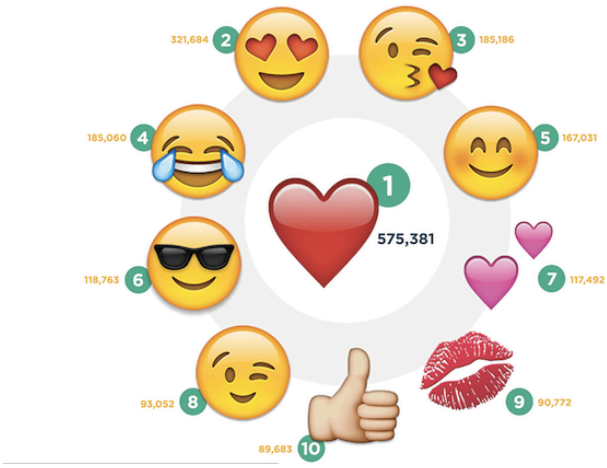

Figure 1. The top ten emojis used in Instagram in 2015 (copyright: Curalate).

In the study by Hu et al., the most popular eight photo categories appearing on Instagram were selfies, friends, activities, food, gadgets, captioned photos with quotes, pets, and fashion. Of these, selfies and friends were the most popular ones.

In my study, I found similar categories as Hu et al., but there were also some differences. My own choice of categories will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

4.2 Hashtags: 'findability' and other functions

Instagram, as well as many other social media platforms, makes use of hashtags that create a tagging system for categorising social media content. Social media users tend to apply hashtags in their posts for engagement purposes. Searchable language and using hashtags have made it very easy for anyone to learn about new phenomena and join global conversations (Murthy 2013, p. 3)[10]. Scott (2015, p. 10) explains the practice in more detail:

> *(...) any string of characters which is preceded by a hash symbol becomes a hyperlink, allowing users to search for any content that includes the same tag. If a large number of people post tweets containing the same hashtag within a short space of time, that hashtag will be said to be trending, and current trends are available for users to browse and view in real time.*

Thus, when an Instagram user applies the hashtag *#marimekko*, they make their post viewable to anyone with an interest in Marimekko – also Instagram users who are not a part of their own

[10] As Murthy mentions, using a hashtag in a post joins one tweet to a larger "conversation" consisting of all tweets with the same hashtag.

personal network (if they have set their Instagram user profile to be public). Applying the *#marimekko* hashtag thus expands a user's reach to global audiences – anyone interested in the subject or keyword 'Marimekko'.

Linguists have examined the usage and purposes of hashtags increasingly during the past decade and they have found that hashtags can serve a variety of roles. In one of her earlier studies on Twitter, Zappavigna labelled hashtags as a tool for 'searchable talk', with the primary function of searchable talk to be "affiliation via 'findability'" (2011, p. 789). In other words, hashtags include keywords as metadata that describes the topic of the message. According to Zappavigna, searches can function as community-building linguistic activities and hashtags function as linguistic markers that enact "the following social relation: 'Search for me and affiliate with my value!'" (p. 789). In a later study, Zappavigna notes that using a particular hashtag "presupposes that there exists a virtual community of interested listeners who may use the same tag in related texts or who may search using the tag" (2015, p. 285). Thus, applying hashtags can aid searches and community-building on social networking services.

In her study on linguistic self-branding and the role of hashtags on Twitter, Page (2012) makes a distinction between a topic-based and an evaluative function of hashtags. In Page's study, these functions are related to different groups of Twitter users; corporate users, celebrities and 'ordinary' individuals (p. 186–188). Page found that hashtags are primarily used to make the topic of a tweet visible, rather than to emphasize stance and express an evaluative sentiment. Page notes that idiosyncratic or expressive uses of hashtags did occur in her data, but they were by far in the minority, and more likely to occur on 'ordinary' accounts than on corporate accounts. According to Page, "the visibility required for self-branding appears more dependent on categorizing the updates (and hence the author) rather than on foregrounding evaluative response" (p. 187–188).

Although Zappavigna also notes that the most commonly recognised role of hashtags is their function as a topic marker, she states that hashtags can construe a range of interactive and structural meanings in social media texts: they can "perform the communicative functions of construing experience (e.g. labelling content), enacting relationships (e.g. indicating evaluative stance) and organizing text (marking metadiscourse via the # symbol)" (2015, p. 288). These three functions are not mutually exclusive and can be occur simultaneously. Zappavigna also argues that some hashtags serve the purpose of "enacting metacommentary unlikely to be used as a search query by another microblogger" yet invoking the possibility of an imagined audience of microbloggers who feel the same way (p. 275). By these she means e.g. hashtags that are so specific or so long that the tags are extremely unlikely to be found in other users' searches, as in examples such as *#BenefitsOfALongDistanceRelationship* or *#bestbeerinthemotherfuckingworld* (p. 286). Thus, using

a particular hashtag supports ambient intertextuality and presupposes that there is an audience somewhere, or texts containing the same hashtag. The imagined audience may then choose to align with the values present in the content of the post or not. Zappavigna also notes that hashtags can be used interpersonally to issue commands to the audience (e.g. *#follow, #share*, etc.) and they amplify the potential of connecting people through searches or participation in mass practices like memes[11].

Scott (2015, p.8) notes that hashtags add "a layer of activation to certain contextual assumptions thus guiding the reader's inferential processes". According to her, hashtags may contain both explicitly and implicitly communicated meaning, and they may also have stylistic impacts.

Fallon states that "the hashtag operates on the logic of the meme which it was intended to capitalize on and facilitate" (2014, p. 58). Fallon claims that Instagram engenders a strong identity connection and Instagram users can add a personal touch even to content that utilises internet memes:

> *As spontaneous trends which emerge and either catch on or fade away, memes are a transitory, amorphous collection of practices that have no single author. […] trending hashtags are often used to raise one's profile or collect additional followers. Participation in memes like #bestofsummer are opportunities to distinguish one's individuality even as they signify participation in an ephemeral collective. Instagram emphasizes the 'me' in meme, as it were* (ibid.).

This would suggest that one of the main functions or aims of an Instagram profile is to gain followers and visibility. Scott (2015, p. 10–11) also mentions that hashtags may be associated with memes, providing an example: "the hashtag *#Failed90sRappers* links a series of joke tweets on the same theme".

Interestingly, Fallon states that Instagram users expect the images on Instagram to be manipulated. This is because the mobile application invites users to apply several different filters, to crop their images and perfect them in other ways (toning the image, removing disturbing shadows, dirt or blemishes from a person's face, making the skin look young and smooth, etc.). The improving is done as "one of the procedural steps for posting" (p. 58). According to Fallon, the opportunity to filter images creates a new dimension to the content. Although the documentary value of Instagram images is decreased, something increases as well: the capacity to capture the desires and moods of the author. As Fallon notes: "[f]iltered images do not claim "this is how it looked" but rather "how I wanted it to look" or "how I felt it looked" (p. 59)." We can assume that

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[11] According to Shifman (2013), "the phrase ''Internet meme'' is commonly applied to describe the propagation of content items such as jokes, rumors, videos, or websites from one person to others via the Internet. According to this popular notion, an Internet meme may spread in its original form, but it often also spawns user-created derivatives."

the same logic applies to written Instagram content as well: some posts may capture the desires of the author, describing what the user *wanted* the moment to be like or what they *felt* it was like.

In their recent study on the adaptation and appropriation of hashtags, Heyd and Puschmann (2017) mention that today, hashtags are not just a widespread feature of online discourse that has increased significantly with the growth of social media platforms such as Twitter or Instagram: they are now also popular as an instrument for creative self-expression and language-play, "often used to qualify a user's attitude toward the preceding text, providing a meta-commentary on its content" (2017, p. 51). They argue that this functional shift can be aligned with effects of pragmatic adaptation and sociolinguistic appropriation. Heyd and Puschmann note that in addition to having linguistic and contextual properties, hashtags also have a material dimension now: they appear in physical public space and not just virtually in the web and social media (p. 56).

Bastos et al. (2013) studied hashtag usage (related to many topics, e.g. politics, health, technology, sports and twitter idioms) on Twitter. They claim that the social media does not bring together people of different nationalities and cultures as strongly as is frequently assumed. They found that the underlying social networks that connect hashtags through overlapping users is "heavily limited to linguistic and content-oriented communities". These findings align with claims heard in Finnish public debate throughout the 2010s about social media and SNS algorithms forming ideological or socio-economic bubbles for likeminded people. The very act of publishing something on Instagram and using searchable hashtags can be argued to be an effort to be found and affiliated with. We are social animals: receiving likes from others, and providing likes to others, both activate brain circuity implicated in reward (Sherman et al., 2018). In other words, we get pleasure and a sense of belonging from the fact that other people enjoy the same things with us. We tend to identify with groups and we express our group membership through shared linguistic and discursive practices (see Limatius, 2017, p. 28, for social identity and group identification). Instagram is a social media platform where e.g. hashtags represent those shared discursive practices.

In 2017, the most popular hashtags on Instagram were *#love, #fashion, #photooftheday, #photography, #art, #beautiful, #travel, #happy, #nature,* and *#picoftheday* (Instagram 2017c).

This study focuses on the content of Instagram posts that feature the hashtag #marimekko. In these posts, the *#marimekko* hashtag functions at least as a tool for searchable talk or findability. All my data was found through a search using the hashtag *#marimekko*. In the analysis section, I will examine *#marimekko* and the other hashtags in the posts (e.g. hashtags accompanying the hashtag *#marimekko*) to investigate possible other functions they serve in the posts.

5 Data and methods

This study includes two separate data sets. In this chapter, I will give a brief account of them both, thus justifying my decision to apply two different sets. Thereafter I will proceed to discuss the methodology and analytical procedure adopted in the study.

5.1 Data

The larger data set, which will be analysed first, is a global collection of 200 Instagram posts published by individual Instagram users between February 26th, 2017, and October 1st, 2017. Examining this data set, I aim to study online identity construction in multimodal Instagram posts and the role of Marimekko in different identity construction practices. I will also investigate the global corporate messages of Marimekko company and compare consumers' messages to them to investigate whether Marimekko's messages "get through" to consumers, i.e. if the Instagram posts by consumers feature similar lexicon and themes as the key messages of Marimekko corporation.

In addition to the larger data set, this thesis will introduce a subchapter with a smaller data set for a comparative study. This data set is gathered from 40 Instagram posts published by two individual Instagram users (20 posts each) who mention Marimekko often. This data set introduces posts published during a two years' time period between February 21, 2016, and February 4, 2018. One of the Instagram users chosen for this comparison is Finnish and the other one is German. Also in the Finn-German comparison, my aim is to study online identity construction in multimodal Instagram posts and the role of Marimekko in different identity construction practices. In addition, I will study possible differences between the users, their habits and consumer relationships, attitudes and tastes concerning Marimekko. The Finn-German comparison is included in the thesis to provide an in-depth analysis of two Instagram users from different countries. The larger data set of 200 posts could not offer a deep analysis of any users since the set of 200 posts features only one post per person.

The suitable Instagram posts for both data sets were searched on Instagram on the basis of the appearance of the hashtag *#marimekko* in them. The search resulted in a random sample of "latest posts" (collected according to Instagram's particular algorithm). After I found suitable *#marimekko* posts from Instagram users, I examined their personal accounts meticulously to confirm that the users were not representatives of small businesses, fashion journalists or Marimekko retailers – I came across all of these groups fairly often on Instagram. This study aims to examine the online identity construction of 'ordinary' individuals (not professionals in the fashion business) and stances that ordinary Instagram users take when discussing Marimekko-related content, or hashtags

they apply when discussing Marimekko. Hand-picking and collecting the two data sets this way demanded a significant amount of time, which limited the size of my data sets to 200 + 40 posts altogether. All posts accepted in the data had to be carefully inspected on the grounds of their content since one of the prerequisites for the Instagram posts examined in this study was that they had to be written in English, mostly. Some of the posts that were accepted in the data featured English and other languages (i.e. the native languages of Instagram users that I could understand and translate). All expressions in other languages than English occurring in the posts have been translated [in brackets].

Although the data consists of Instagram posts that were publicly available at the time of writing this thesis, the usernames of all chosen Instagram users have been anonymised with the convention @User1, @User2, etc. In the Finnish-German comparison, the users have been anonymised with the practice @UserFin (Finnish user) and @UserGer (German user).

5.2 Methods

The purpose of collecting and analysing this data was not to present a comprehensive method of Marimekko-related identity construction, stance formation or hashtag analysis but to demonstrate how Marimekko fans may engage in various processes while creating or constructing identities by posting Marimekko-related content on Instagram. This thesis is based on qualitative and multimodal discourse analysis by close reading. Some quantitative analysis was involved in the process as well, but because of the small sample size, the quantitative elements are only suggestive. The categories suggested by Hu et al. (2014), and the frameworks and ideas of Georgalou (2017) and Zappavigna (2015) were applied in analysing the data, its content and the various ways of using hashtags and taking stances – and thus constructing identities – in Instagram posts. Next, I will provide short summaries of the studies applied in my thesis and explain how I have utilised them.

In their study, Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati (2014) examined photo content, user activities, user types and audiences on Instagram. In order to find out what kinds of content people usually publish on the social networking site, and to examine how the content was related to user types and characteristics, Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati clustered a random sample of 200 Instagram photos[12] published by regular active Instagram users. The study also aimed to find out how users differ based on the type of images they post on Instagram. The categorisation process was partly automated and partly aided by two human coders. If an image featured many different elements or categories (such as a human and a dog, for instance), the photo was categorised on the

[12] Hu et al. selected 50 users who were not organisations, brands, or spammers. All users had at least 30 friends and followers, and they had posted at least 60 photos on Instagram. Hu et al. selected 20 photos from each user for the sample of 200 photos in the study.

basis of the description of the photo, so a description "look at my cute dog" would lead to categorising the photo into the "Pet" category (example provided by Hu et al.). Thus, the Instagram user's own focus or emphasis of the theme mattered in the categorisation process. I applied the same logic in categorising the data in my study.

Hu et al. found that the content shared on Instagram was mostly positive. The most popular eight photo categories on Instagram were self-portraits, friends, activities, food, gadgets, captioned photos (images with text embedded in them), pets, and fashion. Of these, selfies and friends were the most popular categories. Almost half (46.6%) of the images in the data set belonged to the categories of Selfies (24.2%) and Friends (22.4%), whereas the categories Pet and Fashion were the least popular ones. These categories both constituted less than 5% of the total number of images. The categories in between, i.e. Food, Gadget, and Captioned photo, made up more than 10 per cent each. Hu et al. stated that their findings were "in line with the conventional wisdom that Instagram is mostly used for self-promoting and social networking with […] friends" (2014, p. 597).

As Instagram users publish images and texts that discuss different themes, they are simultaneously describing their tastes – and creating online identities. I decided to use the categories created by Hu et al. in my study and compare them to categories occurring often in my data sets since I wanted to examine what the eight most popular categories among Marimekko-related Instagram posts are and analyse how 1) Marimekko-related posts differ from the most frequently occurring content on Instagram (according to Hu et al.), and 2) whether some popular categories found by Hu et al. are regularly emphasised also in the Marimekko posts. My findings will be presented in the analysis section.

This study also utilises Zappavigna's (2015) framework for describing the linguistic functions that hashtags can perform in social media posts. Zappavigna's framework is grounded in the metafunctional approach rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). According to SFL, language construes three key functions in all communicative performances: "an *experiential* function of enacting experience, an *interpersonal* function of negotiating relationships, and a *textual* function of organising information" (2015, p. 278). Zappavigna recognised these three main communicative functions and roles also for hashtags:

- marking experiential topics (i.e. what the posts are about; according to Zappavigna, this function is the most recognised role of hashtags),
- enacting interpersonal relationships (e.g. indicating evaluative stance),

- organising text (e.g. signalling metacommentary via the # symbol).[13]

Zappavigna used a 100-million-word Twitter corpus in her discourse analytic study of linguistic patterns to investigate the abovementioned three functions. Her analysis suggests that hashtags "are involved in a significant shift in the role that metadata occupies in social life, in other words, a shift toward coordinating activity and commentary rather than simply categorising artefacts" (ibid.). I examined how the three functions listed by Zappavigna were represented in my Marimekko-related data sets and studied the functions of the hashtag *#marimekko*. I also examined what other hashtags *#marimekko* frequently occurred with and what kinds of lifestyles Marimekko was connected with because of this. I also analysed how the act of stance-taking was expressed by Instagram users through using hashtags.

In addition to applying the frameworks by Hu et al. and Zappavigna, this thesis utilises Georgalou's ideas and categories on discursive identity construction (see chapter 3.2) and stance-taking (chapter 3.3). As mentioned in chapter 3.3, Georgalou found a variety of ways in which the Greek students in her study communicated stances on Facebook. She mentioned seven different ways of stance-taking:

1. direct stance-taking (e.g. examples of evaluating music),
2. narrative stance-taking (i.e. taking stances to fortify small stories),
3. CMC-specific stance-taking (computer-mediated discourse often includes elements like emojis that indicate stances),
4. stance-taking with audience in mind (writing for specific groups of people, e.g. being careful not to say 'too much' e.g. in case of politically sensitive situations),
5. indirect stances (e.g. asking rhetorical questions to imply stances),
6. cross-modal stance-taking (a text may be complemented with visuals to form a stance, the 'full message'), and
7. recycling ready-made stances (sharing links or memes to show alignment).

In this study, I examined if there were examples of these categories – or any other categories unmentioned by Georgalou – in Marimekko-related Instagram posts.

Examples of stance-taking in Georgalou's data featured the use of the following (p. 204–205):

- *Evaluative adjectives (e.g.* amazing*)*
- *Evaluative adverbs (e.g.* unfortunately*)*
- *Affective verbs (e.g.* laugh, cry, love*)*
- *Cognitive verbs (e.g.* guess, consider, think*)*
- *Modality (e.g.* probably*)*

[13] N.B. Zappavigna notes that these three functions are not mutually inclusive. On the contrary, they tend to appear simultaneously.

- *Generic versus specific use of pronouns*
- *Discourse representation (e.g. others' direct/indirect speech)*
- *Irony*
- *Rhetorical questions*
- *References to the 'Like' button*
- *Usage of song lyrics/titles to imply stances*
- *Typographical emphasis (e.g. smileys)*
- *Visual implications of stances (e.g. through memes, profile pictures)*

I also applied these examples as I analysed the content of my data and stance-taking in posts related to Marimekko.

By applying the abovementioned frameworks and categories related to 1) image content and themes, 2) ways of using hashtags, and 3) different ways of stance-taking, I was able to form a comprehensive analysis of Instagram posts featuring the hashtag *#marimekko* and study how the posts functioned in online identity creating. In the next chapter, I will present my findings.

6 Analysis

In this chapter, I will first analyse the global data set of 200 posts, after which I will proceed to a closer comparison between two Marimekko fans (a Finn and a German) made on the basis of a data set of 20 posts from each user. Subchapters 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 will discuss the global data set of 200 users, whereas subchapter 6.4 will introduce the Finn vs. German in-depth comparison. In subchapter 6.5, I will shortly analyse the differences and similarities of the two data sets.

6.1 The most popular content categories and themes of 200 #marimekko posts

Since Instagram is an image-oriented SNS, I will first consider the multimodal content of the #marimekko posts. As mentioned earlier, in their study called "What We Instagram", Hu et al. (2014) found that the most popular eight photo categories on Instagram were selfies, friends, activities, food, gadgets, captioned photos (with inspirational quotes embedded in the images), pets, and fashion. Of these eight categories, selfies and friends were the most popular ones. I included all of the categories in Table 1 below. In my data of 200 Marimekko-related posts, the most frequent photo categories were not the same as in the study by Hu et al. (the first eight content categories in the table are from their study and the rest are my own).

Table 1. The image content categories found in the posts of 200 Instagram users. The first eight categories are from the study by Hu et al. (2014), and the last nine (marked with a plus sign) are other image content categories that occurred in my data.[14]

Image content category	**Number of occurrences in 200 Instagram posts**
Selfies (self-portraits; only one human face present in the photo)	5
Friends (users posing with friends; at least two human faces in the photo)	1
Activities (both outdoor & indoor activities, places where activities happen, e.g., concerts, landmarks)	41[15]
Food (food, recipes, cakes, drinks, etc.)	52[16]
Gadgets (electronic goods, tools,	6[17]

[14] (N.B. Since more than just one category was usually present in one image, the total number of category occurrences is not 200 but 355.)

[15] Of these 41 posts, 17 posts included the subcategory of travelling and/or airplanes. 9 posts discussed shopping and 4 posts café spotting (with no food in the images). There were two posts about modelling, museum visits, and lunch at a Singapore restaurant cooperating with Marimekko. One post featured a Venetian party, one a book club meeting and one a birthday.

[16] The most popular content was coffee, with coffee mugs or cups included in 17 images. Breakfast and brunch were also popular themes.

[17] Two images with Apple laptops, one with a Microsoft tablet, one with an Urban Ears headset, one iPhone, one Bosch mixer.

motorbikes, cars, etc.)	
Captioned photos (pictures with embedded text, memes, etc.)	-
Pets (e.g. cats and dogs as the main objects in the picture)	15
Fashion (shoes, costumes, makeup, personal belongings, etc.)	54[18]
+ Home & interior design	42
+ Prints and fabrics	36
+ Tableware	35
+ Home/DIY activities	19[19]
+ Bags and accessories	17
+ Glassware	7
+ Children	7
+ Wellness	5[20]
+ Miscellaneous	13[21]

My data featured the majority of the photo categories mentioned by Hu et al. (with only the category of 'captioned photos' entirely missing). Interestingly, the most popular photo content categories of 'selfies' and 'friends' described by Hu et al. were not the most frequent ones in my data. On the contrary, they were in the minority with only five occurrences of selfies and one image of friends[22]. Since many Marimekko-related images featured the specific themes of home and interior design, prints and fabrics, tableware, home/DIY (do-it-yourself) activities, bags and accessories, glassware, children, and wellness, I added those themes as image content categories in Table 1 (they are marked with a plus sign).

The category Activities (by Hu et al.) was a category open to various interpretations. I decided to include images of travelling and airplanes in it. Several Instagram users had spotted airplanes with new Marimekko 'Kivet' livery on them, which explains the abundance of airplanes in the data. Marimekko has cooperated with airline company Finnair and provided cabin accessories for Finnair's flights as well. The category Miscellaneous featured several different themes without a common denominator.

[18] Four images featured second hand fashion.
[19] Four images of handiwork, three of reading, two of studying, baking and playing with graphic design software. One image of bullet journaling, cards, toys, architecture sketches, a DIY pallet bed, birthday preparations, and preparing a Saturday night for friends.
[20] Images of yoga and healthy diet choices.
[21] Featuring three images of nature, two of gay men, and images of miscellaneous retro home accessory, a bus, a book about Maija Isola, a hungover morning, Bangkok cityscape, Marimekko stationary, flowers, and a pink ribbon activist.
[22] Although there was only one image of friends posted, people mentioned friends in texts of other posts as well. Thus, Marimekko was related to spending time with friends although friends did not appear in the images.

The eight most popular content categories in my data were Fashion, Food, Home & interior design, Activities (taking place outside of home), Prints and fabrics, Tableware, Home/DIY activities, and Bags and accessories. Three of these most popular categories, i.e. Fashion, Food, and Activities, were content categories mentioned by Hu et al. The other popular five categories were suggested by me. I separated the category Bags and accessories from Fashion since they represent two distinct product lines at Marimekko.

Table 2. The eight most popular content categories in #marimekko posts. (N.B. Many images contained more than one content category.)

Content category	**Number of occurrences in 200 Instagram posts**
Fashion	54 images
Food	52 images
Home & interior design	42 images
Activities (outside of home)	41 images
Prints and fabrics	36 images
Tableware	35 images
Home/DIY activities	18 images
Bags and accessories	17 images

Place is one interesting feature in the #marimekko posts. Georgalou (2017, p. 44) mentions that "environmental psychologists duly acknowledge that 'who we are' is intimately related to 'where we are'. She also states that "identity is integrally related to where we are, where we have been and where we are heading towards" (p. 254). In my data, many Instagram users had posted images at home (especially in the categories home/DIY activities, tableware, glassware, food, prints and fabrics, home interior, pets, and children). Many posts featured images taken on city streets (with the accompanying hashtag #ootd, outfit of the day), at airports (featuring the cooperation between Marimekko and Finnair) or other travel scenes, at cafés and restaurants (featuring tableware), and Marimekko retail shops (prints and fabrics, tableware, etc.), for instance. Sometimes it was impossible to infer where the image had been taken (see example 1 below for an instance of this).

Next, I will introduce some Instagram posts and discuss the most popular content categories or themes in them. The most frequent content category in my data was Fashion (54 images). Instagram users applying the hashtag #marimekko often posted images such as the one that examples 1 and 2 below feature.

Example 1. @User50: *Love at first sight, purchased after careful consideration #marimekko #mymarimekko #sustainablefashion*

Example 2. @User175: *MARIMEKKO.* ❤️ *#ootd #marimekko #redshoes #adidassuperstar*

Positive emotions or stances were often expressed through positive word choice (example 1) or emojis (example 2) in the posts. Notice the hashtag *#mymarimekko*, which functions as a categorical group identity constructor (by applying the hashtag, @User50 labels herself a Marimekko fan). These details will be discussed in chapter 6.3 and 6.4.

The second most frequent theme in my data was Food (52 posts). Below, example 3 features a typical Marimekko-related post discussing food (the translations in [brackets] are my own):

Example 3. @User173: *Sunday* ☕ *#home #sunday #love #food #marimekko #koti* [#home] *#hem* [#home] *#breakfest*[23] *#sisustus* [#interiordesign] *#aamupala* [#breakfast] *#interior #skandinaviskehjem* [#scandinavianhome] *#skandinavianhome*[24] *#coffee #sundaymorning #withmylove #perfect #drinks*

Interestingly, images of food did not feature any people in them in my data, although Instagram users photographing food often mentioned friends or companions in food-related texts or hashtags. Example 3 features the hashtag *#withmylove*, which implies having breakfast with a loved one (the table is set for two people in the image). Example 3 also features coordination of text and emojis ("Sunday ☕"; this practice is similar with "MARIMEKKO.❤️" in example 2 in the sense that the messages of these texts would not be complete without the emojis). It was not uncommon for the Instagram posts in my data to feature a rather short body text[25] and ten or more hashtags that explained the Instagram user's post, experience or feelings in more detail.

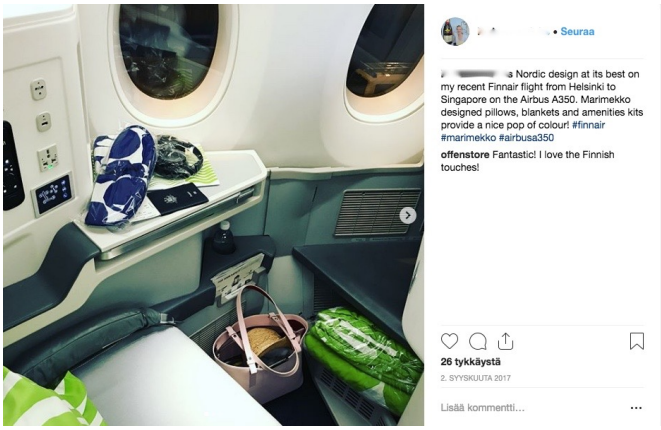
The third most popular content category in my data was Home & interior design (42 images). Example 4 below features this category and the category Children.

[23] This may be a typo or a Swedish-English expression (fest = party/feast/celebration in Swedish).
[24] Again, maybe a typo or just a 'Swedish' way of writing Scandinavian (with a k).
[25] I call the text without hashtags the 'body text' of an Instagram post. In my data, it usually appears before hashtags.

Example 4. @User182: *♡The happiest people don't have the best of everything, they just make the best of everything ♡#happiness #family #homesweethome #oursons #happykids #marimekko #vitra #iittala #apple #euqalyptus #artek #flowers #weekendbouquet #candles #ikea #lokki #cardgames #specialtime #blackandwhite #scandinavianhome #scandinaviandesign #minimalism #minimalist #allgood*

This post features an interesting conflict between the message of the phrase and the hashtag/image content: the phrase implies a non-material attitude, but when applying 24 hashtags, the Instagram user has also ended up itemizing products and brands (Marimekko, Vitra, Iittala, Apple, Artek, Ikea) that the home of these boys or the whole family has. A visual setting such as this could indeed be featured in an advertising brochure of a home interior company.

The fourth most popular content category in my data was Activities (taking place outside of home; 41 images) which example 5 below represents.



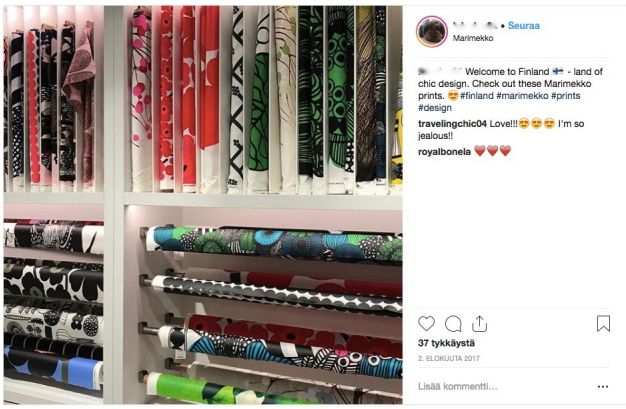
Example 5. @User106: *Nordic design at its best on my recent Finnair flight from Helsinki to Singapore on the Airbus A350. Marimekko designed pillows, blankets and amenities kits provide a nice pop of colour! #finnair #marimekko #airbusa350*

The Australian Instagram user in example 5 expresses her delight about the Marimekko designed accessories in the cabin at a Finnair flight. Her post belongs to the minority of texts with no emojis.

The fifth most popular content category in my data was Prints and fabrics (36 images). Example 6 below features an image posted from Australia by a Japanese Instagram user. The image was placed under two categories: Prints and fabrics and Activities (outside of home; shopping).

Example 6. @User130: *Wall full of Marimekko fabric at a Crate and Barrel outlet. #happyplace #colorscolorscolors #marimekko #outletshopping*

@User130 has been shopping at an outlet and she describes this wall full of colourful Marimekko fabrics a “happy place”.



Example 7. @User69: Welcome to Finland 🇫🇮 - land of chic design. Check out these Marimekko prints. 😍 #finland #marimekko #prints #design

Also @User69 from USA has been shopping in Finland and she has found marimekko prints of her liking. Her choice of adjectives is ‘chic’, and the positive stance towards Marimekko is amplified by the heart eyes emoji (😍).

The sixth most popular content category in my data was Tableware (35 images). Example 8 below features a breakfast setting outside on the terrace in a Belgian home.

Example 8. @User91: *Breakfast this morning. Love to eat it outside. Let the summer stay all year long! #breakfasttime #breakfast #morning #milk #nespresso #icecoffee #marimekko #lovedots #serax #scandinaviandesign #scandinavianstyle #scandinavischwonen* [Scandinavian living] *#outsidelove #outsidelover #gardenlove #gardenlife #evasolo #iittala #citterio #antoniocitterio*

This is a good example of the fact that Marimekko was often connected with other design brands in my data (example 8 features the brands Nespresso, Serax, Eva Solo, Iittala, and Antonio Cittero). Naturally, many tableware images went hand in hand with images of food. The content in such posts was invariably positive. Here, the positive overall message consists of favourable stances expressed towards the time of the year, eating outside in the garden, Scandinavian style and food. In this Belgian post, Marimekko is connected to a certain lifestyle (whatever "Scandinavian living" may entail).

The seventh most popular content category in my data was Home/DIY activities (19 images). Example 9 below also features the categories of Pets and Gadgets.

Example 9. @User32: *I think us dogs should help around the house whenever we can. So today I'm baking with Mommy and she even gave me this pretty apron to protect my fur from stains. #baking #rhodesianridgeback #bakingdog #householdchores #help #kitchen #bosch #apron #marimekko*

Example 9 represents a widely spread phenomenon in Instagram: taking the pets' perspective. Like this Rhodesian Ridgeback, many cats and dogs have their "own" popular Instagram accounts, on which dog owners tend to write in first person, from the pet's viewpoint. This was the only instance in my data where a Marimekko item was worn by a pet. Instagram is a channel well suited for dogs' and cats' accounts such as this one since the image and text content in the social networking service is expected to be light, cute, and delightful.

The eighth most popular content category in my data was Bags and accessories (17 images). See example 2 for an instance of this category. Next, different functions of hashtags will be analysed.

6.2 Different functions of hashtags

The use of numerous hashtags was a prominent feature in my data. If we examine just the nine examples mentioned above, about 10 (9,88) hashtags are applied on average in them (ranging from 3 to 24 hashtags). Next, we will examine some interesting examples in more detail.

Example 10. @User 129: *#gaylove #marimekko #rider #cruisingtime #bed #bedtimestory #love #friendstime #gay #gaypride #sex*

In example 10, @User129 has added 11 rather surprising hashtags in the caption of the black and white image – this was the only instance where sex was discussed. The hashtag *#marimekko* refers to the 'Unikko' socks in the image. Following Zappavigna's (2015) categories, the hashtags in this post are representing three main functions for hashtags.

1. *#marimekko, #bed, #rider, #cruisingtime, #sex* → marking experiential topics (i.e. what the post is about). Hashtags often describe merely what is on display in the picture (*#Marimekko*, *#bed*). This post is about gay sex and the image infers that it may soon

happen on the bed – with Marimekko socks on or off. *#cruisingtime* is a slang term referring to the act of seeking for a sex partner, and *#rider* refers to a person penetrating another person during sex.

2. *#gaypride* → enacting interpersonal relationships (e.g. indicating evaluative stance). @User129 tells his audience about his sexual orientation and expresses the emotion of pride in it. The person in the front has a euphoric look on his face (for anonymity, I have blurred all faces in this study) and this visual cue can also be inferred to express a positive stance towards sex and/or gay sex. The hashtags *#gaylove, #gay,* and *#gaypride* are also constructing identity through expressing group membership (identifying with people who sexually prefer members of the same sex).
3. *#gaylove, #marimekko, #rider, #cruisingtime, #bed, #bedtimestory, #love, #friendstime, #gay, #gaypride, #sex* → organising text (e.g. signalling metacommentary via the # symbol). Although this image includes no body text, the hashtag symbols signal metacommentary on the image: the Instagram user is commenting on his own image through the collection of hashtags. Applied together, the hashtags form the overall message of the post, which is roughly similar to "sex is great, and gay men who are friends can also make love and have fun sexually". The Marimekko sock present in the scene may be there by chance and not intentionally worn for the occasion. It is difficult to state why @User129 has chosen to mention the brand in the hashtag list.

Example 11. @User140: *Our book club and a little something to eat. I love. #book #bookstagram #bookclub #withfriends #latergram #strawberries #arabia #iittala #marimekko #food #foodporn #lingonberrypie #pie #whippedcream #raspberry #pancakes #cookies #wine #coffee #cider #homemade #makesmehappy #iatetoomuch #nofilter*

In example 11, @User140 has included 24 hashtags. Together, they describe what is in the image and how @User140 enjoyed the food served at the book club meeting. The hashtags *#book* and

#bookstagram function as experiential topic markers describing what the post is about – a book club meeting – although there are no books in the image to prove that the image was actually taken at one (the post emphasises food over books in the meeting). Other experiential topic markers are *#strawberries, #arabia, #iittala, #marimekko, #food, #lingonberrypie, #pie, #whippedcream, #raspberry, #pancakes, #cookies, #wine, #coffee,* and *#cider*. Of these, *#arabia, #iittala* and *#marimekko* are brand-related hashtags expressing the Finnish consumer tastes of the person who has set the table (we do not know if that person is @User140 or someone else). Hashtags *#wine, #coffee,* and *#cider* tell the audience more than the image does, since no beverages are showing in the image. The hashtags *#bookstagram*, *#latergram, #foodporn* and *#nofilter* convey specifically Instagram-related information. *#Bookstagram* implies that the post includes book-related content (this hashtag serves the purpose of findability for other Instagram users who want to discover posts about books). The hashtag also constructs the identity of @User140 through expressing group membership: the user identifies with Instagram users who enjoy reading books. The hashtag *#latergram* is applied whenever a user is posting an image from a previous time period ("Instagram" is derived from the word "instant" whereas "latergram" is naturally derived from "later"). *#Foodporn* does not refer to porn or sexual contents; the term is widely used among food-lovers and the hashtag implies a positive stance towards food in general and/or the food presented in the image[26]. When an Instagram user applies the hashtag *#nofilter*, they are informing their audience that no digital image processing was involved in the making of the post (for image filtering on Instagram, see Fallon 2014, p. 58). The hashtag *#homemade* can be deciphered as a positive declaration, since the next two hashtags are *#makesmehappy* and *#iatetoomuch*. Instagram users intuitively understand that a certain succession of hashtags forms mini stories. Here, the story tells what happened (*#homemade #lingonberrypie, #pancakes* and *#cookies* were served), how the protagonist, i.e. the Instagram user, felt (*#makesmehappy*), and what this fact led to (*#iatetoomuch*). @User140 Friends also mentions friends (*#withfriends*) in the hashtag list although no people were photographed for the post. This is a rather typical feature of food posts on Instagram.

In example 12 below, @User153 has applied 22 hashtags that describe her "Sunday mornings at home" in more detail.

[26] According to Wikipedia, food porn is "a glamourized visual presentation of cooking or eating in advertisements, infomercials, blogs, cooking shows or other visual media. These may be foods of a high fat and calorie content, or exotic dishes that arouse a desire to eat or the glorification of food as a substitute for sex". (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_porn)

Example 12. @User153: *Sunday mornings at home✨✨✨ #home #quiet #peaceful #baby #kid #marimekko #ootd #babystyle #stripes #home #interior #decor #bright #furniture #interiordesign #design #sunday #lazy #morning #books #outfit #window*

According to the hashtags, the Sunday mornings of @User153 include peaceful and quiet time with the family. She has applied the hashtag #marimekko since her baby is wearing a striped Marimekko shirt (experiential topic marker, Zappavigna 2015). The hashtags *#ootd* (outfit of the day), *#babystyle, #stripes,* and *#outfit* refer to the same fact. The baby is examining a book and there is a collection of children's books on the living room table – hence the hashtag *#books*, also an experiential topic marker. *#Interior, #decor, #bright, #furniture, #interiordesign, #design, #morning,* and *#window* express what is in the image and what the Instagram user wanted to emphasise. The act of applying hashtags is always a choice that directs the audience's attention; @User153 did not include hashtags such as *#radiator* or *#wallsocket* in her post although the audience can see them in the image as well. *#Lazy* probably does not refer to the active child in the image but the easy nature of Sunday mornings when there are no obligations, hurry or stress, so the hashtag is most probably meant to be read as a positive one.

Example 13. @User191: *Started October with this super yummy lingonberry mango chia pudding with raw chocolate bits ❤️❤️❤️. I do intermittent fasting (have done it for many years, way before it became a trend), so this was my first meal in 16 hours and it was so good, I helped myself to another bowl😂😂😂😂😂... #vegan #veganism #veganfood #vegansofig* [vegans of Instagram] *#glutenfree #glutenfreelife #glutenfreevegan #glutenfreelifestyle #nutritious #nutrition #healthyfood #healthylifestyle #healthybreakfast #fitnesslifestyle #fitnessaddict #fitforlife #breakfast #breakfastwithlove #breakfastinbed #marimekko #happysunday*

A happy Sunday is also featured in the post of @User191, as she has finally tasted a "super yummy lingonberry mango chia pudding with raw chocolate bits" after having fasted for 16 hours. An interesting feature about this post is that of the 21 hashtags applied, 16 are concerned with healthy diet choices or veganism (*#vegan, #veganism, #veganfood, #vegansofig, #glutenfree, #glutenfreelife, #glutenfreevegan, #glutenfreelifestyle, #nutritious, #nutrition, #healthyfood, #healthylifestyle, #healthybreakfast, #fitnesslifestyle, #fitnessaddict, #fitforlife*). The abovementioned hashtags function as topic markers but they are also possibly enacting interpersonal relationships (Zappavigna 2015). Some of these hashtags are constructing categorical identities mentioned by Stommel (2008). According to her, categorical identity refers to "how actors attend to and are attended to by categories in their naturally-occurring interactions" (for more on categorical identities, see also Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, Schegloff, 2007, and Limatius, 2017). As the previous examples of Instagram posts in this study have shown, categorical identities or group identities may be expressed through hashtags such as *#mymarimekko*, *#gaypride* or *#bookstagram*. @User191 is expressing categorical identity through applying hashtags such as *#vegan, #veganism, #vegansofig, #glutenfreevegan, #glutenfreelifestyle, #healthylifestyle, #fitnesslifestyle, #fitnessaddict,* and *#fitforlife*. Thus, she is sending encouraging messages of affiliation to other Instagram users: I am like this – find me and affiliate with my ideas and values (cf. Zappavigna 2011, p. 789). All hashtags in the post have the textual function of organising the

post: the # symbol can be read as punctuation signalling that the tags are metadata (Zappavigna 2015, p. 279). Thus, they separate the tags from the body text of the post.

Studying other hashtags that appeared beside *#marimekko* in my data, I found that Marimekko was frequently connected with other design brands, especially Finnish ones like Arabia, Iittala, Pentik, Finlayson, or Aalto. In addition, the Swedish furnishing brand Ikea was often mentioned. The hashtag *#marimekko* frequently occurred with more general hashtags such as *#finnishdesign, #scandinaviandesign, #scandinavianhome, #scandinavianinterior, #nordichome, #nordicinterior*, or *#nordicdesign*. The Finnish airline Finnair was also frequently mentioned in hashtags because of the design cooperation of the two companies.

6.3 Stance-taking: positive or negative stances?

As mentioned earlier, Georgalou (2017) studied stance-taking among Greek Facebook users. She noted that her data featured the use of the following elements (p. 204–205):

- *Evaluative adjectives (e.g.* amazing*)*
- *Evaluative adverbs (e.g.* unfortunately*)*
- *Affective verbs (e.g.* laugh, cry, love*)*
- *Cognitive verbs (e.g.* guess, consider, think*)*
- *Modality (e.g.* probably*)*
- *Generic versus specific use of pronouns*
- *Discourse representation (e.g. others' direct/indirect speech)*
- *Irony*
- *Rhetorical questions*
- *References to the 'Like' button*
- *Usage of song lyrics/titles to imply stances*
- *Typographical emphasis (e.g. smileys)*
- *Visual implications of stances (e.g. through memes, profile pictures)*

The data in my study featured some similar elements, particularly evaluative adjectives, affective verbs and typographical emphasis (emojis). The Marimekko-related Instagram posts by 200 Instagram users featured mostly positive stances (some neutral ones and no negative ones). The stances were most often expressed through word choice[27] in the body text, hashtags, and emojis, as shown in table 3 below.

[27] In most cases, positive adjectives and verbs.

Table 3. Some positive stances expressed through word choice, hashtags, or emojis in the posts of 200 Instagram users, and some corresponding corporate messages from Marimekko company. The stance objects have been added in parentheses for clarity.

Expressing positive stances by…	**Example**	**Corresponding corporate messages from Marimekko company**[28]
…positive word choice in the body text	5: *Nordic design at its best, a nice pop of colour* (Marimekko products on an airplane)	*The world's most inspiring lifestyle design brand; Original prints and colours*
	4: *The happiest* (people)... (make) *the best* (of everything)	*Empowering people to be happy as they are*
	1: *Love at first sight* (Liidokki dress in Kirjo print)	*Empowering people to express their personality boldly through the way that they dress themselves and their homes*
	9: *pretty* (Unikko apron on a dog)	*Beautiful everyday life*
	11: *I love.* (the catering and tableware at a book club meeting)	*Beautiful everyday life*
	13: *super yummy* (chia pudding)	–
	7: (land of) *chic* (design)	*The world's most inspiring lifestyle design brand*
…using positive hashtags	6: *#happyplace, #colorscolorscolors* (Marimekko fabrics at an outlet)	*Empowering people to be happy as they are; Original prints and colours*
	4: *#happiness, #family, #homesweethome, #happykids, #specialtime, #allgood* (kids playing cards at a home with Marimekko curtains and a Mariskooli bowl)	*Empowering people to be happy as they are; Empowering people to express their personality boldly through the way that they dress themselves and their homes*
	1: *#sustainablefashion* (Liidokki dress)	*High quality*
	13: *#happysunday*	*Empowering people to be happy as they are*
	11: *#makesmehappy* (good food and beautiful presentation with Marimekko tableware), *#foodporn*	*Empowering people to be happy as they are; –*
	10: *#gaylove, #gay, #gaypride*	*Empowering people to be happy as they are*
…using positive emojis	2: ❤️(Marimekko)	–
	3: ☕[29]	–
		–

[28] Some of the key messages that Marimekko has highlighted in their corporate communications (Marimekko 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d).
[29] The coffee cup emoji may be interpreted as a neutral or a positive emoji.

	4: ♡ ♡ 7: 😍 (Marimekko prints) 12: ✨✨✨[30](home) 13: ❤️❤️❤️, 😂😂😂😂😂[31]	– – –

As table 3 shows, the stance objects (i.e. things being evaluated) in the body texts of the 200 Instagram posts may be various things: Nordic and Finnish design, Marimekko clothes and tableware, food, beautiful objects at home, or quality time with friends and family. Table 3 also shows that the stance objects of hashtags partly overlap with the stance objects in the body texts, but hashtags add something extra to the content. Their stance objects vary from food (*#foodporn*) and quality clothing (*#sustainablefashion*) to Marimekko shops (*#happyplace*), home (*#homesweethome*), weekdays (*#happysunday*), or time spent with the family and life in general (*#happiness, #allgood, #happykids, #specialtime*). These hashtags create more depth to the messages of the posts, and especially adjectives in hashtags describe what Instagram users think about certain topics or how they feel about them. The hashtags mentioned above tend to label the stance objects in a positive manner (*#sustainablefashion, #happysunday, #homesweethome*, *#specialtime*).

Table 3 also features some of the key messages that Marimekko has highlighted in their corporate communications (Marimekko 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, and 2018d). The key messages are also listed in this study in chapter 2.3. The emotion of happiness was mentioned fairly often in the hashtags, and the key corporate message from Marimekko analogous with this emotion is "*Empowering people to be happy as they are*". Obviously, this study is not extensive enough to draw any definite conclusions, but according to my data, the notion of happiness is something that both sides – Marimekko company and consumers – discuss in their communications. Colours, prints, high quality and inspiration for beautiful homes were also present in the Instagram posts.

Table 3 features just a fraction of the total amount of emojis found in my data. Instagram is a channel where users apply an abundance of emojis to show their feelings and/or strengthen their messages. Some emojis shown in table 3 (❤️, 😂, ☕, 😍) were among the most frequent ones found in the data. Other examples of emojis occurring in the data are listed below in table 4.

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[30] Decorative sparkling stars, the kind that may be indicate an item as being 'sparkling clean' (very clean) or shiny. (https://emojipedia.org/sparkles/)

[31] The Face with tears of joy emoji is "a yellow face with a big grin, uplifted eyebrows, and smiling eyes, each shedding a tear from laughing so hard. Widely used to show something is funny or pleasing" (https://emojipedia.org/face-with-tears-of-joy/).

Table 4. Examples of emojis occurring in the data of 200 posts globally.

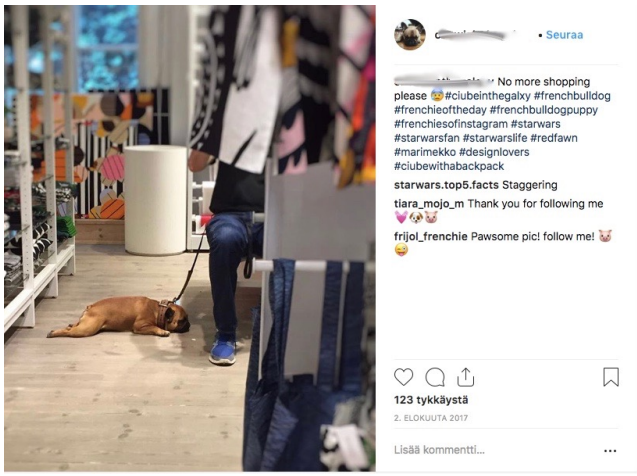
Emoji(s)	Context
❄️	user describing cold climate
✖	user describing work getting done
😻	user discussing cats
😋	user discussing food
🍞	user discussing food
💗	user discussing food
🌱	user discussing veganism
🐞	user discussing ladybug toys
💜	user discussing new Marimekko glasses and the proper shade of lipstick
☺	user discussing an "ootd"[32] and a happy weekend
🍀	user discussing an "ootd", brands and travelling
💝	user discussing cats and a happy weekend
😅	user discussing a quick tidy-up at home
😘	user wishing a nice day to everyone
🐰🐇	user describing the decorations for a child's birthday
💎	user describing Finnish design vases and a marble table
🇫🇮	user discussing a Finnish dinner
💛	user discussing yellow Finnish design glassware
🙃	user trying to find inspiration for graphic design work
🐼	user discussing panda mugs and tableware by Marimekko and other brands
🖤	user discussing Moomin mugs
😛	user discussing breakfast outside
💜	user discussing love for a Marimekko Kivet print dress
🤸	user presenting a yoga asana challenge),
🍫	user discussing chocolate spread
😰	user appearing as her tired pet dog on a shopping day
👏	user discussing sleeping children
💗🇫🇮🇺🇸🌅	user discussing a shopping experience on her travel
⭐🤣👍😎👀	user discussing working on a Saturday in Marimekko shoes
🐾💤💙	user appearing as her dog on a lazy Sunday in a Marimekko chair
⚡⚡	user discussing her dog, "the neighbourhood watch"
😴	user discussing her sleeping dog
🛬	user discussing travelling home
🌿🌿🌿🌺🌺🌺🌿🌿🌿	user discussing a visit to a café terrace for lunch
➰	user discussing a graphic design sketch
🥂	user discussing a birthday

Like some hashtags mentioned earlier, also emojis create depth to the messages of the posts. One of their functions is to guide the audience to infer what the author of the post thinks about certain

[32] (ootd = outfit of the day)

topics and how they feel about them. The emojis mentioned above tend to label the stance objects in a positive or neutral manner.

The only negative emoji I found in the data was actually part of a humoristic post about a pet dog:



Example 14. @User73: *No more shopping please* 😰 *#ciubeinthegalxy*[33] *#frenchbulldog #frenchieoftheday #frenchbulldogpuppy #frenchiesofinstagram #starwars #starwarsfan #starwarslife #redfawn*[34] *#marimekko #designlovers #ciubewithabackpack*

In example 14, the chosen emoji 😰[35] is negative, but the context tells the audience that the Instagram user is in fact being slightly humorous. The image features his/her French bulldog puppy lying on a Marimekko shop floor, looking tired of the shopping day.

As Georgalou (2017) studied communication on Facebook among Greek students, she found a variety of ways in which the students communicated stances (see chapter 3.3 for details). Georgalou mentioned seven different ways of stance-taking:

1. direct stance-taking (e.g. examples of evaluating music),
2. narrative stance-taking (i.e. taking stances to fortify small stories),
3. CMC-specific stance-taking (computer-mediated discourse often includes elements like emojis that indicate stances),
4. stance-taking with audience in mind (writing for specific groups of people, e.g. being careful not to say 'too much' e.g. in case of politically sensitive situations),
5. indirect stances (e.g. asking rhetorical questions to imply stances),

[33] 'Ciube' is an Italian nickname for the film character Chewbacca in Star Wars films. The other hashtags in the post tell the audience that @User73 is a Star Wars fan.
[34] 'Red fawn' is the type of French bulldog in question.
[35] This is the 'Anxious Face with Sweat' emoji, "[a] look of concern, with a blue forehead and sweat dripping down the cheek" (https://emojipedia.org/face-with-open-mouth-and-cold-sweat/).

6. cross-modal stance-taking (a text may be complemented with visuals to form a stance, the 'full message'), and
7. recycling ready-made stances (sharing links or memes to show alignment).

There were examples of all these categories in my data as well (see table 5 below).

*Table 5. Ways of stance-taking in 200 Instagram posts featuring the hashtag #marimekko (marked in **bold letters** in the examples).*

Ways of stance-taking	**Example in the data**
Direct stance-taking	5. @User106: ***Nordic design at its best*** *on my recent Finnair flight from Helsinki to Singapore on the Airbus A350.* ***Marimekko designed pillows, blankets and amenities kits provide a nice pop of colour!*** *#finnair #marimekko #airbusa350*
Narrative stance-taking	9. @User32: ***I think us dogs should help around the house whenever we can. So today I'm baking with Mommy and she even gave me this pretty apron to protect my fur from stains.*** *#baking #rhodesianridgeback #bakingdog #householdchores #help #kitchen #bosch #apron #marimekko*
CMC-specific stance-taking	2. @User175: ***MARIMEKKO.*** ❤️ *#ootd #marimekko #redshoes #adidassuperstar*
Stance-taking with audience in mind	10. @User 129: ***#gaylove*** *#marimekko* ***#rider #cruisingtime*** *#bed #bedtimestory #love #friendstime* ***#gay #gaypride*** *#sex*
Indirect stances	14. @User73: ***No more shopping please*** 😰 *#ciubeinthegalxy #frenchbulldog #frenchieoftheday #frenchbulldogpuppy #frenchiesofinstagram #starwars #starwarsfan #starwarslife #redfawn #marimekko #designlovers #ciubewithabackpack*
Cross-modal stance-taking	10. @User 129: ***#gaylove*** *#marimekko* ***#rider #cruisingtime*** *#bed #bedtimestory #love #friendstime* ***#gay #gaypride*** *#sex*
Recycling ready-made stances	4. @User182: ♡ ***The happiest people don't have the best of everything, they just make the best of everything*** ♡ *#happiness #family #homesweethome #oursons #happykids #marimekko #vitra #iittala #apple #euqalyptus #artek #flowers #weekendbouquet #candles #ikea #lokki #cardgames #specialtime #blackandwhite #scandinavianhome #scandinaviandesign #minimalism #minimalist #allgood*

In example 5, @User106 declared Marimekko designed pillows and other amenities as "Nordic design at its best", which is a clear example of direct stance-taking. Example 9 featured a dog's perspective, and @User32 made a delightful use of narrative in the example: a dog with a Marimekko apron on told its opinions about house chores in the text. Example 2 was an instance of CMC-specific stance-taking which was abundant in the data; users regularly mention brands and express their stances towards them by applying positive hashtags.

In example 10, @User 129 combined two ways of stance-taking: cross-modal stance-taking and stance-taking with audience in mind. His audience is the gay community (although he may be expressing his tidings of joy to people outside it as well, hashtags such as *#rider* or *#cruisingtime* suggest that he is speaking to people who know gay slang terms). The message of the post can be deciphered correctly only if the audience sees the image and reads the full text. If the audience does not see the Marimekko Unikko sock in the other man's foot, they would be baffled; what is the connection between Marimekko and gay sex? Cross-modal stance-taking can be argued to be present in every single Instagram post that contains an image and text or emojis.

Example 14 can be argued to be an instance of an indirect stance: @User73 is pretending to be the French bulldog, expressing that the dog is tired. The tiredness of the dog is expressed through applying an image (of the dog lying on a shop floor). The crying emoji is fortifying the (seemingly) negative stance.

The last type of stance-taking mentioned by Georgalou, recycling ready-made stances, was rare in my data. Example 4 featured an instance of this, recycling an old saying with the act of stance-taking embedded in it.

In the following subchapter, I will compare some Instagram posts of a Finnish and a German Marimekko fan.

6.4 A close comparison between two Marimekko fans' posts: a Finn vs. a German

In this subchapter, I will introduce two Marimekko fans chosen for a closer comparison. The aim of the subchapter is to examine the contexts in which Marimekko occurs in the Instagram posts of a Finnish and foreign social media user. I wanted to study the possible differences in their Marimekko-related identity construction practices in more detail, since the global 200-post data only featured one post per user and drawing conclusions on identity construction is problematic on the basis of just one post. Some of the material featuring in the following subchapters was also presented in my bachelor's thesis (Pakarinen 2018). In the bachelor's thesis, I examined Instagram posts by the Finnish Marimekko fan only.

The Instagram users chosen for the study were found through a random search using the hashtag *#marimekko* on Instagram. They are unaware of this comparison since I wanted to keep the analysis and their behaviour as authentic and spontaneous as possible. All posts are anonymised although the posts and the profiles were set to public at the time of making this study. The requirements for the users to be chosen were the same as in the main data set of 200 posts: the users had to be 'ordinary' people with no financial ties to Marimekko who would often post about the company or its products on their Instagram accounts, and mostly use English language in their posts. My aim was to compare the way a Finn and a foreign Marimekko fan discuss the company or its products or discuss their lives in Marimekko-related contexts (for us Finns, Marimekko is an iconic and traditional brand, and I wanted to explore the ways in which a foreigner might see it). My initial hope was to compare a Finnish and an Asian Marimekko fan since Asia is a current focus area for Marimekko: the company has been growing fast in Asia and getting an abundance of Asian fans during the past years. There were plenty of Asian people tagging Marimekko on Instagram, but unfortunately, all of the people (Chinese, Japanese, South Korean, Thai, etc.) who posted frequently using the hashtag *#marimekko* also did this in their native language. Because of the language barrier, I was forced to choose a foreign Marimekko fan who would post in English. The first suitable Instagram user I found was the German woman and she was picked for the study.

6.4.1 Finn vs. German: the profile texts

I first examined the profile texts of both Instagram users to see how they presented themselves and their identities in this context. As Georgalou (2017, p. 16) mentions, users of social networking services make use of profiles which function as "public displays of self where the users have a unique opportunity to disclose and deeply enmesh aspects of their social and personal identity". Georgalou calls creating an SNS profile text "essentially a self-reflexive act". The profile text, or the 'digital body' (boyd 2007), tells our audience some basics about who we are. It may also guide the reader to infer why we are using the SNS and how we are likely to interact with others in the service.

The Finnish user chosen for this study has chosen to disclose the following information about her identity on her Instagram profile text:

> @UserFin: [**first name**] *Saksassa sijaitseva kotoilija. // A Finn based in Germany. Likes food, sewing, and nice things.*

The Finnish word 'kotoilija' does not have an equivalent in English but it could be translated as 'a person who likes homing'. The Finnish user also gives out her first name and introduces an address to her public blog (in Finnish) that discusses the issues of home decor, sewing, living with kids and

expatriate life in general. On Instagram, she writes in English (only adding Finnish and German hashtags in her posts), so we can assume that her intended audience on the platform is somewhat different from the intended audience of her blog.

The German user also gives out her first name with the following profile text:

> @UserGer: [**first name**] *Here's to the fools that dream.* ♥ *Interior | Design | Lifestyle | Inspiration | Hej! I'm* [first name], *a German girl who loves and lives (interior) design.*

The first thing the German user informs her audience about is her positive attitude towards dreaming, though use of the black heart emoji may make this interpretation conflicting, since its meaning can be deciphered in many ways. According to Emojipedia[36], a black heart is a "heart shaded completely black. May be used to express morbidity, sorrow, or a form of dark humor." But by examining the posts by @UserGer more closely, I realised that she applied the black heart symbol simply because of its aesthetic look, without any dark psychological references (judging by the overall contents in her posts). Her images often contain simple and beautiful black and white objects. A small detail in her profile text stands out: she addresses her audience with the Scandinavian greeting word "hej" although the rest of the text is written in English. This is one way of telling the readers what to expect on the Instagram page and what she identifies with: this German Instagram user is bound to be interested in some aspects of Scandinavian culture. Choosing this particular way of greeting is well grounded; her posts often feature the hashtags *#scandinavian, #scandinaviandesign, #scandinavianstyle, #scandihome* and *#nordicinspiration.*

What is similar about @UserFin and @UserGer is that according to the images they post and the information they share on their profiles, they both enjoy interior design and decorating their homes. Neither of them informs us about their age, which is a common practice on Instagram. @UserGer may be a few years younger than @UserFin, since she calls herself a girl, not a woman. @UserFin had a husband and one child at the time of collecting the data and she mentioned her family (at least by using the subject 'we' in her posts) in 10 of 20 posts, identifying strongly with family life, whereas @UserGer did not mention having a family. Another difference between the users is that @UserFin stresses the fact that she likes to make some of the home decoration featured in the images (such as pillow cases or curtains) herself by sewing, whereas @UserGer does not identify as strongly with DIY (do-it-yourself) culture. @UserGer tends to mention tableware most often in her Marimekko-related posts.

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[36] (https://emojipedia.org/black-heart/)

6.4.2 Finn vs. German: the most popular content categories and themes

Like with the larger data set, also here I will first consider the multimodal content of the *#marimekko* posts. Hu et al. (2014) found that the most popular eight photo categories on Instagram were selfies, friends, activities, food, gadgets, captioned photos (with inspirational quotes embedded in the images), pets, and fashion. I included all of these categories in Table 6. In my data of 40 Marimekko related posts, the most frequent photo categories were not the same as in the study by Hu et al. (the first eight content categories are from Hu et al.):

Table 6. The image content categories found in the posts of two Instagram users (Finnish & German user).[37]

Image content category	**@UserFin (20 posts)**	**@UserGer (20 posts)**
Selfies (self-portraits; only one human face present in the photo)	1 (+2 portraits of the user that were taken by someone else)	0
Friends (users posing with friends; at least two human faces in the photo)	0	0
Activities (both outdoor & indoor activities, places where activities happen, e.g., concerts, landmarks)	12 (home activities)	4 (home activities)
Food (food, recipes, cakes, drinks, etc.)	3	7
Gadgets (electronic goods, tools, motorbikes, cars, etc.)	1	1
Captioned photos (pictures with embedded text, memes, etc.)	0	0
Pets (e.g. cats and dogs as the main objects in the picture)	0	0
Fashion (shoes, costumes, makeup, personal belongings, etc.)	4	1
+ Home	20	20
+ Interior design	7	18
+ Tableware	3	19
+ Sewing / handicraft	10	2

My data featured the majority of the photo categories mentioned by Hu et al. (with the categories of 'friends', 'pets', and 'captioned photos' missing). Interestingly, the popular photo content categories of 'selfies' and 'friends' were not the most frequent ones in my data. On the contrary,

[37] The first eight categories are from the study by Hu et al. (2014), and the last four (marked with a plus sign) are my own specifically Marimekko-related photo categories that occurred often in the data. Some categories are overlapping since more than one category may be simultaneously present in an image.

they were in the minority[38]. Since Marimekko-related images featured the specific themes of home, interior design, tableware, or sewing (Marimekko fabrics), I decided to add those themes as four photo content categories in Table 6 (they are marked with a plus sign). 'Activities' was a category open to various interpretations. I decided to include photos of home activities (e.g. baking, handicraft) in it, although I presume that Hu et al. may have had public activities in mind as they created their categories. They only provided the following information on the category: "both outdoor & indoor activities, places where activities happen, e.g., concerts, landmarks".

What was striking about my data was the fact that all of the 40 images (20+20) featured the homes of the two Instagram users. As mentioned earlier during the examination of the larger data set of 200 Instagram posts, Georgalou (2017, p. 254) has stated that "identity is integrally related to where we are, where we have been and where we are heading towards". Both the Finnish and the German Instagram user have also posted images outside of their homes elsewhere in their profiles, but all Marimekko-related images in this data were home-related. Although it would be unreasonable to draw any conclusions on the basis of a small data sample such as this, it is an interesting detail. In these two users' cases, Marimekko was strongly linked or identified with home life.

Next, I will introduce two posts from both Instagram users and discuss the content categories or themes in them.

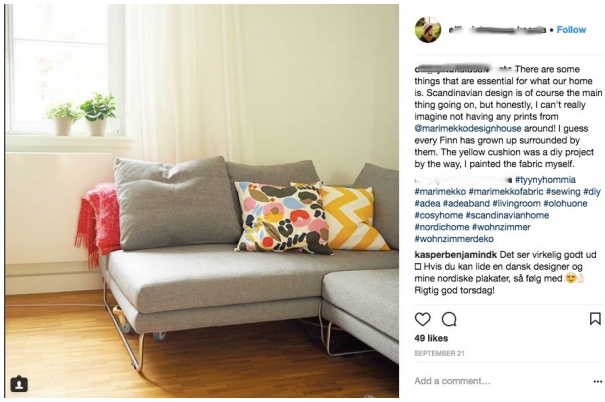
Examining other themes besides 'home', the most frequent content category in @UserFin's data was 'activities' (12 images). In her posts, this category overlaps with another category that could be treated as a subcategory of activities, 'sewing/handicraft' (@UserFin had posted 10 images of sewing and two images of baking with the family. I considered them all 'activities' but created a subcategory for 'sewing/handicraft' since it occurred so often.) Another frequent theme for @UserFin was interior design (7 posts). Below, example 15 features a typical Marimekko-related post from @UserFin, discussing sewing (the translations in [brackets] are my own):

[38] Although there were no images of friends posted by @UserFin or @UserGer in their Marimekko related posts, both women mentioned inviting friends to their homes in a few texts, and the accompanying images were taken in their kitchens (featuring either Marimekko tableware or kitchen towels). Thus, Marimekko was related to spending time with friends although friends did not appear in the images.

Example 15. @UserFin: *This is my #lanewaydress (pattern by #jenniferlaurenhandmade)! It's my first self-made proper dress, and I couldn't be prouder of it! The pattern is fantastic and sewing the dress was pure pleasure. I'm also really happy with the fit, even though I didn't make basically any changes except lengthening the bodice a bit. And the fabric - can we all take a moment to admire it? It's a cotton sateen I bought at @marimekkodesignhouse fabric sale some years ago without any special plans. Thank you @jenniferlaurenhandmade for such a great pattern!* 😚
#sewJLH #marimekkofabric #marimekko #sewing #sewingforme #selfishsewing #handmadewardrobe #selfmadewardrobe #slowfashion #nähen [#sewing] *#nähenmachtglücklich* [#sewingmakeshappy] *#nähenfürmich* [#sewingforme] *#isew #handmade #sewingproject #dresssewing #ompeluelämää* [#sewinglife] *#ompeluhommia* [#sewingstuff] *#naistenvaate* [#womensclothes] *#itetein* [#madeitmyself] *#ompelu* [#sewing]

In the above post, @UserFin discusses sewing and handmade fashion. She presents a dress she has made for herself. This post coincides with what @UserFin has told us about her identity on her profile: she is a person who enjoys sewing. The post presents @UserFin as an inspired hobbyist artisan and features several positive adjectives, nouns and verbs (*proper, prouder, fantastic, pure pleasure, happy, admire, thank, great*) that lead the reader to assume she is good at what she does. She addresses the provider of the dress pattern personally (via using the @-symbol and username) and thanks her with a kissing face emoji (*Thank you @jenniferlaurenhandmade for such a great pattern!* 😚). She also praises the fabric maker, Marimekko, for great dress material (*And the fabric - can we all take a moment to admire it?*), addressing her audience first, and after that, also addressing Marimekko company directly by adding the Instagram account name *@marimekkodesignhouse* on the post. In the following subchapters, we will examine the acts of stance-taking and hashtag usage in more detail.

Example 16 features another frequent theme in @UserFin's posts, that of interior design:



Example 16. @UserFin: *There are some things that are essential for what our home is. Scandinavian design is of course the main thing going on, but honestly, I can't really imagine not having any prints from @marimekkodesignhouse around! I guess every Finn has grown up surrounded by them. The yellow cushion was a diy project by the way, I painted the fabric myself. #tyynyhommia* [pillowstuff] *#marimekko #marimekkofabric #sewing #diy #adea #adeaband #livingroom #olohuone* [#livingroom] *#cosyhome #scandinavianhome #nordichome #wohnzimmer* [#livingroom] *#wohnzimmerdeko* [#livingroomdeco]

Example 16 is the only one in my data where a user discusses Marimekko prints through the viewpoint of time and not merely as concrete products that we can see in the image. @UserFin tells her audience that the prints of the company form a significant part of her home interior. She has grown up surrounded by them – as she suspects every Finn has. Thus, Marimekko prints could be argued to form a part of her identity as a home interior decorator alongside other Scandinavian design (e.g. the valuable Adea Band design sofa mentioned in the post).

The most frequent content categories in @UserGer's data were 'tableware' (19 images), 'interior design' (18 posts) and 'food' (7 posts featuring mainly cups of coffee). Example 17 introduces a typical Marimekko-related post from @UserGer, featuring the frequent theme of tableware:

Example 17. @UserGer: *PURE BEAUTY ♥ | So simple, but so pretty. #marimekko #oiva #räsymatto #siirtolapuutarha #myhome #atmine #stilllife #geschirr* [#tableware] *#tableware #federn* [#feathers] *#feather #teller* [#plate] *#scandinaviandesign #scandinavian #stillleben*

[#quietliving] *#kinfolk #simplicity #monochrome #muster* [#pattern or #design] *#nordicinspiration #schwarzweiss* [#blackandwhite] *#blackandwhite #minimalism #pureandsimple #interior123 #eyecandy #calm #interiordecoration #clean #inspiration*

In example 17, @UserGer discusses her favourite tableware style that she describes as black and white, pure, simple and pretty. This post also features very positive adjectives and nouns (*pure, pretty, eye candy, simplicity, calm, clean, inspiration)*. @UserGer often writes short clauses and adds 20 to 30 hashtags in the end to describe her message in more detail, adding information and emotions in the texts. In this one, she makes use of the black heart emoji to express positive feelings or stance.

Example 18 introduces a typical Marimekko-related post from @UserGer, discussing the themes of spring light, home and interior design:

Example 18. @UserGer: *GOOD SUNDAY MORNING | Finally the sun comes out* ☀️🎉😀 *I love my home in these hours.* ♥ *#atmine #myhome #interior123 #diningroom #livingroom #berlinerzimmer* [#roomofaberliner] *#vitra #vitraeames #eamessidechair #freshflowers #tulips #sundaymood #rayoflight #designhousestockholm #cordlamp #hanginglights #industrial #bigpicture #aludibond #fabrikchic* [#factorychic] *#scandihome #monochrome #table #marimekko #industriechic* [#industrychic] *#spring #sundaymorning #eamesplasticarmchair #blackandwhite #happysunday*

This image of a dining room was posted by @UserGer on a spring Sunday. She is describing how the time of the year and her home make her feel: she loves her home when the light is like this. @UserGer tends to mention many brands and interior objects in her posts which makes one assume that the right brands strongly contribute to her happiness and/or she wants to represent a certain lifestyle through mentioning them frequently.

In Georgalou's study, the most straightforward ways of constructing identity (references to ways of being, doing, feeling and thinking) were expressed on Facebook by 'I-marked' utterances

that consisted of the first-person pronoun and a verb that was either cognitive, epistemic, affective or operative and signalled or announced activity (2017, p. 255). Below, example 19 introduces some instances of the same pattern in my data.

Example 19. Some 'I-marked' utterances constructing Instagram users' identities.[39]

@UserFin:

- ***I couldn't be prouder*** *of it!* ***I'm also really happy with*** *the fit…*
- *It's a cotton sateen* ***I bought*** *at @marimekkodesignhouse fabric sale…*
- ***I can't really imagine*** *not having any prints from @marimekkodesignhouse around!*
- ***I guess*** *every Finn has grown up surrounded by them.*
- ***I painted*** *the fabric myself.*

@UserGer:

- ***I love*** *my home in these hours.* ♥
- *Carnival is near and* ***I am not ready*** *yet* 😬🙈
- *Evening with friends.....|* ***I really have to hurry up*** *now!!* ⏱️🙈🍷😬
- ***I enjoy*** *the tea hour and* ***long*** *for spring.* 🍵🍩☁️❄️🌸

6.4.3 Finn vs. German: different functions of hashtags

The use of numerous hashtags was a prominent feature in my data. @UserFin adds about nine (8,55) hashtags on average in her posts, whereas @UserGer adds about 30 (29,55) hashtags on average in her posts.

Example 20. @UserFin: *Every time I ask my son if we should bake something, the answer is yes, cinnamon rolls! He was so proud of this particular one he helped bake that I was instructed to take a picture of it (in its half-eaten state because you have to taste first* 😉*).*

[39] @UserGer tends to apply more emojis in her posts than @UserFin. Their functions align with the ones mentioned by Zappavigna (2015); they are also used to marking topics, expressing stances and organising text.

#marimekko #korvapuusti [#cinnamonroll] *#hänsöiehkäneljä* [#heatemaybefour] *#eimeillälasketa* [#wedontkeepcount]

In example 20, @UserFin has added only four hashtags in the caption. The hashtag #marimekko refers to the "Karkuteillä" plate in the image. Following Zappavigna's (2015) categories, the hashtags in this post are representing the three main functions for hashtags:

4. *#marimekko, #korvapuusti* [cinnamonroll] → marking experiential topics (i.e. what the posts are about). This post is about baking cinnamon rolls, and in this family, they are eaten from Marimekko plates such as the one in the image. Hashtags often describe merely what is on display in the picture.
5. *#hänsöiehkäneljä* [#heatemaybefour], *#eimeillälasketa* [#wedontkeepcount] → enacting interpersonal relationships (e.g. indicating evaluative stance). @UserFin tells her audience about her young son's infatuation with cinnamon rolls. While she first estimates the number of rolls her son has eaten, in the following hashtag she claims her family does not keep count of the rolls eaten (these circumstances are supposedly positive from a child's point of view, so using this type of a hashtag may be deciphered as an example of constructing an identity of a person with a happy family).
6. *#marimekko, #korvapuusti* [cinnamonroll], *#hänsöiehkäneljä* [#heatemaybefour], *#eimeillälasketa* [#wedontkeepcount] → organising text (e.g. signalling metacommentary via the # symbol).

In example 21 below, @UserFin tells her audience how she loves slow Sunday mornings (the positive stance is expressed by using the two hearts emoji). The image features her family: her husband and son in their bedroom.

Example 21. @UserFin: *Slow Sunday mornings* 💕*#uusipostausblogissa* [#newpostintheblog] *#ajatuksiasaksasta* [#thoughtsfromgermany] *#marimekko #finlayson #morning #lazyday*

@UserFin has added six hashtags in the post, and the first two of them (*#uusipostausblogissa*, *#ajatuksiasaksasta*) are referring to an entity outside of the posted image and Instagram – the blog written by @UserFin. Thus, one function of her hashtags is to advertise her other personal communication channels (following Zappavigna's categories, their function is to enact interpersonal relationships). The hashtags *#morning* and *#lazyday* are functioning as topic markers. The hashtags *#marimekko* and *#finlayson* are also topic markers since they are used to describe what Finnish design brands are featured in the image (i.e. labelling content). The boy is wearing a striped shirt by Marimekko, and the family sleeps in linen made by Finlayson. But what is different about these topic markers (as opposed to *#morning* and *#lazyday*) is that they can be inferred to function as building blocks of a Finnish or Scandinavian identity and a certain lifestyle – an identity of a person who consumes well known Finnish quality brands in clothing and linen.

Example 22. @UserGer: *My very lazy Sunday ends up with a good Book and a coffee.* [smiling nerd face emoji]☕🍩 *#homesweethome #interiordecor #interior123 #interior #marimekko #coffee #coffeelovers #bookstagram #blackandwhite #monochrome #reading #slowlife #wintermood #livingroom #sowasvonda*[40] *#minimalism #instahome #stilllife #coffeetime #scandi #scandinavian #oiva #nordicinspiration #weekend #dishware #tableware #geschirr* [#tableware] *#tinohanekamp #glasses #siirtolapuutarha*[41]

In example 22, @UserGer has added 30 hashtags, and 27 of them are marking topic: *#interiordecor*, *#interior123*, *#interior*, *#marimekko*, *#coffee*, *#bookstagram*, *#blackandwhite*, *#monochrome*, *#reading*, *#slowlife*, *#wintermood*, *#livingroom*, *#sowasvonda* (title of a novel), *#minimalism*, *#instahome*, *#stilllife*, *#coffeetime*, *#scandi*, *#scandinavian*, *#oiva* (the Marimekko tableware

[40] So Was Von Da (So Totally There) is a novel by Tino Hanekamp.
[41] A print by Marimekko, featured on the plate.

design), *#weekend*, *#dishware*, *#tableware*, *#geschirr*, *#tinohanekamp* (writer of the novel), *#glasses*, and *#siirtolapuutarha*. Of these, *#bookstagram* and *#instahome* are examples of specifically Instagram related content: books and homes that are presented on Instagram for other users. During the history of Instagram, it has become a common practice for people to entitle their content in this manner (cf. *#cats of Instagram, #instadogs*). The hashtags *#bookstagram* and *#instahome* are also constructing identity through expressing group membership (identifying with people who enjoy reading books and decorating their homes). Three hashtags are expressing positive evaluations or stance: *#homesweethome*, *#nordicinspiration*, and *#coffeelovers*. The last one is also constructing identity through expressing group membership (identifying with people who love coffee). The hashtags *#sowasvonda* and *#tinohanekamp* provide an example of the kinds of cultural works @UserGer enjoys and consumes.

Example 23. @UserGer: *SPRINGFLOWERS ... | So happy that with every passing week we're getting closer to spring. Can't wait!!* 🌷🌸☀️ *#kubusbylassen*[42] *#dalarna*[43] *#marimekko #frühlingsblüher* [#springflowers] *#bulbs #print #letterlove #c #coffeelover #sideboard #blackandwhite #homesweethome #inspiration #spring #springflowers #oiva #siirtolapuutarha #räsymatto #bylassen #interior123 #scandinavianstyle #interiordecoration #inspiration #scandihome #minimalism #myhome #whitehome #monochrome #typo #stilllife*

In example 23, @UserGer has again added 30 hashtags, 25 of which are marking topic: *#kubusbylassen*, *#dalarna*, *#marimekko*, *#frühlingsblüher*, *#bulbs*, *#print*, *#c*, *#sideboard*, *#blackandwhite*, *#spring*, *#springflowers*, *#oiva*, *#siirtolapuutarha*, *#räsymatto*, *#bylassen*, *#interior123*, *#scandinavianstyle*, *#interiordecoration*, *#scandihome*, *#minimalism*, *#myhome*, *#whitehome*, *#monochrome*, *#typo*, *#stilllife*. Again @UserGer is applying hashtags to describe

[42] Kubus By Lassen is a Swedish design candlestick.
[43] #dalarna refers to the Swedish Dala horse, *Dalahäst*, a decorative wooden horse.

what is on display in the image, but she is also positively describing the time of the year. Notice that the six hashtags *#kubusbylassen*, *#marimekko*, *#oiva*, *#siirtolapuutarha*, *#räsymatto*, and *#bylassen* are related to Scandinavian brands, and *#dalarna*, *#scandinavianstyle*, and *#scandihome* are related to Scandinavian style of home decoration. All these hashtags are constructing identity through expressing a certain taste. The hashtags *#letterlove* and *#coffeelover* are constructing identity through expressing group membership (identifying with people who love coffee and typography). The hashtags *#homesweethome*, *#inspiration* and *#inspiration* (this hashtag was added in both English and German) are most probably expressing positive stances towards the Instagram user's home, minimalist home decoration in black and white, and especially spring flowers (which are mentioned in the body text and emojis as well as German and English hashtags).

The native languages of the users often appeared in hashtags that were also present as English versions in the same posts. In those examples, the native language content did not change the overall message of the posts; the double hashtags merely seemed to be used for fortifying the message or increasing the findability of the posts in Finland or German-speaking countries. But many posts featured hashtags that were only present as either Finnish or German only, which lead me to infer that social media users may simply be accustomed to using more than one language when they are not posting in their native language and adding hashtags may be a partly spontaneous act: you add some hashtags that simply come to your mind first or hashtags describing the physical objects in the image, while some (more abstract or creative) hashtags are considered more carefully before adding. In time, some hashtags become your favourites, i.e. the ones you tend to use frequently.

6.4.3 Finn vs. German: stance-taking – positive or negative stances?

The Marimekko-related Instagram posts by @UserFin and @UserGer featured almost exclusively positive stances. They were most often expressed through hashtags, word choice (in most cases, positive adjectives) in the body text, and emojis (as seen in table 7):

Table 7. Positive stances expressed through word choice (positive adjectives), hashtags, or emojis in the posts of @UserFin and @UserGer. The stance objects have been added in parentheses for clarity. German and Finnish expressions have been translated in brackets.

Expressing positive stances by…	**@UserFin**	**@UserGer**
…positive word choice in the body text	*amazing* (mugs), *special* (mugs), *proper* (self-made dress), *fantastic* (pattern of a fabric), *pure pleasure*	*BFF* (best friends forever), *FRIYAY*[44], *Marimekko-love* (tableware), *good* (Sunday morning), *I love* (my home), *so happy*

[44] A combination of Friday and the interjection 'yay'.

	(sewing a dress), *happy* (with the fit of a dress), *admire* (a fabric), *great* (dress pattern), *essential* (things for home), *super excited* (about a sewing project), *the best* (fabric; children's room; thing about inviting friends over), *I like* (a self-made dress), *comfortable* (dress), *extra awesome* (today is… since the cleaner came), *proud* (a child's emotion about a cinnamon roll), *a definite improvement* (lamps in a bedroom), *vivid* (colors in a curtain), *a dream to sew* (a Marimekko knit), *matching stripes*, *my favorite men* (family members)	(about the spring coming), *PURE BEAUTY* (Marimekko tableware), *so pretty* (Marimekko tableware), *I enjoy* (the tea hour), *lovely* (birthday present), *a good book*, *I really love* (typography)
…using positive hashtags	#muglove, #figlove, #astiarakkaus [#tablewarelove], #cozyhome, #nähenmachtglücklich [#sewingmakeshappy]	#filzliebe [#feltlove], #calmingeffect, #girlsnightout, #ohlala, #interiorlovers, #streifenliebe [#stripelove], #merci [#thankyou], #merci❤️, #friyay, #calmingeffect, #withlove, #springiscoming, #friendship, #inspiration, #homesweethome, #eyecandy, #blacknwhite_perfection, #monochromelovers, #decorlove, #happysunday, #coffeelover, #coffeelovers, #interioreyecandy, #justbeautiful, #letterlove, #inspiration, #nordicinspiration, #clean, #relax, #calm, #decorinspiration, #schlichtundschön [#simpleandbeautiful], #goodfriends, #goodmorning, #happymonday, #springisnear, #bright, #relaxingmood, #buchstabenliebe [#letterlove], #kaffeeliebe [#coffeelove], #beunique, #iloveyoublogsandcoffee
…using positive emojis	😚, 💕, 😉, 😍	💋, ♥, 🙌, 😘, ☀️, 🎉, 😀, 😉, [a smiling nerd-face emoji][45]

As table 7 shows, the stance objects (i.e. things being evaluated) in the body texts of the Instagram posts are things related to the home life of @UserFin and @UserGer: Marimekko mugs and tableware, self-made Marimekko dresses (or fabrics or their patterns), beautiful objects at home, the time of the year, and quality time with friends and family. As the hashtags in table 7 show, the stance objects vary from food (*#figlove*) and tableware (*#muglove*) to interior (*#interiorlovers*, *#decorlove*), days (*#happymonday*), or the coming time of the year (*#springisnear*, *#springiscoming*).

[45] The version of my computer's operating system does not recognise the nerd face emoji so I was forced to give a written account on the symbol; a smiling face with glasses on.

There was only one example of a seemingly negative post (or negative stance-taking) by @UserFin in the data, but that one can be interpreted to be humorous, too:

Example 24. @UserFin: *One down, one to go! If I ever start thinking of sewing curtains myself again, I hope that someone will remind me that it's a very bad idea that should be forgotten immediately*💩 *#lastenhuone* [#childrensroom] *#marimekko #kidsroom #childrensroom #kinderzimmer* [#childrensroom]

@UserFin did not specify why sewing the curtains for her son was a bad idea, but one member of her Instagram audience commented that curtains are hard to make. The ready curtain looked beautiful to the eyes of her audience: "*Sweet!* ☺ 👍" / "*But they're so cute! Totally worth it!*" Still, the choice of the poo emoji suggests a negative stance from @UserFin's side during the sewing process.

There was only one example of a sad post:

Example 25. @UserFin: *He's ill* 😔 *So quiet here as both boys are sleeping. #marimekko*

The stance object (the thing being evaluated) is the child's illness. It makes @UserFin sad, which is expressed by using the sad face emoji.

The following posts 26 and 27 by @UserGer feature the emotions of stress or shame (for being late):

Example 26. @UserGer: *@Home & working | Carnival is near and I am not ready yet* 😬🙈 *#karneval #atmine #carnivalcostume #carnivaliscoming #interior #kinfolk #scandinaviandesign #scandinavianstyle #onmyknees #hay #marimekko #oiva #string #filzliebe #create #ideenfindung #calmingeffect #interiordesign #creativeprocess #creativeproject #stilllife #ichkannnichtnähen* 🙈 *#fuckitletsdance #blackandwhite #siccors #coffeelover #stilleben #butfirstcoffee #sundaymood #kreativerprozess*

The emotions are expressed by using emojis 😬 and 🙈[46] and applying the hashtags *#ichkannnichtnähen* and possibly *#onmyknees* (although it may also be chosen for the fact that she is about to start working on her knees on the carpet). The following example shows the same source of negative feelings (being late causes @UserGer anxiety again):

Example 27. @UserGer: *Evening with friends.....| I really have to hurry up now!!* ⌚🙈🍷😬 *#drinkwine #stilllife #dishware #tablesetting #fuckitletsdrink #marimekko #oiva #friendship #feedfeed #livethelittlethings #geschirr #dinner #friyay #monochromelovers #athome #decorinspiration #blackandwhite #lifeisgood #abendmitfreunden #scandinavianstyle*

[46] According to Emojipedia, the grimacing face emoji is "generally used when a mistake or unfavorable situation has arisen – aka "eek!"" (https://emojipedia.org/grimacing-face/).

#borddekking #keepitsimple #diningroom #evening #schlichtundschön #tableware #siirtolapuutarha #abendessen #gedecktertisch #räsymatto

Example 27 also features many positive stances expressed by using hashtags like *#friendship, #livethelittlethings, #lifeisgood,* and *#abendmitfreunden* [*#eveningwithfriends*].

There were no examples of negative stances evaluating Marimekko as a company or its products among the data of @UserFin or @UserGer. These three examples above featured negative stances that were directed on the Instagram users themselves, the stance objects being their bad habits or lack of skills. But the overall majority of the posts featured positive stances with stance objects such as beautiful home decoration objects, the Instagram users' own lifestyles, their achievements (e.g. sewing a new dress), or drinking coffee.

An interesting detail about @UserFin's posts was the fact that she mentioned @Marimekkodesignhouse (the official Marimekko company account) in four of her posts (also see examples 15 and 16 for this). She was directing her positive stances openly towards the company:

Example 28. @UserFin: *If you ask me, the best children's room is one with some @marimekkodesignhouse in it* 😚 *#marimekko #marimekkofabric #lastenhuone #childrensroom #kinderzimmer #scandinavianhome #nordichome*

Example 29. @UserFin: *It might be fall outside, but we still have a small piece of summer in our bedroom. I guess our home would not be ours without @marimekkodesignhouse* 😚 *#marimekko #bedroom #makuuhuone* [#bedroom] *#cushions #schlafzimmer* [#bedroom] *#scandinavianhome #nordichome*

Examples 28 and 29 show that for @UserFin, the Marimekko brand plays a significant role in her life and identity as a 'kotoilija' (a person who likes homing). The fact that @UserFin added the kissing emoji in her posts twice to strengthen the emotions of gratitude or enjoyment was interesting. This reflects the open online communication practices of our time: emojis make self-expression easier, and messages may be directed straight from consumers to global companies. If the kisses were expressed otherwise, i.e. written out in the text ("kisses to @marimekkodesignhouse"), it might have felt weird or a bit 'too much'. But emojis are a natural tool in expressing feelings.

Some differences and similarities between @UserFin and @UserGer and the larger data set of 200 #marimekko posts will be examined in the following subchapter.

6.5 A short comparison of the themes in the two data sets

This subchapter summarises the themes that all Instagram users in my study discussed as they used the hashtag *#marimekko*. The two data sets of this study – a set of 200 Instagram posts on a global scale and an in-depth comparative set of 40 (20+20) posts from a Finnish and a German Marimekko fan – featured many similarities. They included positive overall content and Instagram users expressing mostly positive feelings and stances. Positive stances and emotions were expressed through using positive word choice, hashtags and emojis. There were also some differences.

As mentioned earlier, the eight most popular content categories on Instagram are selfies, friends, activities, food, gadgets, captioned photos, pets, and fashion (Hu et al. 2014). Table 8 below summarises the results of Hu et al. and the results of my study, featuring my two different data sets (the global sample and the posts from the Finnish and the German Marimekko fan). The results of

the two data sets are not entirely comparable with each other since the amount of posts varied a great deal (200 vs. 20 posts) and the sample in the Finn-German comparison was fairly small. In addition, I was obliged to apply slightly different content categories in my data sets since the posts in the Finn-German comparison entailed content and themes that differed from the content of the global data set.

Table 8. The eight most popular content categories in the study by Hu et al. and my study (my global data set consisted of 200 Instagram posts and the in-depth comparison of 20 posts by a Finnish Marimekko fan and 20 posts by a German fan).

	Hu et al. (2014)	**200 IG posts (global)**	**@UserFin: 20 posts**	**@UserGer: 20 posts**
1.	Selfies	Fashion	Home	Home
2.	Friends	Food	Activities (at home)	Tableware
3.	Activities	Home & interior design	Sewing/handicraft	Interior design
4.	Food	Activities (outside home)	Interior design	Food
5.	Gadgets	Prints and fabrics	Fashion	Activities (at home)
6.	Captioned photos	Tableware	Food; Tableware[47]	Sewing/handicraft
7.	Pets	Home/DIY activities	Gadgets; Selfies[48]	Gadgets; Fashion[49]
8.	Fashion	Bags and accessories	-[50]	-

In the global data set of 200 posts, the leading theme was Fashion (which is also a product line of Marimekko), and in the data set of a Finnish Marimekko fan and a German fan, the most discussed product line was Home (another product line of Marimekko). The eight most popular themes (or image content categories) in my global data set were Fashion, Food, Home & interior design, Activities (outside home), Prints and fabrics, Tableware, Home/DIY activities, and Bags and accessories.

Although Hu et al. found selfies and friends to be the two most popular content categories on Instagram, interestingly they were rare or even nonexistent in my Marimekko-related data sets. The global data set of 200 posts indeed featured images of people, but there were only five occurrences of selfies and one image of friends. @UserFin posted one selfie whereas @UserGer did not post any selfies. (In addition, @UserFin posted two portraits of herself that were taken by someone else.)

[47] Joint sixth place for Food and Tableware (1 post each).
[48] Joint seventh place for Gadgets and Selfies (1 post each).
[49] Joint seventh place for Gadgets and Fashion (1 post each).
[50] There were nine themes that @UserFin posted about and eight themes that @UserGer posted about in my data.

Neither one posted any images of friends. Yet, Instagram users in both my data sets mentioned friends in the body texts or hashtags of their posts, thus connecting Marimekko to spending time with friends although the friends did not appear in the images.

In the Finn/German comparison, the leading theme was Home (it was the only scene of all their *#marimekko* posts, so the users connected the brand of Marimekko strongly with home life). In the global comparison, Marimekko was also connected to a mobile lifestyle. Some individual differences occurred between the Finn and the German: for @UserFin, the second most frequent Marimekko-related theme after Home was Activities (taking place at home) and her third most frequently occurring theme was Interior design. For @UserGer, the second and third most popular themes were Tableware and Interior design. @UserFin posted about nine different Marimekko-related themes on her Instagram profile (Home; Activities at home; Sewing/handicraft; Interior design; Fashion; Food; Tableware; Gadgets; Selfies). @UserGer posted about eight different Marimekko-related themes (Home; Tableware; Interior design; Food; Activities at home; Sewing/handicraft; Gadgets; Fashion). @UserFin emphasised her sewing hobby in her Marimekko-related posts. She was the only person in my data to discuss her relationship to the brand of Marimekko and the products of the company on a deeper level or longer time span. @UserGer mostly discussed Marimekko tableware and interior design at home, posting still life images of mainly black and white objects on her Instagram account. The posts by @UserGer differed from the global data set in the sense that she mentioned fashion only once in her Marimekko-related posts, whereas the global data set featured fashion as the most popular content category.

The results of this study will be summarized and interpreted in the following chapter entitled Results and conclusions.

7 Results and conclusions

This Pro Gradu thesis aimed to answer three research questions:

1) What kinds of themes are present in Instagram posts that include the hashtag *#marimekko*?
    - Which themes appear most frequently?
    - What kinds of lifestyles is Marimekko frequently connected with and what kinds of identities are constructed in the Instagram posts?

2) How do hashtags construct Marimekko-related online identities on Instagram?

3) How is the linguistic act of stance-taking performed in the posts?
    - Are the stances mostly positive, neutral, or negative?
    - What are the stance objects, i.e. the things under evaluation?

Next, I will present the results concerning all three research questions. For the sake of clarity and readability, I have divided the results of my study and the two data sets under different subchapters. I have dedicated one subchapter for general conclusions.

7.1 Results of the 200 Marimekko posts: themes, hashtags, stance-taking

In chapters 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3, I examined the kinds of themes present in Instagram posts that include the hashtag *#marimekko* by 200 Instagram users globally. Since Instagram is an SNS with a strong visual emphasis and an image tends to be the first thing that the audience perceives (and not text), I decided to give the images the weight they deserve, i.e. examine themes through whatever was on display in the images[51].

Following the practice of Hu et al. (2014), I also listed eight most popular content categories in my data. They were Fashion (54 images), Food (52 images), Home & interior design (42 images), Activities (taking place outside of home; 41 images), Prints and fabrics (36 images), Tableware (35 images), Home/DIY activities (18 images), and Bags and accessories (17 images). Three of these most popular categories, i.e. Activities, Food, and Fashion, were content categories also mentioned by Hu et al. in their ground-breaking Instagram study. But there were also differences. In the study by Hu et al., the most popular eight photo categories on Instagram were selfies, friends, activities, food, gadgets, captioned photos (with inspirational quotes embedded in the images), pets, and fashion – in this order. On the basis of this order, we can assume that a Marimekko-related post will feature the theme of fashion more often than an average Instagram post will, which is a logical finding since one of the business lines of Marimekko is fashion.

[51] A text in an Instagram post is rarely about something else than what is showing in the image; I can only think of inspirational quotes on top of atmospheric images as an example of this. And they were nonexistent in my data.

Although selfies and friends are content occurring very often in Instagram posts, they were clearly in the minority in my data. Instagram users and their friends were indeed present in #marimekko posts, but they were not necessarily on display in the images. This may be partly due to privacy issues: not everyone wants their images published on public Instagram accounts. Thus, when a polite Instagram user wants to tell their audience about a nice gathering with friends, they may take photos of the food served in that gathering and bring a social aspect to the post by using accompanying hashtags such as *#friendship* or *#withfriends* (see examples 11 and 27).

Place was an interesting aspect in constructing online identities in the *#marimekko* posts of this data set. One of the places occurring most often in my data was home (especially in the categories of home/DIY activities, tableware, glassware, food, prints and fabrics, home interior, pets, and children). Kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms mostly made the scenes of the images. When users were not at home, they had taken images e.g. in cafés or restaurants (featuring Marimekko tableware and especially coffee mugs), on city streets (with the accompanying hashtag *#ootd*, outfit of the day), at airports (featuring the cooperation between Marimekko and Finnair), or in Marimekko retail shops (with users discussing Marimekko prints and fabrics, tableware, other products, or Scandinavian design in general). In some instances, it was impossible to infer where the image had been taken. These posts often featured Marimekko clothes (see example 1).

My second research question dealt with hashtags. My data proved that Marimekko-related online identities were also constructed through using hashtags. The three main functions and roles that Zappavigna (2015) listed for hashtags were evident in my data:

- marking experiential topics (i.e. what the posts are about),
- enacting interpersonal relationships (e.g. indicating evaluative stance),
- organising text (e.g. signalling metacommentary via the # symbol).

Most often the hashtags marked experiential topics, simply describing the content of the images *(#livingroom, #kitchen, #home, #café, #airbus, #ootd, #Sunday,* etc.). But hashtags were also used to express feelings (*#love*, *#happiness*) and to indicate evaluative stances (*#homesweethome, #specialtime*) or to organize text (the # symbol functioning as the organizer). Hashtags were also used to increase findability of the posts and to gain audiences interested in particular subjects *(#Tallinn, #marimekko, #scandinavianstyle,* etc.). All Instagram posts allow the use of 30 hashtags, and several users applied more than 10 hashtags per post. By doing this, they were able to create mini stories about the themes in the images or their lives in general (see example 4 about happy home life, or example 11 from a book club gathering for instances of this). These mini stories formed of hashtag strings were active elements in constructing online identities.

The hashtag *#marimekko* was mostly used to describe or label objects in the images, but in some posts, Marimekko was also discussed more generally in the body text (consider "Nordic design at its best" in example 5, for instance). Marimekko was frequently connected with Finnish design brands like Arabia, Iittala, Pentik, Finlayson, or Aalto. The Swedish furnishing brand Ikea was also often mentioned. The hashtag *#marimekko* frequently occurred with more general hashtags such as *#finnishdesign, #scandinaviandesign, #scandinavianhome, #scandinavianinterior, #nordichome, #nordicinterior,* or *#nordicdesign*. The Finnish airline Finnair was also frequently mentioned in hashtags because of the design cooperation of the two companies.

My third research question was concerned with the act of stance-taking. I found three elements that occurred frequently when Instagram users communicated stance: evaluative adjectives, affective verbs and typographical emphasis (the use of emoji symbols). These elements coincided with Georgalou's (2017) findings.

I mostly found positive stances in the posts, and the positivity could be inferred from word choices, hashtags or emojis. There were neutral posts in the data as well (e.g. an image from an Instagram user's home might with only neutral hashtags such as *#livingroom, #home, #marimekko, #blackandwhite, #scandinaviandesign*, and no emojis). But there was no negative content concerning Marimekko as a company or the Instagram users' lives or experiences. The content on Instagram is mostly positive (Hu et al. 2014), and that was evident in my data as well.

Georgalou (2017) mentioned seven different ways of Greek students communicating stances on Facebook: direct stance-taking, narrative stance-taking, CMC-specific stance-taking, stance-taking with audience in mind, indirect stances, cross-modal stance-taking, and recycling ready-made stances. I found examples of all these categories in my data as well.

All in all, according to the global data sample of 200 Instagram posts, Marimekko was frequently connected with the following themes: fashion; food; home & interior design; varied activities such as shopping, travelling or visiting cafés; prints and fabrics; tableware; home/DIY activities; and bags and accessories. The company brand was often mentioned alongside other design brands, especially Scandinavian ones. Marimekko was connected to simple but beautiful Scandinavian fashion and home decoration style. Marimekko tableware, prints or fabrics seemed to bring joy to many Instagram users as they reported having quality time, e.g. drinking coffee on weekends, having breakfast or just enjoying the beauty of their homes. Although Marimekko was linked with peaceful and happy home living, the company was also connected with a mobile way of life (with place tags occurring at e.g. airports, cafés, and restaurants). In this data set of 200 Instagram posts, the messages constructed identities of people (and pets) who are chiefly content

with their lives and enjoy beautiful things and objects. Obviously, these results are only tentative and cannot be generalised, since that would demand a more exhaustive data set.

7.2 Results of the Finn/German comparison

In chapter 6.4, I examined the kinds of themes present in Instagram posts that include the hashtag #marimekko by two individual Instagram users. The overall theme appearing most frequently was 'home' (with 20 out of 20 Instagram posts by @UserFin and 20 out of 20 Instagram posts by @UserGer). Some individual differences occurred in the post contents: for @UserFin, the second most frequent Marimekko-related theme was 'activities' with 12 posts (mainly sewing, and to some extent, baking). Her third most frequently occurring area of Marimekko-related interests was 'interior design' with 7 posts. @UserGer mentioned 'tableware' in 19 out of 20 posts, and 'interior design' in 18 posts. After that came 'food' (7 posts, mostly about coffee). Neither user had posted images of friends or pets in their Marimekko-related posts, and they had not added any inspirational quotes on top of their images (cf. the popular Instagram content categories mentioned by Hu et al., 2014). According to this small data sample, Marimekko is frequently connected with home life and other Scandinavian design brands.

The online identities constructed in the two Instagram users' accounts featured mainly positive content, and the positivity was expressed through emojis, word choice and hashtags. Expressions of happiness and other positive emotions (pride, excitement, etc.) were abundant in the data. As Georgalou (2017) studied Facebook, she noticed that a lot of identity work is done there since the SNS was initially designed as a self-report microblogging technology for sharing information on users' experiences and whereabouts. This also applies to Instagram, but my data seems to suggest that Instagram is an even more self-centred platform than Facebook. Since Instagram users cannot share links (in the same manner as retweeting on Twitter), Instagram has not evolved into an important channel for spreading news (if we exclude the Instagram accounts of public figures such as political parties or news channels and focus on accounts of 'ordinary' users). Instead, Instagram remains to be a visual platform for promoting one's personal life.

In the Finn vs. German comparison, I also examined how Marimekko-related online identities were constructed through using hashtags. The data featured several 'findable' hashtags (sometimes general ones such as *#spring*, sometimes ones that expressed identifying with different groups, such as *#coffeelovers*) as well as more creative hashtags that were not particularly 'findable' and were probably added in the text for inspirational reasons (e.g. *#livethelittlethings*), stylistic reasons (e.g. *#minimalism*) or for story-telling purposes (e.g. *#heatemaybefour, #wedontkeepcount*). Mini-stories functioned in constructing the users' online identities. All Zappavigna's (2015) categories for

hashtag functions could be found in this data set as well. The hashtag *#marimekko* was used to describe the objects in the images, but Marimekko was also discussed more generally in the texts.

Chapter 6.4 also dealt with stances taken in the Instagram posts. They were almost exclusively positive in my data, with only a few exceptions. The stance objects (i.e. things being evaluated) were mostly things related to the home life of @UserFin and @UserGer: Marimekko mugs and other tableware, self-made Marimekko dresses (or fabrics or their patterns), beautiful objects at home and interior design in general, food, the time of the year, and quality time with friends and family.

As a whole, the posts by the two Instagram users constructed identities of people who are content with their lives, who enjoy beautiful things and objects, and are happy to be at home. The individual Instagram posts in my data seemed to tell the same story about the two users' identities as their profile texts did: @UserGer is an interior design lover who enjoys setting her table with Marimekko tableware and drinking her coffee from Marimekko mugs. She appreciates other Scandinavian brands and furniture as well and prefers a simple, minimalistic style with a black-and-white touch. When friends come over, she serves them meals from Marimekko plates. @UserFin enjoys sewing clothes for herself and others from Marimekko fabrics. She also appreciates rather expensive Scandinavian furniture and Scandinavian brands and loves doing things with her family. She considers Marimekko tableware special, as well as the whole Marimekko brand: she grew up with it. Perhaps Marimekko reminds her of her Finnish roots and makes her feel at home now that she lives in Germany.

Some observations I made coincided with those made by Georgalou (2017) and some did not. Place was a relevant factor for identity construction in this data set as well. The scene of all posts was home, which was clearly an emotional entity for the users, also reflecting their tastes and interests (which function as building blocks of their identities). Affiliating with Germany was prominent in @UserFin's posts (she used the German language in her texts often). This was naturally the case with @UserGer as well.

Georgalou investigated how Facebook users express professional and educational identities. Although the Instagram posts featured in this data set did not include any content related to the users' work or education statuses, functions such as the ones mentioned by Georgalou could also be found in my study. While the Greeks in Georgalou's study used Facebook to perform professional or educational identities, the two Instagram users in this data set used Instagram in a similar way to perform identities related to domestic life; they just expressed their 'professionalism', know-how or orientation to things such as home decoration or handicraft.

The data set in this comparison was fairly small. For the results to be generalised, a more exhaustive data set would obviously be needed.

7.3 Conclusions

This thesis was based on the idea that identity is something we constantly produce in linguistic interaction. We create images of ourselves every day, consciously and unconsciously, thus forming an ever-changing identity with multiple layers or dimensions. Our identities are constructed in linguistic interactions within local contexts. Today, one of those contexts is the internet with its various social network sites (SNS's). They are continuously present in the everyday lives of social media users, which makes their social impact patently strong. My study shows that like Facebook, also Instagram is inherently constitutive of identity. Because of its popularity and technological features, Instagram is in a key position in shaping the discourse on lifestyle and identity.

This qualitative and multimodal discourse analytic study aimed to examine how people discussed the brand of Marimekko with each other on Instagram and what kinds of feelings and impressions occured in Marimekko-related Instagram posts. I studied the ways in which Instagram users expressed their personas and how they utilised the brand of Marimekko in constructing their identities. I also investigated the linguistic acts involved in the process. One objective of this study was to find out whether the messages sent by consumers parallel with the key messages Marimekko sends out as a company (concerning its vision, brand and products), i.e. whether the company and it fans or customers speak 'the same language' online. I also aimed to find out which product lines of Marimekko were represented strongest in the Instagram posts of regular Instagram users. I studied the ways in which individual social media users utilised the hashtag *#marimekko* – whether they did it to comment on the company or its products, or if they mentioned Marimekko (and other brand hashtags) merely as secondary references, as some kind of evidence of lifestyles that they wished to represent, thus cultivating certain desired self-images in front of other Instagram users. Since multimodal features and visually organized environments of social networking sites play a significant role in identity construction, I also examined how multimodality, images and communication technologies such as hashtags and emojis are shaping discourse on Instagram.

The two data sets for the study – a set of 200 Instagram posts on a global scale and an in-depth comparative set of 40 (20+20) posts from a Finnish and a German Marimekko fan – featured many similarities. Both data sets included positive overall content and the Instagram users expressed mostly positive feelings and stances. Users from different countries shared their love for beautiful Marimekko fashion items and other objects ranging from cups and plates to clothes and

home decoration fabrics. Positive stances and emotions were expressed through using positive word choice, hashtags and emojis.

My thesis examined the themes that people discussed on Instagram as they mentioned Marimekko in their list of hashtags. In the global data set of 200 posts, the leading theme was Fashion (which is also a product line of Marimekko), and in the data set of a Finnish Marimekko fan and a German fan, the most discussed theme was Home (another product line of Marimekko). The results show that different Instagram users see the brand of Marimekko through the 'filter' of their own interests. The content posted, the mentions of the brand and the identities constructed vary accordingly.

Although selfies and friends are the two most popular content categories on Instagram, interestingly they were almost nonexistent in my Marimekko-related data sets. Yet, Marimekko was connected to spending time with friends since Instagram users in both my data sets mentioned friends in the body texts or hashtags of their posts; the friends just did not appear in the images.

The eight most popular themes, or image content categories, in my global data set were Fashion, Food, Home & interior design, Activities (outside home), Prints and fabrics, Tableware, Home/DIY activities, and Bags and accessories. In the Finn/German comparison, the leading theme was home, and it was the only scene of all the *#marimekko* posts of the two Instagram users. Thus, the users connected the brand of Marimekko strongly with home life. In the global comparison, Marimekko was also connected to a mobile lifestyle.

@UserFin emphasised her sewing hobby in her Marimekko posts. She was the only person in my data to discuss the products of Marimekko or her relationship with the brand on a deeper level or longer time span. @UserGer mostly discussed Marimekko tableware and interior design, posting still life images of mostly black and white objects. @UserGer mentioned fashion only once in her Marimekko-related posts.

There were no instances of inspirational quotes on top of #marimekko posts in my data sets, although quote posts are popular among Instagram users. One #marimekko post featured an old saying, but the anonymous quote was not embedded in the image.

Marimekko was frequently connected with other design brands, especially Finnish ones like Arabia, Iittala, Pentik, Finlayson, or Aalto. In addition, the Swedish furnishing brand Ikea was mentioned a few times. The Finnish airline Finnair appeared in hashtags quite often because of the design cooperation of the two companies. The hashtag *#marimekko* also frequently occurred with general hashtags such as *#finnishdesign, #scandinaviandesign, #scandinavianhome, #scandinavianinterior, #nordichome, #nordicinterior,* or *#nordicdesign.*

According to the results of this study, the messages sent from consumers to other consumers on Instagram coincide with the key messages that Marimekko emphasises concerning its vision, brand and products. Instagram users frequently mentioned happiness in their posts. This fact is in accordance with the purpose of the company which is to "empower people to be happy as they are and bring joy to their everyday lives through bold prints and colours".

Before beginning this study, my hypothesis was that Instagram users would mostly discuss themselves, their lives and experiences in their Marimekko-related posts, and not so much Marimekko as a company. That hypothesis proved to be right. Marimekko indeed functioned as a building block of certain lifestyles and online identities that Instagram users wished to represent to their audiences.

In the data of this study, the hashtag *#marimekko* served as a reference or evidence of tastes and appreciations – and thus, of user identities. Consumers utilised the brand of Marimekko in describing to their audiences what kinds of things they enjoyed in life and who they were – or who they wanted to be.

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