

**A Comparison of the Use of Adjectives in Makeup
Foundation Marketing by Chinese and Finnish Cosmetics
Brands**

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June 2024

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Kandidaatintutkielma

Humanististen tieteiden kandidaatti, kiinan kieli

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Sivumäärä: 26

Tiivistelmä

Kandidaatintutkielmassani vertailen kiinalaisen kosmetiikkabrändi Carslanin (卡姿兰) ja suomalaisen kosmetiikkabrändi Lumenen adjektiivien käyttöä meikkivoiteiden markkinoinnissa. Lisäksi tutkin, millä tavoin kiinalaiset ja suomalaiset kauneusihanteet vaikuttavat meikkivoiteiden markkinoinnissa käytettyihin adjektiiveihin. Tutkimusmateriaali koostuu markkinointiin tarkoitetuista mainosteksteistä Carslanin ja Lumenen virallisilla nettisivuilla, Carslanin RED (小红书) -tilillä ja Lumenen Instagram-tilillä. Tutkimukseni teoreettinen viitekehys pohjautuu Norman Fairclough'n kriittiseen diskurssianalyysiin. Diskurssianalyysin tavoitteena on yhdistää kielenkäyttö yhteiskunnallisiin ja sosiaalisiin rakenteisiin, ja se perustuu käsitykseen siitä, että käyttötilanteella on vaikutusta siinä käytettävään kielen piirteisiin. Tutkimukseni hyödyntää myös sosiaalikonstruktiivista lähtökohtaa ja refleksiivistä lähestymistä. Olen jakanut aineistosta kerätyt adjektiivit kolmeen alakohtaan perustuen siihen, mitä niillä mainosteksteissä kuvataan. Merkittävimmät erot adjektiivien käytön välillä perustuvat siihen, mihin aspekteihin ne keskittyvät: Carslan käyttää Lumenea vahvemmin adjektiiveja kuvaamaan, millaisia tunteita meikkivoiteet ja niiden käytön vaikutukset aiheuttavat käyttäjässä, Lumenen adjektiivien keskittyessä vahvemmin siihen, miltä meikkivoiteet näyttävät ja tuntuvat käyttäjän iholla. Carslanin markkinoinnissa käyttämät adjektiivit ovat Lumenen käyttämiä adjektiiveja epäsuorempia. Sekä Carslanin että Lumenen meikkivoiteiden markkinoinnissa käyttämät adjektiivit sopivat yhteen kiinalaisten ja suomalaisten kauneusihanteiden kanssa; Carslanin käyttämät adjektiivit kuvaavat, kuinka korkealaatuiselta meikkivoiteet tuntuvat käyttäjän iholla ja kuinka ne antavat käyttäjälleen itsevarmuutta. Lumenen käyttämät adjektiivit korostavat meikkivoiteiden antamien tulosten luonnollisuutta ja hehkua. Merkittävimmät erot Carslanin ja Lumenen adjektiivien käytössä johtuvat kiinalaisten ja suomalaisten kauneusihanteiden eroista; Kiinalaisessa kauneusihanteessa painotetaan hienostuneisuutta, ja suomalaisessa kauneusihanteessa korostetaan luonnollisuutta. Tutkimusta voisi jatkaa tarkastelemalla useampaa kosmetiikkabrändiä sekä Kiinasta että Suomesta. Tulevaisuudessa voisi myös tarkastella pohjoismaisen kosmetiikan markkinointia Kiinassa ja sitä, kuinka tehokasta markkinoinnissa käytettävä kieli on. Lisäksi voisi tarkastella millaisia vaikeuksia pohjoismaisilla kosmetiikkabrändeillä saattaa olla kiinalaisilla markkinoilla erilaisista painotuksista ja markkinoinnissa yleisistä lingvivistisistä piirteistä johtuen.

Avainsanat: kriittinen diskurssianalyysi, markkinointiviestintä, kauneusihanteet, adjektiivit, identiteetti, kosmeettiset tuotteet

Table of contents

1	Introduction	4
1.1	Background	4
1.2	Earlier research	4
1.3	Aims and significance	7
2	Methodology	9
2.1	The Scientific Approach and Methodology	9
2.2	Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis	10
2.3	Data Collection	11
2.4	Analysis of Data	13
3	Findings	15
3.1	The foundations' effects on the skin	15
3.2	The feeling of wearing the foundations	17
3.3	The coverage of the foundations	18
3.4	The Practice of Marketing	19
3.5	Social Practice	20
4	Discussion	23
5	Conclusion	28
	References	30

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Why sell your soul to the devil to attain flawless skin, when you can reach the same result with a dash of foundation? In the beauty world, nothing is ever enough, and cosmetic brands further amplify this ideology by flooding the market with new products, promising customers a solution to a new source of insecurity no one had batted an eye at a few years prior (Laham, 2020). Furthermore, different countries and cultures have their own standards regarding ideal-looking skin, and these beauty standards play a crucial role in cosmetics marketing (Mady et al., 2023). On top of providing imagery of beautiful people, the language used in cosmetics marketing also plays an important role in which products and brands become widely known hits and which get forgotten within a few months after their initial launch (Kaur et al., 2012).

The pale white skin in Edwardian England or the Japanese geisha, the glass-like skin of South Korea, and the idealized matte and bronzed skin in the West all tell a different story of what kind of skin garners the people's appreciation as the most beautiful. In all these cases, one's bare skin is oftentimes not enough to achieve the ideal look, and makeup foundation must be used to affect the color and tone or to add smoothness to one's face by covering small imperfections. Skin is always textured, a detail many standards worldwide find undesirable, hence the use of foundation, as it is one of the best ways to hide the unwanted signs of uneven pigmentation or lines on one's face while reducing the signs of age, making one's face look younger, less lived-in. There are sometimes striking similarities between beauty standards and marketing practices in regions and cultures far removed (Dimitrov & Kroumpouzos, 2023; Jones, 2011). It could be said that Chinese and Finnish conceptions of beauty and cosmetics marketing belong to this category.

1.2 Earlier research

While the research into both Nordic and East-Asian beauty standards is quite extensive, we will concentrate mainly on how closely the beauty standards are connected to the culture and cosmetics marketing in China and Finland, as well as paying attention to how the ideal skin should appear, as this matter is most crucial to this study. In Finnish cosmetics marketing,

women are often depicted as having long blond hair and blue eyes, similar to the Maiden of Finland, and are often situated in the wild and pure Arctic nature (Rantala, 2014). She also finds that nature and purity, accompanied by white femininity, are the norm of an ideal Finnish woman. The Finnish beauty standard, therefore, idealizes light skin tone and natural skin; for example, freckles are often not seen as something that needs to be covered with foundation. This language-specific beauty idea can be seen in the marketing of several Scandinavian and Nordic brands (Fransson & Nordlund, 2021). Admittedly, during the last few years, as the importance of inclusivity in cosmetics marketing has become more common, Finnish cosmetics brands have also started to include more persons of color and men in their product advertising. However, the standard of beauty has not been that easily changed, as Slimani (2021) found in her research on how the Finnish beauty standard and marketing continue to exclude Afro-Finnish women.

The Chinese beauty standards, however, hold a woman with light skin, dark hair, and slim features to the highest ideal (Lotti, 2021). Both Chinese and Finnish standards, therefore, seem to connect light-colored skin to the ideal appearance of a person. Several studies have found, however, that a person's outer appearance is closely linked to their socioeconomic status in Chinese society, and many women feel the pressure from the society around them even to undergo plastic surgery to conform to the standards and the benefits it brings (Wu et al., 2022; Zhang, 2012). To further support this idea, Chinese beauty product marketing emphasizes this correlation between beauty and prosperity. Several Chinese cosmetics brands market their products by accentuating the feeling of luxuriousness it gives to the customer and how the products give the wearer confidence to advance in their career and pursue the lifestyle fitting of a wealthy individual.

These two beauty standards, with their inherent similarities and differences, lay the basis for makeup foundation marketing in their respective countries. Different understandings of beauty undoubtedly affect the language used to describe it, and beauty standards and marketing have the power to influence each other. The wild and natural ideal of the Finnish woman and the successful and beautiful ideal of the Chinese woman can be found clearly in the brands' marketing of foundations, as we will find later in the following sections.

This leads us to the topic of language used in marketing. As product advertising aims to make the customer purchase the product, one of the main functions of marketing language is to

convince the potential consumer that they need the product or service. Over the years, a significant amount of research has been conducted on cosmetics marketing and how the language used in products advertising affects sales. According to Kaur et al., (2012), typical linguistic features used in cosmetics marketing to achieve this result include using second personal pronouns, imperatives, and adjectives. These characteristics are used to make advertising more creative and striking, which, consequently, makes it easier to garner the potential customer's attention and, more importantly, hold the consumer's attention and persuade them to make a purchase (Cook, 2001).

The use of adjectives is especially important, as they convey to the customer either positive or negative meanings about the product and the purpose it is intended to serve (Delin, 2000; Ebaid, 2018) and, therefore, have the power to shape consumers' views towards the marketed products and services. Cosmetic product advertisements employ adjectives to illustrate the advantages and attributes of the products, therefore shaping the opinions and feelings the items give consumers (Susanti, 2019). Positive adjectives are, in most cases, related to the advertised product itself. In contrast, negative adjectives describe the problem the product seeks to solve or what issues will remain unsolved if the product is not used. Similarly, Cook (2001) argues that the use of positive adjectives makes consumers attach desirable qualities to a normally characterless product, which in turn entices them to purchase said product. In the tourism sector, adjectives like "warm," "historical," "soothing," and "green" are often used by marketers to help potential customers notice the advantages these services bring (Al-Issawi, 2020). Moreover, a study by Ke & Wang (2013) has shown that adjectives such as "good, beautiful, real, better, best, great, perfect, and pure" are frequently used in English slogans. Besides adjectives, common characteristics in persuasive marketing also include the use of comparative and superlative constructions, nominalization, and transitive verbs (Martutik et al., 2013).

Looking at this phenomenon of effective usage of adjectives in marketing practices from a different angle, fear-appeal commercials and guilt appeals also utilize adjectives to elicit wanted reactions and feelings in consumers. Chang (2012) has found that adjectives are often used in pairs in green advertising guilt appeals. These pairs include ones such as "bad/good," "negative/positive," and "favorable/unfavorable." Similarly, by appealing to the consumer's fear of arrest or serious injury, marketers can enforce the consumers' feelings against bad practices like driving under the influence of alcohol (Shehryar & Hunt, 2005).

Adjectives, therefore, have a central role in effective marketing and persuasive communication, regardless of the domain or the purpose of advertising. We have found that adjectives are used in marketing to form a specific view or attitude towards a service or product. This deliberate and intentional use of adjectives has the potential to influence how consumers feel about products or companies, which is why we will seek to understand what adjectives are used in makeup foundation marketing by the chosen brands. However, a literature review on this topic shows that limited research has been done on the use of adjectives in Chinese marketing communication. Therefore, this study intends to fill this research gap. These results can then be utilized in the future to develop effective marketing strategies in the Chinese and Finnish beauty markets.

1.3 Aims and significance

This study compares the use of adjectives in makeup foundations' marketing of a Finnish brand, Lumene, and a Chinese brand, Carslan (卡姿兰), while investigating how the beauty standards in these two countries may affect the usage of said adjectives. Therefore, the research questions are formulated as such:

1. What similarities and differences can be found in the use of adjectives in foundation marketing between Chinese and Finnish cosmetics brands?
2. How do Chinese and Finnish beauty standards affect the adjectives used in foundation marketing?

We will start by looking at the adjectives used in marketing descriptions produced by Carslan and Lumene and considering possible reasons why these exact adjectives are used by Chinese and Finnish beauty standards.

This study contributes to earlier research into marketing language by analyzing and offering insight into the similarities and differences in the language used in makeup foundation marketing. There is a research gap regarding in-depth study into Finnish and Chinese foundation marketing, which this study intends to fill. The results of this study may offer significant help to brands intending to enter either the Finnish or Chinese cosmetics market by making sense of common linguistic practices used in cosmetic marketing. Using the results of this study as a guideline while developing their marketing strategy, cosmetics brands may find

a way to further solidify their place in either the Chinese or Finnish market. Furthermore, this study may help Nordic brands looking to enter the Chinese market, as the Chinese consumer market is exhibiting a growing interest and demand for Nordic cosmetics (Rantanen, 2013). Marketing a product's Nordic characteristics with language and adjectives that appeal to Chinese consumers will be of great importance to brands wanting to stand out in a very competitive marketing sphere.

2 Methodology

In this chapter, we will review the framework regarding how this study is constructed. We start with an overview of the scientific approach chosen for this study and its methodology. Finally, we explain how the process of collecting and analyzing empirical data was conducted. This study's nature is qualitative, and it has been realized using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis of texts produced by Lumene and Carlsan's official websites, Lumene's official Instagram account and Carlsan's official RED (小红书) account.

2.1 The Scientific Approach and Methodology

This exploratory study analyzes and compares which adjectives are used in makeup foundation marketing by beauty brands Carlsan and Lumene. The second objective is to find out how the beauty standards in these two countries affect the usage of adjectives in foundation marketing. This study uses the standpoint of social construction of reality, which means that humans hold the power to create the society around them, and society, in turn, creates us human beings (Vera, 2016). This is especially fitting as our second research question is about finding out how Chinese and Finnish beauty standards may affect the marketing of foundations. It is undeniable that beauty standards are not arbitrary but rather stem from the collective opinions of people regarding what physical features are most attractive. Therefore, it is important to recognize that these standards are not universal and are subject to change over time. Coincidentally, these standards then influence people who grow up within them. Therefore, this development follows the constructivist view of reality, where society (beauty standards) and human beings affect each other. The choice of theory and methodology used in this study can be seen as further evidence of this position. Furthermore, this study uses abductive reasoning, as it is a commonly used method while doing exploratory research, where observations may differ from existing theories and where there can oftentimes be several interpretations that are all compatible with the data (Lipscomb, 2012). Abductive reasoning will, therefore, grant more freedom for analyzing the empirical data as it emphasizes the importance of observations when concluding the source data (Magnani, 2014).

Finally, as both abductive reasoning and social construction of reality emphasize the individual's experiences and observations, we will also use reflexivity to avoid blindly jumping to conclusions and to ascertain that our subjectivity will not overly distort the

conclusions drawn from the data. Reflexivity can be defined by how researchers evaluate and critique their subjectivity throughout the research process to stay aware of how this subjectivity may affect the results (Olmos-Vega, 2022). This inclusion of reflexivity in the methodology lines with the study's social constructivist standpoint, where the most important aspects to focus on are the experiences and ways of how individuals understand and experience the world. In practice, this means that my own subjectivity is acknowledged as my own worldviews and encounters will affect the conclusions I will draw from the empirical data and deal with the issues that may arise from this. When a conclusion is made, there has been a conscious effort to understand and reflect on the thinking process and if there are some personal biases that may affect my way of thinking. Moreover, there has been a continuous effort to look for possible reasonings from several different standpoints and compare if my conclusions support or contradict common theories.

2.2 Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

We will conduct this study using critical discourse analysis, whereby posts on Carlsan and Lumene's social media and data from their official websites were studied to find an answer to the research questions. To better understand why this methodological position was chosen, let us first investigate what discourse implies. Oxford Dictionary defines discourse as "A connected series of utterances by which meaning is communicated." Furthermore, it is important to note that discourse occurs both in spoken and written language. Henry and Tator (2002) argue that discourse is identified by the social conditions of its use, by whom, and under what conditions it is used. In this study, the chosen discourses are Chinese and Finnish beauty discourses used in marketing communication by cosmetics brands. Since critical discourse analysis is a commonly adopted and effective theory that aims to find connections between smaller discursive practices and larger structures of society, this framework was chosen as a part of this study's methodology.

According to Fairclough (1995), discourse should be analyzed by focusing on two dimensions: *communicative events* and the *order of discourse*. In the context of this study, *communicative events* point to the adjectives Carlsan and Lumene use on their websites and social media to market foundations. The *order of discourse* refers to the different kinds of discourses that can be found in the sphere of marketing foundations and other cosmetics. On top of identifying these two dimensions, let us go through Fairclough's three-dimensional

model before moving on and utilizing the critical discourse analysis to analyze our results. To gain a deeper understanding of the researched topic, each of these steps is applied to the studied discourse. The first step is *text*, which, in this case, refers to the written content regarding the adjectives used in marketing the foundation products of our chosen brands. We then move on to *discursive practice*, during which we study the life cycle of the texts: how they are first produced, then distributed to consumers, and finally consumed. During this step, we will identify the discourses from the analyzed data. Fairclough views the text's creator as someone who has an important role in upholding social order and who has the power to change it, which is why we utilize critical discourse analysis in this study. Our objective is to find out how Chinese and Finnish beauty standards affect the adjectives used in the marketing of foundations, so viewing the writers of the texts, Carslan and Lumene, as entities that can affect these standards is integral for this study. As the final step of this three-dimensional model, *social practice* refers to the meaning communicative actions create for different processes and experiences. As already mentioned, finding this meaning is indeed the objective of this study.

2.3 Data Collection

The first step in collecting empirical data was researching which brands to pick for the comparison. As Lumene is one of Finland's most well-known cosmetics brands and represents the Finnish beauty standard well, emphasizing on naturality and sustainably harvested Nordic ingredients (Koskinen, 2022), choosing it as one of the two subjects was quite clear-cut. Then, I began the search for a Chinese cosmetics brand that also sells foundations, whose products are within a similar price range to Lumene's, is well-known within the Chinese consumer base, and whose products are made to fit the Chinese beauty standard. These requirements were decided on to make the comparison as even as possible, as a drastic difference in the pricing of the products would create a clear deviation since this study's purpose is not to compare ordinary brands to luxury brands. Similarly, the brand needs to adhere to the common beauty standard and not cater only to a subculture of beauty, such as gothic makeup. The basis for this restriction is also to even the starting grounds of the comparison since a clear catering in a brand's products affects the words used in advertising, which in turn would directly lead the results of this study to a direction not intended.

A Chinese cosmetics brand, Carslan (卡姿兰), fits the requirements the best and was hence chosen. The brand began its operations in 2001 and launched its first product, a lipstick series, in 2002. In an interview, the president of Carslan, Tang Xilong, commented that the brand focuses on high-quality products catered to modern Chinese women (Zhu, 2021). While investigating Carslan's official website and social media, it was found that they offer a large range of products, from more classical products like red lipstick to trendy ones like brightly colored eyeshadows. This inclusion of both timeless classics and products that answer to the fast-changing trends of social media depicts rather clearly that the brand caters to the needs of the younger generation of Chinese women while also offering products to a more mature audience. Furthermore, the appearance of the product packaging meets the beauty standard. As we found earlier, the Chinese beauty standard emphasizes the connection between appearance and personal success and that beauty is exquisite and luxurious. Carslan's intricate and often dark-colored packaging with golden details seemingly supports this ideal.

Then began the stage of gaining a deeper understanding of Carslan and Lumene as cosmetics brands. Online sources were used to facilitate the process of data collection. The empirical data, or *texts*, according to Fairclough, consists of texts the chosen brands use in marketing that can be found on their official websites. In addition to the official websites, data has also been taken from the official Instagram account of Lumene and the official RED (小红书) account of Carslan, as it does not have an Instagram account. Regarding function and usage, RED is a platform similar to Instagram and is widely used in China. The brands' official social media accounts were added to the sources to find empirical data for the interesting aspect their visuality brings, as the brands can create a clear image and identity for themselves with the images they post. This fundamentally helps the information-gathering process, especially regarding how the brand perceives beauty. This can help determine the relationship between the country's beauty standards and how they are seen in marketing their foundations. This study only includes platforms fully managed by the brands themselves, as this ascertains that the empirical data collected is official and in accordance with how the brand wants to be perceived. All data was collected during the spring of 2024.

Five foundations from both brands were chosen for the study, along with the five marketing descriptions of the products that can be found on the brands' official websites. This number was decided upon as Lumene has five foundations on the market right now. At the moment,

Carslan has six foundations on the market, but one was left out to even the number because the marketing description for that specific foundation was very short and did not include much content that would have been useful to this study. Furthermore, relevant social media posts on Carslan's RED account and Lumene's Instagram account were studied. Some posts didn't include adjectives related to the products themselves but advertised a promotional package or a sale, even if a picture of some of the chosen foundations was chosen as the header. Posts like these were disregarded. Furthermore, not all foundations had relevant content on social media sites, and posts regarding older foundation launches were rare.

This study can be done without violating ethical or moral codes of conduct. Since data is taken from the brands' official websites and official social media, it is all produced and shared for commercial purposes and shared publicly for the consumers. Furthermore, as the empirical data is from official sites, it is not distributed by an individual private person.

2.4 Analysis of Data

The analysis began by first finding the adjectives used in the product description of the chosen foundations. The main purpose during this stage is to find differences and similarities between the adjectives Carslan and Lumene use in their marketing. The significance of this particular stage with regard to the research inquiries is apparent; the marketing descriptions consist of longer sentences, not just adjectives, so there is a need first to extract the adjectives from the whole text. The texts were first read carefully, and the adjectives were written down. The adjectives were first categorized under the foundation they describe to simplify the process of finding out how frequently a specific adjective was used by the brand. Subsequently, the adjectives were sorted into several themes and then evaluated and reflected upon. During the evaluation and reflection, some adjectives were moved under another theme as they matched the new theme better than the one they were first assigned to. Lastly, the complete themes and their contents were put in order based on their importance to this study. The final order of themes is:

1. The foundations' effects on the skin
2. The feeling of wearing the foundations
3. The coverage of the foundations

These themes work as the base for the analysis process, and we will return to them throughout this study. Now, we will continue by applying Fairclough's methodological framework to the contents of these themes. Each theme will be analyzed separately, beginning with the first step of Fairclough's analysis *text*. During the second step, we focus on the discursive practice by combining the themes and looking at the larger picture. Lastly, in the third step of the analysis, we investigate the themes from a societal perspective, the final step in Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. The structure of the analysis is shaped like an inverted triangle as we start from a closer analysis of the phenomena and then start to widen the perspective all the way to a societal level. During the analysis, the study's reflexive approach to truth was acknowledged, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, since my own subjectivity may have affected the conclusions drawn from the results.

3 Findings

In this chapter, we utilize Fairclough's three-dimensional model to analyze texts produced by Carlsan and Lumene. This section has been divided into five sections: The foundations' effects on the skin, The feeling of wearing the foundations, the Coverage of the foundations, Marketing as a practice, and Social Practice. The first three chapters answer Fairclough's analytical framework's first part. The fourth chapter, The Practice of Marketing, discusses the second part of Fairclough's model, that is to say, the discursive practices within the sphere of Chinese and Finnish cosmetics marketing. The last chapter is focused on social practice and aims to analyze the texts' societal impact in light of the beauty standards in the brands' countries of origin, China and Finland. Before moving to the analysis process, it is important to note that the terms found are taken from content written in Chinese and Finnish, meaning that the adjectives do not always have a direct one-word translation to English. When this happens, the word or phrase is first given in its original language and then explained in English. Furthermore, we must pay attention to the fact that Chinese adjectives tend to overlap with other Parts of Speech (Li & Thompson, 1989; Sun, 2006). For example, several words can be used as a noun or an adjective without making any changes to the word itself, only to its placement in the sentence, which can affect finding a suitable counterpart in English.

3.1 The foundations' effects on the skin

Finnish adjectives	Chinese adjectives
heleyttävä 'glowing'	自然 zìrán 'natural'
hehkuva 'radiant'	匀净 yúnjìng 'even'
luonnollinen 'natural'	迷人 mírén 'enchanting'
tasoittava 'evening'	折光 zhéguāng 'reflecting'
häivyttävä 'blurring'	透亮 tòuliàng 'transparent'
virheetön 'flawless'	光彩 guāngcǎi 'radiant'
heleä 'glowing'	无瑕 wúxiá 'flawless'
kuulas 'luminous'	不暗沉 bú àn chén 'not dull'
mattapintainen 'matte'	

The adjectives in this category describe how the foundations are advertised to make one's skin look. This was decided to be the first theme in the hierarchy as the main idea of wearing a foundation is to change somehow and often better the appearance of one's skin. The words *heleystävä* and *heleä*, both of which can be translated as 'glowing', and *kuulas*, 'luminous', are used in three of the five foundations by Lumene. These adjectives give the consumer an image of skin with a natural and healthy glow to it. This seemingly supports the current Finnish beauty standard, where a clean and pure, no-makeup makeup look is considered ideal (Rantala, 2014).

Compared to the adjectives used in Finnish foundations, the ones Carslan uses describe a radiant and bewitching result. These adjectives seemingly emphasize products that have the power to make one's skin look vivid and lively, even clearly stating that the result will not be dull. Carslan's marketing descriptions are more descriptive in their style, while Lumene's seem more down-to-earth and subdued. For example, one of Carslan's foundation's descriptions uses a metaphor as Example 1 below:

Example 1

仿若给肌肤穿上高定晚礼服，格外迷人

Fǎngruò gěi jīfū chuān shàng gāo dìng wǎnlǐfú, géwài mírén

'As if wearing an especially charming high-end evening gown for the skin.'

Comparing the foundation to a high-end dress depicts the exquisiteness the product gives to one's skin. Events where eveningwear is used tend to be very high-profile, which correlates directly with how put-together one's appearance should look. Comparing the foundation to a high-end evening gown, therefore, emphasizes its high quality and exquisiteness and how it will enhance its wearer's appearance to a new, higher standard.

3.2 The feeling of wearing the foundations

Finnish adjectives	Chinese adjectives
ilmavan kevyt ‘airy-light’	从容 cóngróng ‘composed’
kosteuttava ‘moisturizing’	自信 zìxìn ‘confident’
hengittävä ‘breathable’	丝滑 sī huá ‘silky’
sileä ‘smooth’	细腻 xìni ‘exquisite’
raikas ‘fresh’	精致 jīngzhì ‘delicate’
hoitava ‘nourishing’	柔润 róurùn ‘soft and moisturizing’
täyteläinen ‘creamy’	服帖 fútiē ‘well-fitting’
kevyt ‘light’	轻薄 qīngbó ‘light and thin’
	柔滑 róuhuá ‘creamy’
	不厚重 bú hòuzhòng ‘not thick and heavy’
	在线 zàixiàn ‘long-lasting’
	滋润沁肌 zīrùn qínjī ‘moisturizing’

This category consists of adjectives used in marketing descriptions of how the foundation feels on the skin. This category was chosen to be the second in the hierarchy as *how the item feels to use* comes commonly after deciding *which item looks the most appealing* in deciding which product to buy, be it makeup or something else. In Lumene’s foundations, the adjectives are used to accentuate that the foundation is light in formula and has skincare-like properties that nourish and moisturize the skin. The adjectives *hoitava* ‘nourishing’ and *kosteuttava* ‘moisturizing’ also support the claims mentioned in the section above, as nourished and well-moisturized skin is usually also shiny and glowing.

In addition to describing how the foundation feels on the skin in a literal sense, Carslan also uses more figurative adjectives, 从容 cóngróng ‘composed’ and 自信 zìxìn ‘confident,’ to describe how wearing the product makes the consumer feel. This is a concrete difference between Carslan and Lumene, as Lumene’s marketing descriptions do not include adjectives or descriptions like this. Furthermore, in two of the five foundations, Carslan uses the term 在线 zàixiàn. Normally, this term holds the meaning of online, such as in online friends, but in the context of cosmetics, this term is used to describe that the product is long-lasting. It

emphasizes that the foundation will stay on the skin without the need to be re-touched and that it doesn't transfer easily from friction into the inner surface of a facemask or a scarf, for example.

Both Carslan and Lumene's foundations are marketed as light in consistency, and their formula is smooth and pleasant to wear on the skin without feeling thick or heavy. Both brands also use terms such as moisturizing and refreshing, which are more commonly used to describe skincare products. This marketing decision might have been made to accentuate that the foundation benefits the skin in more ways than just enhancing the customers' appearance. Makeup that offers the skincare benefits on top of looking beautiful may help make the products stand out from others.

3.3 The coverage of the foundations

Finnish adjectives	Chinese adjectives
puolipeittävä 'half-covering'	轻盈 qīngyíng 'lithe'
täydellisen peittävä 'perfectly covering'	
peittävä 'covering'	
kerrostettava 'can be layered on'	

The last category in the hierarchical order is how the coverage of the foundation is described. This category is determined to be the last in the order of importance as both brands have foundations from sheer to almost full covering. Lumene's marketing uses the word *kerrostettava* several times, which doesn't have a straight one-word translation to English, but it means that the product can be layered on. This usually indicates that the product's coverage depends on how many layers are used. One layer tends to be rather sheer, while adding a second one increases the foundation's coverage. Carslan uses a phrase similar to this, as seen in Example 2 below:

Example 2

可多次涂抹遮盖

Kě duōcì túmǒ zhēgài

'Can be layered several times to cover.'

Four of the five Carslan's foundations are described as light in coverage. Still, like with Lumene's foundations, several marketing descriptions mention that the products can be layered on if more coverage is desired. The main difference between the adjectives of this category and the two brands comes from the frequency with which each is used. Carslan's foundations are closer to the low end of coverage, while Lumene's products are more akin to the middle of the spectrum. The differences in the coverage can be difficult to determine in a concrete way as it is not easy to ascertain how much of this phenomenon is related to consumer preference and unintentional habits and how much of it is related to the natural appearance of people's skin and especially blemishes in it that consumers might feel the need to cover up with foundation. It could be argued, for example, that since Finland's geographic location is very far in the north, the cold and dry winter makes the skin more susceptible to getting overly dry from the surface. The temperature and humidity inside apartments are completely opposite to the outside air, which is difficult for one's skin to balance and can often result in undesirable lasting redness in the cheeks and forehead during winter. Similarly, protecting one's skin from the sun is something very relevant in China, with products ranging from umbrellas, sun visor caps, and hats to sun sleeves, all made to help people protect the skin from the harsh sun, therefore also protecting the skin of one's face from premature aging which unprotected exposure to the sun ultimately leads to.

3.4 The Practice of Marketing

The texts we have analyzed during this study have all been produced with the intention of serving a purpose in marketing, meaning that their inherent function is to persuade the consumer to purchase a product. The language used in product marketing is a key factor in the success of a brand, and the core intention of marketing language is to increase the brand's influence by establishing and strengthening the brand's relationship with its consumers (Kronrod, 2022). This is a crucial element in establishing and nurturing a relationship with consumers. Effective communication is key to the success of any brand, and language plays a vital role in facilitating this.

One essential way Carslan and Lumene have tried to build consumer relationships is by utilizing social media platforms in their marketing. As mentioned in earlier chapters, in addition to official websites, content has been taken from Carslan's official RED account and Lumene's official Instagram, both of which are excellent channels for cosmetics brands to

reach their targeted consumers. Utilizing social media, brands can follow the trends in the makeup world and adapt their content accordingly to best cater to the needs of their consumers. Both Carslan and Lumene also actively repost reviews and tutorials made by their consumers using products from their brands. Some of these reviews are sponsorships where the brand pays the reviewer to try the makeup products on and share their opinions, which increases the collaboration of these bigger brands with smaller content creators, who in turn promote the products to their own followers and share tips on how to use them effectively, something makeup brands themselves tend to do in a significantly smaller scale.

Another way in which the brands draw the consumers' attention and evoke their desire to purchase the products is by drawing from the Chinese and Finnish beauty standards. Through the analysis of the texts, we find that Carslan and Lumene's marketing references different discourses in hopes of upholding their relationship with their customers. The terms Finnish beauty discourse and Chinese beauty discourse are used to ease the comparison. While the contents of said discourses are inherently different, the brands use them in a similar manner as Lumene draws from the Finnish beauty discourse and Carslan from the Chinese beauty discourse. Additionally, we should note that these two discourses are not confined only to the marketing sphere but are used as a part of everyday discursive practice regarding beauty in their respective countries. Therefore, by referencing these standards in their marketing communications, the brands are able to recreate a new commercial identity and power structure (Fairclough, 1992). By attaching themselves to the region and adopting the ideals of said region, the consumers may feel the brand's identity is close to their own, which then has the potential of increasing consumer interest in the products the brand offers, which is the key objective of any marketing. Playing into this sort of language-specific discourse can be seen in especially Lumene's, but also on a smaller scale in Carslan's marketing communication. Additionally, the consumption of products from brands that draw from this sort of beauty discourse may strengthen the consumer's own identity as a person of Chinese or Finnish heritage, and a beautiful one at that.

3.5 Social Practice

The section above focused on how the brands use discourses to build and maintain a favorable relationship with their consumers and to increase sales by creating interest and desire towards the brand's products. By analyzing Carlan and Lumene's marketing language and practices,

we found that in addition to the Chinese and Finnish discourse, a language-specific discourse is included in product marketing to increase their consumers' interest. In this section, we analyze the discourses in a broader societal sense. We will analyze how the Chinese and Finnish beauty standards may influence the language used in foundation marketing and how this effort to create a relationship with consumers may, in some instances, exclude some individuals.

When drawing upon the country's beauty standards through their marketing, brands may be able to evoke feelings of pride or community in consumers who feel like the language and imagery represent their own identity and ideals. Carlsan and Lumene use adjectives somewhat linked to a lighter skin tone when describing the foundations' effects on the skin. Lumene uses the adjective *kuulas* 'luminous,' which in Finnish is almost always used to describe something light in color, for example, the Moon. Additionally, it is often paired with another adjective *kalpea* 'pale.' Similarly, while Carlsan uses more neutral adjectives such as 光彩 *guāngcǎi* 'glorious' and 折光 *zhéguāng* 'radiant,' their catering towards lighter skin tones comes apparent from the complete lack of medium and dark foundation shades. While this phenomenon could be partly explained by the fact that both Finnish and Chinese beauty standards are more appreciative of lighter skin and that most of the population in these countries is indeed lighter in skin tone, so by catering to the majority, the brands are only trying to maximize profits. This practice, while somewhat understandable, doesn't excuse the celebration of light skin with the next to complete exclusion of darker skin, especially in today's globalized world with lots of immigration.

While drawing upon the language-specific discourse can be seen as an effective way of product marketing as it usually appeals to a large share of the consumer base, the emphasized inclusion of one group almost automatically results in the exclusion of another. These beauty standards and how they inspire the language used in marketing might be seen as a form of embracing one's heritage. Still, attention should be given to what negative consequences might follow if the appropriate amount of care is not being taken in the future. If one strategy proves useful in marketing, more and more brands may start adopting it in their product marketing. Consequently, a direction where marketing is catered increasingly towards the majority will inherently narrow down the representation of people seen in beauty product marketing. In Chinese, Finnish, and other cultures where people of light skin tone are seen as

the beauty ideal, the representation of people with darker skin tones may diminish or never even begin to appear, which in turn will exclude increasingly more potential customers, as they may feel that these brands do not cater nor care for people of their appearance and identity.

When marketers recreate a Chinese or Finnish ideal of beauty based strictly on the current beauty standard, it limits people's sense of individuality as the idea of what a beautiful Chinese or Finnish person should look like gets standardized to one specific type of person. This standardization process also strongly implicates, be it intentional or not, what is Finnish or Chinese and what isn't. In short, the current marketing language created by Carlsberg and Lumene seems to include elements that have the power to exclude noticeable parts of the Chinese and Finnish population, which in a global world with lots of immigration may lead to a growing divide between people living in these regions, as larger and larger groups may feel like they are never fully seen as someone belonging to the population of the country they call home.

4 Discussion

This study used Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate differences and similarities in the use of adjectives in makeup foundation marketing by the cosmetics brands Carslan and Lumene and how the common beauty standards in China and Finland may affect the usage of these adjectives. This study examined adjectives used in texts produced by Carslan and Lumene. These texts are published for commercial purposes and by the companies themselves, not individual, private persons. The empirical data consists of posts retrieved from the brands' official websites, Carslan's official RED account, and Lumene's official Instagram account. This study aimed to answer the research questions: "What similarities and differences can be found in the use of adjectives in foundation marketing between Chinese and Finnish cosmetics brands?" following the question, "How do Chinese and Finnish beauty standards affect the adjectives used in foundation marketing?". To find answers to these questions, we first investigated the common beauty standards in China and Finland and how marketing communication strategies may affect the language these two brands use in their foundation marketing. We also looked into the use of adjectives in marketing and how they affect the image consumers form of the marketed products. Now, to further investigate the findings our investigation yielded, let us discuss them according to the same parts as they were divided into in the last chapter: *The foundations' effects on the skin*, *The feeling of wearing the foundations*, and *The coverage of the foundations* while also keeping the findings connected to Chinese and Finnish marketing practices, beauty standards, and other social impactors.

As we have established, the main difference between the adjectives that Carslan and Lumene use is the aspect they focus on. Lumene's adjectives concentrate largely on the foundation's appearance on the wearer's skin and, more literally, how the foundation makes the wearer's skin look. Special attention is paid to how natural, healthy, and glowing the wearer's skin becomes. The marketing language is quite to the point and straightforward, without much excessive fanfare or information that could be considered unessential to the product's purpose. This aligns well with Finnish product marketing, where straightforwardness and factuality are often seen as the best strategies (Koduvayur, 2021). Lumene's texts concentrate on the literal effects of the foundations and straightforwardly tell the consumer what they should expect from the product. There are no special mentions of what feelings the

foundations might evoke in the wearer as they use the product or in other people who see the wearer with the product applied.

Carslan, on the other hand, uses adjectives that focus more on the feeling the foundation's results give the wearer or what feelings others may experience once they see the wearer with the foundation on. In descriptions of several different foundations, adjectives are used to describe that the foundations have the ability to make their wearer more confident since the product smoothens skin texture and, therefore, enhances the wearer's appearance, for example. Undoubtedly, Carslan also uses adjectives to describe how the foundations look once applied, but, additionally, telling the customer how the product makes them feel on top of descriptions of the effects of the product makes Carslan's marketing more vivid compared to Lumene's. This also aligns with typical Chinese marketing, where strategies such as metaphors, indirectness, and ambiguity are more common (Adair & Brett, 2005). An example of indirectness can be seen in how two foundations are marketed as 不暗沉 (bú àn chén) 'not dull' instead of directly saying that they are glowing or radiant. Another fitting example of showcasing indirectness is the sentence we pointed out earlier in Example 1.

On top of indirectly telling the consumer that the foundation makes their skin look charming, it also works as a metaphor. In this sentence, the noun 晚礼服 (wǎnlǐfú) 'evening gown' refers to the foundation, and by describing it as 高定 (gāo dìng) 'high-end', it gives the consumer an image of a product whose quality is especially high-class and that fits even the most demanding events.

Backtracking slightly to how Carslan pays attention to describing the feelings wearing their products evoke, this habit seems to give an image that a beautiful look gives the person more opportunities in their daily life. Several descriptions of Carslan's foundations mention how wearing the product gives the customer more confidence, which seems to lead to the fact that being deemed beautiful by society is something that makes it easier for an individual to attain success in their career, for example, and thus making them feel more confident in themselves. This confidence can stem from a belief that by looking beautiful, other members of the society will treat you better, which makes it easier for you to pursue the future you have envisioned for yourself. Looking at this from the opposite perspective, if your looks are lackluster, you may often get the short end of the stick, while people with the same skills but

better appearance have an easier time advancing in their careers. It is a commonly noticed phenomenon that the pressure to adhere to the beauty standard is higher in East Asia than in Northern Europe, and using language that insinuates that beauty is the solution to a person's, especially a woman's, success further emphasizes this idea.

When discussing how the foundation feels on the skin, the brands have more themes in common. Both Carslan and Lumene emphasize their products' moisturizing and refreshing properties and intend to give the customer an image of a product that is very comfortable to wear. Lumene uses more adjectives to accentuate the feeling more literally by describing how smooth or creamy the product is. Carslan uses some more figurative adjectives, such as 细腻 (xìni) 'exquisite,' 精致 (jīngzhì) 'delicate,' and 柔润 (róurùn) 'soft and moisturizing.' Several of Carslan's marketing descriptions also bring forth the long-lastingness of the foundations, which Lumene does on a considerably smaller scale. A foundation that stays on without re-touching has definite advantages in a Chinese society where face masks are far more common than in Finland. For example, face masks are often used during summer to protect one's face from harmful UV rays, so a foundation that doesn't transfer to the inner surface of a face mask has a large market. Furthermore, air pollution, especially in the larger Chinese cities, may also warrant using masks during other seasons, not to mention the COVID-19 pandemic, after which wearing a mask when outside was recommended, if not obligatory. Higher air humidity, especially in southern China, makes it easy for makeup to come off, which may also explain why Carslan emphasizes that their products are long-lasting. This again depicts the differences between what features these brands emphasize in their marketing. Altogether, Lumene emphasizes its products' natural effects and skincare-like properties, while Carslan accentuates the luxuriousness of its foundations without forgetting practicality. This gives the impression that Lumene's products help the consumer enhance their natural features. At the same time, Carslan promises their consumers products that help them achieve a better, upgraded version of themselves.

Most common themes were found in the adjectives used to describe the coverage of the foundations. Both Carslan and Lumene's products offer mostly light or sheer coverage that can be layered on if more coverage is desired. However, Lumene's foundations lean slightly toward a more covering category as one of their products is marketed as perfectly covering. This brings about a slight discrepancy between the ideal look these brands market their

products for and the qualities their products hold. This holds especially on Lumene's side as the brand emphasizes its products' natural results but offers foundations that can cover more imperfections. It is important to note that covering small imperfections on one's skin doesn't automatically equal making someone look unnatural, and this may only refer to covering fine lines or pores in a way that seems natural and seamless. However, the need for products that offer more coverage must stem from somewhere. As discussed above, the Chinese habit of protecting oneself well from the sun may explain why Carslan's foundations' coverage is lighter. It is discovered in biochemistry and dermatology that the damage from the Sun's UV rays hastens the skin's aging process, which results in the emergence of fine lines, sunspots, and wrinkles, not to mention more harmful effects like melanoma (van der Rhee et al., 2016) that can be considered undesirable in the light of beauty standards and, therefore, be seen as something that should be covered. This may be one explanation for why Lumene's foundations generally offer more coverage than Carslan's, as the importance of using sunscreen or other products to protect the skin during summer is not nearly as emphasized in Finland as in China.

Moving on to analyzing the discursive practices used in the texts, we found that the brands draw upon a Finnish and Chinese beauty discourse to increase sales and the value and attractiveness of the brand in the eyes of their consumers. Additionally, we found that using these discursive practices in a commercial setting may lead to a monotone image of what is considered beautiful, especially regarding skin tone. The way these brands depict the ideal and beautiful person is highly romanticized. Not many normal and common people live a life where they can attend luxurious events, as pictured in Carslan's marketing, relax on an archipelago, and freely enjoy the sea breeze, like in Lumene's marketing. Admittedly, these romanticized pictures are used exactly for marketing because they fit the beauty standard and the aesthetic the brands are known for. However, this type of marketing, while eye-catching, is not very attainable for a normal person, so despite its success, it is worth remembering how it risks excluding individuals living in the region but not fitting into the portrayal.

Above all, this knowledge of which marketing practices for advertising cosmetics are the most successful can be used when brands want to enter a new market or strengthen their position in a culturally exotic market where they already have an established position. Knowing what qualities consumers hold to the highest esteem and how to effectively use language in the marketing of said products to gain the attention of the intended consumer base

is one of the vital aspects that have the power to make or break a brand. This study's importance comes from exploring these marketing practices, especially regarding the language used in cosmetics marketing. The findings of this study can give insight into cosmetics brands that hope to enter either the Chinese or Finnish cosmetics market and offer ideas on how to effectively use language in advertising while taking the common beauty standards into consideration.

As for the limitations of this study, the most notable one is admittedly the fact that we have researched only two brands: one from China and one from Finland, and five foundations from both brands. To better cope with this possible issue, strict requirements were made to find two brands exhibiting qualities that correspond to the common Chinese and Finnish beauty standards, are both well-known in their countries of origin, and whose products are priced similarly. However, this doesn't completely remove the fact that the two brands cannot give a comprehensive picture of which adjectives are usually used to market foundations in China and Finland. Therefore, it would be beneficial to pick several brands to broaden the scope in the future, allowing for more reliable results. Another limitation stems from my own subjectivity, which may have affected the conclusions drawn from the findings. This issue has also been acknowledged throughout this study, as mentioned in the Methodology chapter.

5 Conclusion

This study came to life from my interest in the language used in cosmetics marketing and from my own observations of somewhat surprising similarities between Finnish and Chinese beauty standards. This then developed into an idea to research how similar the marketing of beauty products in these two countries is. As someone who has never conducted a study this large scale, I had to do quite a lot of background work, especially regarding the theories and methodology that would be the most fitting for a study like this. Another surprisingly difficult part was first understanding and then translating the content of Carslan's posts since most terms used in the makeup community are seemingly not known widely enough for them to be all found in dictionaries. Luckily, I have some Chinese friends who were able to give me some insights regarding the meaning and function of these terms and helped me find sources from the internet regarding their meaning, for which I am very grateful.

Moving on to the key findings of this study, we began with the most basic of facts which is that most, if not all, marketing is done to gain profits. Furthermore, it is integral to market one's products with language that appeals to the target audience to secure said profits. We found that Carslan uses adjectives quite vividly to describe its foundations. When examining their marketing language in a broader sense, it is slightly more indirect, which can be seen in their use of metaphors, for example. Furthermore, they use more adjectives to describe the feelings evoked when wearing their foundations. They describe how the wearer feels and how others may feel when they see the wearer with the foundation on. Lumene uses adjectives in a sense to describe how the foundations look once applied and how they feel on the skin, not necessarily how the wearer may feel once they see themselves with the foundation on. We also found out that Finnish and Chinese beauty standards certainly influence how the foundations are marketed. While the Finnish standard may emphasize natural beauty slightly more strongly, both brands emphasize how natural one's skin looks even with the foundation applied. The beauty standards can also be seen in the wider brand image: Lumene's imagery references Nordic nature and beauty, while Carslan pays more attention to making their products seem luxurious and exquisite. We also discussed how Lumene and Carslan's marketing seems to be catered towards a specific group of people based on their outward appearance, mainly light skin tone, and how this practice excludes parts of people living in these regions.

The limiting factors that may have affected the findings are namely my own subjectivity and the scope of brands and products studied. Achieving complete objectivity in analyzing information is an insurmountable task due to the inherent subjectivity of human beings. Our personal backgrounds, experiences, and biases invariably influence the interpretations we draw from the source material, rendering complete objectivity an unattainable ideal. This subjectivity has been addressed in several parts of this study and kept in mind while analyzing by intentionally looking at the analyzed matter from different perspectives. Similarly, in the matter of researching only two brands and ten foundations, measures were taken to ascertain that the empirical data retrieved from these brands would be as neutral as possible, meaning that I have done my best to choose two brands whose popularity, price-point, and response to the beauty standards in their countries of origin is similar.

In the future, a similar study could be conducted through a corpus-based big data approach or a longitudinal study. These methods allow for more extensive data collection and more precise quantitative analysis. In a similar vein, there is a noticeable demand for Nordic cosmetics among Chinese consumers. This growing interest in Nordic brands and products offers fruitful grounds for researchers and Nordic cosmetics brands alike. The most appealing qualities of Nordic cosmetics seem to be their closeness to nature and a lack of unnecessary added ingredients. As we have found in this study, embracing nature is rather far from the Chinese beauty ideal, which seemingly idealizes modernity and luxuriousness, so this formidable difference may attract consumers who would like to try something different. Moreover, exploring promising directions for future investigation on the subject of Nordic cosmetics in the Chinese market, some potential inquiries to commence with could be: “What factors contribute to the allure of Nordic brands?,” “What strategies can be implemented to promote Nordic brands to Chinese consumers successfully” or “What potential challenges might Nordic brands encounter when entering the Chinese market?” All of these topics could be future directions for the areas covered in the thesis.

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