

Sentiment Analysis of Attack Advertising:

Good for Humorous Rivalry, not for Serious Aggression

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Abstract

This Master's Thesis researches attack advertising in a commercial business context. Attack advertising is generally associated with political campaigns designed to personally attack opposing candidates. In the business context it is a form of aggressive marketing where the brand attacks its rivals in an advertisement. The current literature does not generally recommend public confrontations but in practice companies do utilize attack advertising.

Samsung versus Apple, Lakers versus Celtics and Coca-Cola versus Pepsi are all rivalries with long histories behind them. According to the current research, brands should involve themselves in rivalries as it leads to multiple benefits. Attack advertising is an extreme form of rivalry promotion as it pins two brands against each other in a concrete way and is likely to provoke a reaction from the consumers. The consumer reaction is studied and focused on in this paper. How do consumers react to attack advertising and which advertisement attributes cause this reaction? Various marketing techniques and approaches are studied, and the role of for example, humor and rivalry history in aggressive attack advertising is researched.

This paper's research approach is a quantitative netnographic research, and it is executed by doing a sentiment analysis. Five attack advertising cases are analyzed, and 3034 comments are researched in order to understand what the consumer reaction to attack advertisements is like. The data is collected from online sources and processed through Python code and SentiStrength program. The data is analyzed further with data calculations and testing including t-tests and ANOVA.

The research results show that generally attack advertising as a marketing approach can be recommended. Humor, strong rivalry history with the attacked brand, mild aggressiveness and high investment products are attributes that lead to positive consumer reactions. Highly aggressive and serious attack advertisements are not recommended as it leads to an overall more negative than positive reaction from the consumers. The paper is recommended for marketing professionals and those interested in non-traditional marketing phenomena, sentiment analysis and aggressive rivalry marketing.

Keywords attack advertising, sentiment analysis, rivalry marketing, aggressive marketing, rivalry history, humor in marketing, brand to brand communication, brand communities, anti-brand communities, competitive rivalries, scandalous marketing,

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Tiivistelmä

Tutkielmassa tutkitaan hyökkäävää mainontaa (attack advertising) kaupallisessa yritysmaailman kontekstissa. Yleisesti hyökkäävä mainonta yhdistetään poliittiseen kampanjointiin, jossa hyökätään vastapuolella olevia ehdokkaita vastaan henkilökohtaisella tasolla. Yritysmaailmassa se on aggressiivisen markkinoinnin muoto, jossa brändi hyökkää kilpailijoitaan vastaan mainonnan kautta. Tämänhetkinen kirjallisuus ei suosittele yleisesti osallistumista julkisiin vastakkainasettelutilanteisiin, mutta käytännössä yritykset hyödyntävät hyökkäävää mainontaa markkinoinnissaan.

Samsung vastaan Apple, Lakers vastaan Celtics ja Coca-Cola vastaan Pepsi ovat kaikki pitkän kilpailuhistorian kokeneita yrityskilpailijoita. Nykyisen tutkimustiedon mukaan brändien tulisi kilpailla ja osallistua kilpailuun yrityksiä vastaan, koska se johtaa useisiin hyötyihin. Hyökkäävä mainonta on kilpailutilanteen edistämisen äärimmäinen muoto, sillä se asettaa kaksi brändiä vastakkain ja provosoi kuluttajilta reaktioita. Tutkielman keskiössä ovat kuluttajien reaktiot. Kuinka kuluttajat reagoivat hyökkäävään mainontaan ja mitkä mainoksen piirteet johtavat reaktioon? Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan eri markkinointitekniikoita ja lähestymistapoja sekä esimerkiksi huumorin ja kilpailuhistorian roolia aggressiivisessä hyökkäävässä mainonnassa.

Tutkimus on kvantitatiivinen netnografinen tutkimus, joka suoritetaan sentimenttialyysin muodossa. Tutkimuksessa viisi hyökkäävän mainonnan kampanjaa analysoidaan ja 3034 kommenttia tutkitaan. Tarkoituksena on ymmärtää kuluttajan reaktiota hyökkäävää mainontaa kohtaan. Tutkimusdata on kerätty Internetistä ja se on prosessoitu Python-koodin ja SentiStrength -ohjelmiston läpi. Dataa analysoidaan laskelmien ja testien, kuten t-testin ja ANOVAn avulla.

Tutkimustulosten mukaan hyökkäävää mainontaa markkinointikeinona voidaan yleisesti ottaen suositella. Huumori, vahva kilpailuhistoria hyökätyn brändin kanssa, lievä aggressiivisuus ja korkean kustannuksen tuotteet ovat mainoksessa piirteitä, jotka johtavat positiivisempaan kuluttajareaktioon. Hyvin aggressiivista ja vakavaa lähestymistapaa hyökkäävään mainontaan ei suositella, koska se johtaa yleensä enemmän negatiiviseen kuin positiiviseen kuluttajareaktioon. Tutkielman lukemista suositellaan markkinoinnin ammattilaisille, joita kiinnostavat epätavalliset markkinointi-ilmiöt, sentimenttialyysi ja aggressiivinen kilpailumarkkinointi.

Avainsanat hyökkäävä mainonta, sentimenttialyysi, kilpailullinen markkinointi, aggressiivinen markkinointi, kilpailuhistoria, huumori markkinoinnissa, brändien välinen kommunikaatio, brändiyhteisöt, brändien vastaiset yhteisöt, aggressiiviset kilpailijat, skandaalimarkkinointi

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. General introduction to the theme

McDonalds and Burger King, Coca-Cola and Pepsi, Samsung and Apple, and FC Barcelona and Real Madrid are all well-known rivals each in their own markets. They form strong communities around their brands and products which in return creates even more tensions that can easily get out of hand (Berendt, Urich, & Thompson, 2018). Rivalry between companies can be beneficial for all parties involved (Ilhan, Kübler, & Pauwels, 2018). The companies might get new interest from customers searching for the best product in the market and on the other hand the consumers are able to get superior products due to the development that is needed for the rivals to best each other.

In this paper a very specific phenomenon in rivalry marketing is at the center of research. In political environment it is called attack advertising and due to the marketing scene missing a better term for the phenomenon in this paper it will be referred to accordingly. It is used to describe a situation where a rival brand is attacking the other party involved in the rivalry directly through an advertisement or its official marketing communications otherwise. This has happened multiple times in marketing history and one fairly recent example of it is Samsung's "Ingenious" campaign which directly mocks its rival's Apple's products (Evelyn, 2019). This campaign will be more closely researched and discussed among multiple other case examples later on in chapter 3.2.

This attack advertising phenomenon brings up many interesting possibilities which this paper and research discusses. Why do brands take part in this aggressive advertising? How do the consumers react to this? What role does the humor and the level of aggressiveness of the marketing message have and how does it affect the response of the customers? Are communities, anti-brand communities and rivalry history important factors when doing aggressive rivalry marketing?

Pitting brands against each other supports creating communities as conflict and rivalry are main drivers for humans to form groups (Ewing, Wagstaff, & Powell, 2013). This appears in sports frequently as teams usually have rival teams that the fans love to hate passionately. Lakers and Celtics in basketball and Real Madrid and FC Barcelona in

football, are examples of sports club rivalries that have long history between them (Fox Sports, 2016). They are great examples of fierce competition not being bad for the brands but actually building more interest and character to it. Would there be as much feeling in supporting FC Barcelona if they never had a football club that could challenge them?

Researching this phenomenon can concretely assist companies in knowing whether they should involve themselves in aggressive communications with rivals and if they do, what should they expect the consumer reaction to be when they see these adverts. Knowing when attack advertising usually hurts and when it benefits is key in strategizing the brands future marketing especially in rivalry scenarios. The paper provides further understanding on whether the company should opt into using aggressive marketing strategies or not in order to receive optimal consumer reaction from the market, and how to utilize humor in aggressive promotions. In day-to-day activities, understanding the usage of social media platforms for rival-provoking content is currently topical as many companies are experimenting on how to behave online. A current example of a creative provocative business usage of social media is Wendy's as they have been known for having an unusual approach into their Twitter account, where they "roast" everyone, which led to their following increasing noticeably (Dyner, 2020).

The author's motivation for this research derives from seeing aggressive adverts and changes in businesses' behavior online. It has raised questions whether it is beneficial for large companies to almost childishly resort to playground insults in their marketing and is this something the consumers appreciate. As an observer it can be entertaining but does it generally push customers to support or act against the company? I believe this research is worth reading for people who would like to understand current marketing phenomena better and are interested in how big companies should strategize their marketing actions. Consumer loyalty, brand communities, anti-brand communities, aggressive advertising and humor in marketing are themes that stand at the forefront of this research.

*The author would like to give special thanks to Atso Galkin for writing the initial python code used to process the data into a readable form and helping the author modify and use the code for the purpose of this research.

1.2. Research objectives and questions

In today's business world marketing is not only an action that is done in order to create more sales. It is also a tool used for building relationships and emotions in consumers and other brands. Going viral for creative brand to brand conversations can get the public intrigued and excited to see what's next (Ramadan, 2019). According to Berendt, Uhrich and Thompson (2018), it is typically advised that brands should stay out of public conflicts. Rival brands receive both brand-negative and brand-positive comments from consumers which in return has effects on the brands involved. To better the results of marketing campaigns it is key to get consumers to engage with the brand. (Ilhan et al., 2018).

In the current research there are gaps in this theme as rivalry marketing and brand to brand communications are studied broadly whereas negative attack advertising and brand to brand rivalry communications specifically are not. It is currently unclear whether this type of aggressive advertising leads to positive or negative effects. This research gap can be identified as the current research does not agree with the benefits of rivalry promoting. Some articles claim that emphasizing rivalry leads to benefits (Ilhan et al., 2018) whereas others do not generally recommend active rivalry seeking (Berendt et al., 2018). Do brands become more interesting and likeable in the eyes of the consumer or does their reputation suffer when they are involved in aggressive rivalry marketing? How do consumers feel and react when they are faced with it? What reactions do aggressive and humorous approaches in attacking rivalry marketing elicit in consumers? These questions are the primary interest and research focus of the paper. Therefore, the paper's research question is:

How do attack advertisements affect customers, and how do they react to them when they are presented in a commercial business context?

There are reputational risks involved when attacking other brands (Berendt et al., 2018). For some those risks might be more worthy of taking than to others. Even if something is perceived as tacky or negative it can have positive effects in the end. Berger, Sorensen and Rasmussen (2010) claim that if a company or their product is fairly unknown, they especially can gain positive benefits from negative publicity. There are also some studies that recommend underdog brands to involve themselves in rivalry marketing (Berendt et

al., 2018). There are few studies on aggressive rivalry marketing strategies and there are many general aspects in this area of research that are still yet to be studied and uncovered. It is unclear whether well-known brands should stay away from rivalry conflicts as is advised by J. Berger et al. (2010) or embrace the rivalry and its benefits as Ilhan et al. (2018) recommend. In this paper the research revolves around multibillion-dollar companies and none of them can necessarily be considered an underdog. Understanding the consumer reaction and the general effects that this marketing phenomenon has on companies makes it easier to understand how it should be approached overall.

Suggested rivalry marketing strategies divide authors and finding the optimal way to lead a company can be difficult. Strategies include completely removing the commenting and posting from the company's social media sites. Staying quiet while being attacked can seem viable for some. Ilhan et al. (2018) recommend going head on with the rivals while Ramadan (2019) claims that the risks of starting provocations can be much higher than the potential rewards. Some research suggests that direct attacks against competitors are not as effective as outside attacks coming from independent sources not directly related to either side of the rivalry (Phillips, 2020). The strategy for negative brand-brand and customer-brand posts and advertisements varies and there are no absolute answers to how a company should act when faced with public controversies. This topic in marketing rivalry research is torn as suggested strategies can be very radical and differ completely from one research to the other.

The research question in this paper was chosen according to the research gaps that were currently present in the field of rivalry marketing research. It was also important to find a research question that could realistically be studied as it is more accessible to gather information of consumer reactions to big corporations' social media and advertising compared to, for example, unknown underdog brands or getting inside information and campaign result data to analyze from the big corporations such as Pepsi and Samsung.

In coming up with this research question the author wanted to narrow down the study in a way that could lead to clear managerial implications. The theme of rivalry marketing and understanding the consumer reaction and the possible effects this has on the company is of interest to the author. This led to the decision to focus specifically on this research topic

rather than some other research areas and gaps that were found. These research gaps are further discussed and listed in the paper in “Future research suggestions”.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

In this paper the research begins with a literature review. The literature review is divided into two parts. First, the current research available is gone over and how the research question presented previously has been covered in the current literature. This will include taking a look at the current effects aggressive attack advertising is thought to have on the rivalry companies involved and understanding the impact this marketing has on the consumers. It is also important to go over general information on how brands begin rivalries, what are some of the most notable companies that have been or still are in rivalry with each other and how this competition has been noticeable. The actions these brands have taken in order to best each other are covered as well as the nature of the rivalries. This is studied in order to better understand the underlying marketing actions rival companies take and how the rivalry relationship forms between companies.

Brand loyalty, brand communities, brand personality, humor and aggressiveness in advertising and consumer brand rivalries are central themes discussed. This is studied in order to understand how consumers treat rivalry brands and communicate within their brand and anti-brand communities. Community building and specifically anti-brand community participation is studied. This part of the literature review is important in order to better construct the data collection and analysis of the paper.

The second part of the literature review consists of covering the theoretical framework used to proceed with the research done in this paper. This is done to tie the data collection and analysis methods into relevant research and create a reasonable method and meaningful tool for data processing. Going over the theoretical framework and how it is used in this paper wraps up the literature review.

After the literature review, the methodology and methods used in the research are covered. This is done in order to show how data for the research is collected and why certain data collection methods are selected over others. Finally, the trustworthiness and research ethics

of the data are discussed and analyzed.

The data collection is done through a netnographic research method where relevant attack advertisement cases are selected, and consumer reactions are collected and analyzed to find answers for the primary research question: “How do attack advertisements affect customers, and how do they react to them when they are presented in a commercial business context?”. The attack advertisement cases are divided according to their aggressiveness and use of humor and differing campaigns are chosen to study how the varying nature of cases affect the response of the consumers.

The research continues with an in-depth data analysis and presentation of findings. The data is processed and analyzed through a Python code, SentiStrength 2.3 sentiment analysis dictionary, Excel calculations and SPSS significance testing. These results are presented and in Discussion chapter they are compared with the information retrieved from the literature review in order to get a full picture of the results. The research question is also answered here in light of the literature and data analysis.

In the Conclusions the overall paper will be summarized, practical implications are given, limitations of the study are discussed, and future research avenues are suggested. At the end of the thesis references are listed in order to show which literature has been referred to throughout the text.

2. Literature review

2.1. Competition within rivalry brands

2.1.1. Long time competitors

Competition is good for brands but also for customers due to product development offering better and more affordable goods (Ilhan et al., 2018). In real life market situations, there are usually multiple different companies or parties competing for their share of the overall goal that they all look to accomplish. In competitive circumstances one party's goal cannot be achieved without it happening at the expense of another parties goal (Converse & Reinhard, 2016). While there can be some technical exceptions to this in monopolized markets where market entry may be legally restricted or otherwise difficult, usually this model applies naturally especially in consumer goods market. The size and impact of the competitors can vary drastically, for example, in the soft drinks' selection of a local store there are big notable products such as Coca-Cola, Sprite and Fanta all produced by the Coca-Cola Company (Coca-Cola Company website, 2020) while there are also options for many locally sourced small companies like Laitilan Wirvoitusjuomatehdas (Laitilan website, 2020). Understanding these basic business competition principles is important in analyzing motivations companies have in designing marketing campaigns.

When the customer is faced with multiple different options they make the purchase decision according to their expectation of the product (Maehle & Supphellen, 2015). What are they craving? Do they go for the new flavor from the local small company that their friend claimed to be extraordinary the other day, or do they stick with the long time favorite? The choice is done according to the need that is expected to be satisfied with each selection.

The choice is not entirely in the consumer side even though it may first seem like it. The expectations the consumer has on the product can be altered through continuous image enhancement done by the company (Maehle & Supphellen, 2015). Opinions about strong brands are harder to sway by, for example, outside opinions compared to weaker brands that have not left a lasting impression on the customers (J. Berger, Sorensen, & Rasmussen, 2010). Based on this aggressive marketing strategies should work better when attacking against weaker brands. If the opinion of a strong brand is usually hard to sway,

the gain an aggressive marketer gets from attacking such brand is drama and the attention it brings. According to J. Berger et al. (2010) brand equity is an important aspect in the decision-making when the consumer is dealing with uncertainty. Strong image helps create a certain quality guarantee that might be missing when taking a leap of faith with an unknown company. The risk can be small when dealing with daily produce but when making bigger investments such as buying a new car the branding and image of the company play a large role. Therefore, from an aggressive marketer's standpoint, it is a very unlikely that attack advertising would sway the consumers opinion of brands in markets of high investment products. Later on, in this paper it is presented through case examples that in real-life companies do not abide by these rules blindly as there are instances where for example, car manufacturers have gone aggressively head-to-head. More about this can be read in chapter 3.2.

Pepsi and Coca-Cola, Samsung and Apple, Lakers and Celtics and Nike and Adidas are all companies that are tied together in fierce competition. Usually the whole company might not be as involved in the competition as online forum posts and everyday conversation might lead to believe. For example, Samsung and Apple have been the biggest rivals in the phone market since 2011 according to Forbes (2020). It is important to note that Samsung most likely does not consider Apple its key competitor, for example, in the Smart Fridge - market. Therefore, companies might be competing in a single product category and not in all parts of their operations. When developing a marketing strategy in an environment filled with competition the company has to factor in its own weaknesses and strengths compared to its key competitors in order to develop advantages over its specific competition (Burns, 1986). Therefore, even if Samsung phones department uses aggressive marketing tactics to compete, it has to consider the overall Samsung brand not to risk ruining its reputation for all the other product categories. This has to be especially considered carefully because in today's market the brand communities can co-create and take brands into directions they have not planned themselves (Black & Veloutsou, 2017). Keeping this in mind, companies have to be careful not to get their brands hurt by consumers dragging them into trouble. Both the consumer co-creation and the broadness of a company's offering are themes that marketers have to consider when analyzing the consumer reactions and the overall effects a marketing campaign has. Do consumers see companies as a whole or are they wise enough to separate the product categories and possible different brand images these categories might have? Do consumers co-create

actively, and should this be limited by the company to reduce risks of undesired brand image?

2.1.2. From competitors to rivals

So far, the literature has been covered from a business competition standpoint. Rivalry is bigger than just an ordinary competition between companies operating in the same product category. When involved in a rivalry, current competition is embedded in a running competitive narrative that is influenced by the history and the upcoming future of the competition (Berendt et al., 2018). The brands are linked together, and their stories develop according to the actions done by them. Usually these strongly positioned brands that have stayed on top of the competition for a long time attract consumer or brand communities to form around them (Ramadan, 2019). This may lead to the most loyal customers to support their favorite companies and even attack the competitors (Ilhan et al., 2018). Strong feelings, both positive and negative, can lead to grouping together in brand and anti-brand communities (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2020). Opinionated consumers can freely express their thoughts via social media while others might stick to for example, letting their friends and family know about their preferences. Understanding the running competitive narrative rivals have can be very significant when analyzing company's marketing strategy as an advertisement campaign might refer to some previous events that have shaped the way brands are seen by consumers. Sometimes companies even answer to each other's campaigns and create a back-and-forth brand to brand conversation that consumers can follow and engage with online. One of the studied cases which will be gone over later on involving marketing campaigns from PlayStation and Xbox is a great example of such activity (PlayStation Europe YouTube channel, 2013).

Being involved in rivalries is beneficial. Having a strong competition between certain brands can create a sentiment that the rest of the brands in the market are obsolete (Ilhan et al., 2018). If the consumers are busy thinking about which is a better sports brand to train in Nike or Adidas, it does not give much room for Reebok to pitch in their offering. The "outsiders" are completely ignored as the rivals are automatically considered the only two options. Forcing involvement in a rivalry is not necessarily beneficial either as new rivalries are not as effective as historical rivalries that have been on-going for a long time (Watanabe, Pegoraro, Yan, & Shapiro, 2019).

Overall, rivalry as a whole is generally agreed to have positive effects on the brands involved. However, this does not yet take into account different types of rivalries and actions that are usually taken in rivalry situations. These can lead to more polarizing views and results which are focused on in the following chapters 2.1.3 - 2.1.4.

2.1.3. Attack advertising: From Politics to Business

In markets that have already established a stable state, advertising is usually used to pull customers and their preferences towards the advertiser and away from the competitors rather than creating new-found demand for the product category itself (Chen, Joshi, Raju, & Zhang, 2009). In a rivalry scenario if a rival runs an advertisement campaign it usually ends up having a positive effect on both companies' financial market value. This can be explained to be caused by the rise of total demand (Fosfuri & Giarratana, 2009). Ilhan et al. (2018) suggest that in rivalry scenarios these positive effects come due to the rivals catching all the attention away from other options in the market. Therefore, in these mature markets advertising is actually competing with others where one's loss is the others gain. It can be visualized as a tug-of-war contest as Chen et al. (2009) describe it. In a scenario where the rivals both end up having positive effects from an advertisement campaign the losers are the companies not involved in the rivalry.

When rivals end up attacking each other with aggressive advertising, it contains a risk of getting negative publicity. Some authors advice staying completely out of public confrontations. The reasoning being that the risks of starting provocations are larger than the opportunities presented (Ramadan, 2019).

In politics attack advertising became really relevant and aggressive in the 2016 United States presidential elections campaigning. The republican party's candidate Donald Trump resorted to playground insults calling the democratic party's candidate Hillary Clinton names such as "Crooked Hillary" (Bond et al., 2017). The attacks could be considered as serious threats as Trump claimed Clinton should be imprisoned if he became president (BBC, 2016). This over the top tactic seemed to work quite well as Trump ended up winning the elections despite the polls were favored towards Clinton (New York Times, 2017). This campaigning style continued in 2020 as Donald Trump went against Joe Biden

whom he had named “Sleepy Joe” (CNN, 2020). This time around the upset victory did not come as Donald Trump lost the elections in both the popular vote and the electoral votes (The Guardian, 2020).

Further studies into the 2016 elections show that negativity and attack advertising might not be as effective as the results of the election may imply. The direct attacks initiated by a candidate tend to be ineffective but the attacks coming from outside or independent sources are effective (Phillips, 2020). This result points to direct attack advertisements not being smart as they can backfire in a way not hoped whereas others, who are not rivals, bringing issues up can lead to positive outcomes for a person or company. Considering the 2016 presidential elections in the United States contrary to the public belief, Hillary Clinton ran more ad hominem advertisements focusing on claiming Donald Trump unfit for the office (Tedesco & Dunn, 2019).

Back in the 1990s it was claimed that attack advertisements are common in politics where a candidate might run campaign advertisements against the other candidate in an effort to sway voters (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentino, 1994). According to Ansolabehere et al. (1994), this strategy has been effective as negative advertisements led to 5% drop in the voting intention of the participants which was presumed to be a very conservative estimate by the authors. The result has been challenged as in current research it is claimed that direct attacks are actually more likely to backfire whereas indirect attacks which do not come from the candidates themselves are usually effective (Phillips, 2020). In the business environment these findings are interesting as it raises questions whether companies should aim to activate their brand fans to attack their competition rather than aggressively rival marketing themselves.

As in politics, in business there are recent examples of aggressive advertising. Some brands have had the courage to attack their competitor in an advertisement directly even though this is naturally not a standardized way to approach marketing. Samsung is included in these brands with their multiple advertisements attacking Apple in the phone product category. One example of these attacks is the “Ingenious” -campaign (Evelyn, 2019). It is a video advertisement or rather series of video advertisements, in which Samsung mainly shows its competitor’s product, Apple iPhone X. According to Evelyn (2019), Samsung shows iPhone X in a very disappointing light and highlights its

weaknesses throughout the advertisement. This advertisement will be analyzed further later on in the data collection and analysis chapters along with other case examples. It is a great example of an aggressive attack advertisement which almost solely features the rival's product and focuses on its weaknesses.

Rivalry can create and further highlight distinctiveness for brands and consumers (Berendt et al., 2018). Attacking other brands weaknesses as Samsung does to Apple in the 'Ingenious' -campaign can highlight the differences in which they themselves shine and the competitor is shown in a bad light. Showing these differences of the products in a very clear manner can help a consumer that might not be too familiar with the field previously, position the brands more effectively (Berendt et al., 2018). In some instances, even negative publicity may end up being positive for the company. According to J. Berger et al. (2010), if a product is fairly unknown the overall publicity may lead to overall positive outcome even if the initial publicity intent was negative. In the study these positive effects were seen in both sales and likelihood of purchase. Berendt et al. (2018) also claim that underdog companies and new companies are usually the main beneficiaries of promoting rivalry even though this is not always the case. The positioning of the attacking brand and the attacked brand is an interesting aspect that should be noted when analyzing research on attack advertisements as it can for example, shed some light on the motivations the attacking brand has.

Polarizing brands are brands that face customer attitudes ranging widely from hate to love (Osuna Ramírez, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2019). These brands can use conflicting actions to their advantage by strengthening the loyal ties with their brand fans by catering especially to their needs and expectations. When managing these polarizing views succeeds, it can lead to business improvements as even some anti-brand participants may be happy to see changes that make the company's product better (Wong, Haddoud, Kwok, & He, 2018). Therefore, opposing customers should not solely be seen as "haters", as the views consumers have can change drastically, especially if they are actually expecting the company to make some transformations in things that are personally important for the customers, such as values. Polarizing actions can lead to multiple outcomes in consumer reaction and in the research one goal is to understand, which ways of approaching polarizing communication leads to positive consumer reactions. Is aggressive humorous

polarizing marketing more positively perceived than seriously communicated attack advertisement, or is there no difference?

Nowadays video or photo advertisements are not the only way for a company to communicate. It is possible to build character and persona for a brand. With social media, brands can be seen almost as living human beings online (Ramadan, 2019). People can interact, communicate and even build relationships with brands. Some researchers believe that this brings never seen before possibilities to improve a company's brand and customer relationships (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). Naturally there are also more risks and challenges as brands have to navigate new constantly evolving platforms to stay relevant. Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and even TikTok are all platforms that companies have to be active on in order to be relevant. Social media is rapid to change with trends coming and going every day. Many companies are trying to adjust and act flexibly yet similarly in all communication channels in order to hold an easily recognizable pattern of behavior in various platforms. The companies' adjustment to social media and open communication to consumer side is discussed in further detail in the chapter 2.2.

2.1.4. Does rivalry benefit the companies involved in the long run? How about aggressive attack advertisements?

There are no simple answers to whether the effects of rivalry marketing and aggressive attack advertisements in business scenarios are entirely positive or negative. Some research articles claim the effects to be positive in most scenarios while other articles completely suggest staying out of public conflicts. As is pointed out in the previous chapters, recent literature suggests that rivalry in general has more positive outcomes than negative ones. However, it is also a common understanding in literature that public confrontations are something to keep out of (Berendt et al., 2018). Recently there have been many articles claiming that there are positive outcomes in involving a company in heated rivalries.

According to Berendt et al. (2018), rivalry can highlight distinctiveness. Kilduff et al. (2010) and Kilduff (2014) suggests that rivalry creates heightened motivation and people tend to perform better in competitive scenarios. There are also benefits to consumers as

rivalry tends to lead to innovation as successful product innovation directly impacts rivals financial value negatively (Fosfuri & Giarratana, 2009). Overall, the literature currently seems to suggest that rivalry as a whole is something companies should look involving themselves into. Increased relevancy, better performance and highlighted distinctiveness are some of the key benefits enjoyed by the rivalry companies. Ilhan et al. (2018) claim that failing to engage in rivalries may lead to other brands swooping in to enjoy the benefits of the rivalry position.

Being involved in a rivalry in general is something that the current literature mainly suggests. Being specifically involved in heated, attacking and aggressive rivalries, however, is not as agreed on. Many authors have shown concerns about it. Being a relevant and an engaging rival without causing negative public conflicts can be a tight rope to balance a company's reputation on. According to Berendt et al. (2018), promoting rivalry is not a tool that is only reserved for "evil marketers" but rather it can create positive outcomes for everyone included. This idea is combatted by Ramadan (2019) who claims that starting provocations carries more risks than rewards. J. Berger et al. (2010) show effects to support both sides as they agree that there can be positive effects from negative publicity even though these effects are usually heightened if the product is not well-known. In the rivalry cases that are looked into in this paper, focus is given to larger companies where no product can be put into the unknown product -category. Berendt et al. (2018) specifically recommends getting into rivalries if the company is considered an underdog in the field. It seems to be a somewhat agreed part of aggressive rivalry research that if the company is in a position where it is either facing competition as an underdog or otherwise unknown it should take the risks of attack advertising as it has more to win than lose. It is realistic to assume that the nature of the rivalry marketing is important in the way it is perceived. In this paper the consumer reactions are looked into in more detail to understand deeper what aspects lead to negative or positive customer reactions when aggressive marketing is done.

According to this paper's literature research, it can be concluded that brands involved in rivalries gain multiple benefits including heightened motivation, increase in relevancy and distinctiveness compared to other competitors in the field. Identifiable by-products of these benefits include better performance and faster innovations. When specifically focusing our research attention on aggressive rival marketing however, we can reach the conclusion that

there is still a lot of room for further research. There is a research gap currently on both the actual effects the company faces when involved in aggressive rivalry and the kinds of consumer reactions that should be expected to different aggressive marketing strategies, especially when considering large companies in the market. The nature of aggressive marketing and its role in the overall consumer reception is unclear. It is somewhat established in the current research that underdog brands and unknown products benefit from this type of marketing strategy, as generally all attention they gain is positive. A company in the position of for example, Samsung, Burger King or Pepsi faces a drastically different environment and cannot operate with the same attitude as a small company trying to break through the masses. Currently, it seems that promoting rivalry is key to being on top of the field as failing to engage in rivalries can lead to losing the rivalry benefits (Ilhan et al., 2018). The risk of opting into using unusual more aggressive marketing strategies can also be a positive for larger brands if managed correctly as seen done by Wendy's (Dyner, 2020).

To wrap up the literature research on the aggressive marketing effects for a company, the overall consensus in the current research seems to be that the risks of provocations are being viewed generally higher than the possible benefits. Therefore, according to the current literature companies should involve themselves in rivalries but avoid public confrontations and therefore, aggressive marketing strategies are not recommended for the top companies. The current literature does not however answer the question sufficiently and this recommendation does not fully reflect what some of the top companies have deemed successful as there are multiple examples of aggressive marketing strategies being implemented by the biggest brands in the world. It is very likely that the risks of aggressive marketing can be toned down with careful planning and understanding what resonates well with the customers. The results of this literature research will be compared to the data research done on consumer reactions in this paper and the phenomenon will be more thoroughly focused on in order to understand it better. It is also discussed what the companies likely expect to achieve with these strategies, especially focusing on the desired consumer reactions. In the next chapter the focus is shifted to the consumer brand communities and the overall consumer-side of the aggressive marketing phenomenon.

2.2. Consumers in brand rivalry markets

2.2.1. Consumer loyalty and response to rival brands

Most brands have fans who are actively supporting them but there are also fans who are ready to post on the social media pages of the brand's rivals (Ilhan et al., 2018). Online platforms are especially powerful for brand communities to show their power. Most active fan bases can make themselves heard despite the context. An example of this are hardcore fans of groups like One Direction and the Korean boy band BTS, as these two communities used to have heated rivalries on whose fanbase is more loyal (PINKVILLA, 2019). These kinds of rivalries boost the brand fans activity on social media platforms and therefore spike discussions around brands (Watanabe et al., 2019).

It is not only customers that engage in online discussions. Brands talk to each other and these brand to brand conversations on, for instance, Twitter, can lead to excitement as fans of the brands see them, engage and the posts go viral (Ramadan, 2019). Consumers see on-going rivalries as appealing and expect a long-time competition to continue (Converse & Reinhard, 2016). Social media gives everyone a chance to get involved. By supporting their favorite brands and hating on the rivals anyone can be a part of the brand rivalry legacy. Consumer is not a passive recipient of the company's products and messages but rather a part of the process and can be benefitted from. The customer can co-create value, competitive strategy and collaborate with the firm in coming up with new innovations (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009). The brands can initiate their own virtual brand communities as well, where consumers can share their experiences. When monitored and ran well, these become the preferred channel of communication between the customers and the brand due to the instantaneous nature of the online channel (Akroun & Nagy, 2018). A brand community can be supported by the brand by offering loyal customers the platform to discuss and express themselves on brand-related issues. It is, however, almost impossible to control and manage these communities as people can form groups on third-party websites and forums if the brand does not cooperate with the community and cater to its needs.

Consumer posts can have positive effects even if the intended actions are negative originally. An angry tweet bashing a company can actually lead to supporters giving their

opinions on the matter. Even the brand can try to make amends to address the complaints the consumer had. Deleting such posts from the brands page is not a recommended action (Ilhan et al., 2018). There are however, scenarios where consumers main goal is to ruin a brands reputation and sabotage its operations (Kähr, Nyffenegger, Krohmer, & Hoyer, 2016). This is usually due to extremely negative experiences with the brand which has caused the consumer to be outraged. This can lead to consumer wreaking havoc on the brand with relatively little effort according to Kähr et al. (2016). These extreme circumstances are unlikely to be risks when dealing with attack advertising as it can be assumed that most consumers do not take brand communications as personally as for example their health being endangered by wrong company procedures.

There are situations where people come together to unite against a brand and this can be called anti-brand community participation (Dessart et al., 2020). It should be noted that these anti-brand communities are not always motivated by making the company lose or become miserable, but rather there might be changes that the community participants expect to see within the company (Wong et al., 2018). Therefore, these communities do not necessarily end up being bad for the company as some changes driven by anti-brand communities can lead to the brand having a better product or operations after taking into account the opinions of the opposition. An anti-brand community participation is therefore not necessarily driven by passionate personal reasons or direct actions done by the brand.

Rivalry brands can enjoy the rivalry benefits in social media. Having negative tweets, posts or comments on the brand's social media does not end there. There are brand fans that are ready respond and defend their own favorite brands. Trust and commitments developed in a brand community leads to positive word-of-mouth (Akroun & Nagy, 2018). This type of back-and-forth commenting, attacking and defending is very different to the sabotaging attacks where consumers are determined to break the company down. It can even be naturally expected that a company's social media performance benefits from being a part of active conversation between brand fans and the opposition. J. Berger et al. (2010) support the idea of negative posts leading to positive results as they claim that negative attention on a product is still publicity. The companies can also improve their image by managing conflicting situations well, which in a good scenario can lead to anti-brand community participants feeling more positive about the brand and the brand fans being happy about improvements in the business (Wong et al., 2018).

Consumers might feel the need to express their identity as they want to share their experiences with brands. Sometimes there might be conflicts in their process to share experiences as they might fear imitation which would lead to reducing their uniqueness (Thomas & Saenger, 2017). If a consumer feels it is part of their identity to support Apple over Samsung, they might engage in posts on both companies' sites. Allowing open conversation on both brand sides is important in order to benefit from it, as removing posts early can stop the supporters and the opposition from conversing. It is important for brand managers to define what type of motives do the customers behind the posts have. There are some consumers that want to re-establish and better their relationship with the brand, whereas sometimes customers only want to destroy the brand. When addressing these drastically different consumer posts actions taken by the company should differ accordingly (Kähr et al., 2016).

The level of control is a key element brand manager has to balance with in order to achieve optimal results in their social media (Ilhan et al., 2018). How much negativity can be allowed without deleting a post? What kind of a response should be given to a hateful commenter? How open should the conversation be when a brand fan and rival brand fan start arguing? How much responsibility does the company have on the way consumers communicate under their social media posts? These are all very good questions and should be tied to the personality the company has throughout their platforms. If a company has a liberal, open and joking personality in its advertisements and social media it should probably allow more open conversation in its comment section than a brand that tends to be very conservative and strict in all of its marketing. As Ramadan (2019) suggests, a clear pattern of conversation throughout platforms creates a more understandable image to the customer side as well. This does not always seem to apply, however, when taking a look at the real-life scenarios and how brands act on different channels.

2.2.2. New age of consumer brand communities

Brand personalities

Brand's personality is built on its human-like characteristics (Luffarelli, Stamatogiannakis, & Yang, 2019). The five dimensions of brand personality are competence, sophistication, ruggedness, sincerity and excitement (Aaker, 1997). If a consumer perceives a company's brand personality as positive there are multiple advantages for the company to enjoy including increased loyalty (Luffarelli et al., 2019). Earning customers loyalty and interest to join a brand community is encouraged as customer's participation in a brand community enhances the long term customer – brand relationship (Lee & Kang, 2013). According to Lee & Kang (2013), brand personality attributes of sincerity and cuteness positively improve the attitude towards the brand and the relationship between the brand and the consumer. The brand should carefully examine its brand, goals and market to push its brand personality in the correct direction in order to enjoy the benefits that come with it. The way a brand chooses to approach its brand personality building is interesting for this research topic as attacking advertising and aggressive marketing generally push the brand personality more towards dimensions of ruggedness, excitement and strength and away from sincerity and sophistication. Understanding what the brand achieves or possibly loses with certain marketing campaigns is important when reviewing the consumer reactions and the overall perception. For example, while sincere brands should stick to milder humor in their communications, aggressive humor approach suits brands with exciting brand personality well and it leads to higher purchase intentions (Béal & Grégoire, 2021).

The current research suggests that a company should start building a personality in social media platforms that does not differ too much across platforms. If the pattern of action and communication type is not similar in multiple channels the consumers can end up feeling alienated (Ramadan, 2019). Therefore, when brands involve themselves in social media conversations, they should understand across platforms how they are perceived and how they are expected to behave. This does not however seem to be the case for all brands. Wendy's is an example of a brand that behaved in a completely different way on Twitter. In 2016 and 2017 Wendy's Twitter account became popular for aggressive and humorous tweets that spared no one (BetterMarketing, 2019). This has however changed as of late, and Wendy's has been shifting its tweets to include relatable and friendly content.

According to BetterMarketing's article (2019), this could be due to Wendy's already obtaining popularity which was probably the main pursuit of the aggressive tweets and taking the risks involved is no longer rational. Therefore, based on this real-life example, it could be assumed that aggressive marketing is a great tool for gaining popularity and reaching a following but after establishing a certain level of success it is no longer worth taking the risks as community reactions to tweets bordering the line of good and bad taste can change in a heartbeat. This assumption is supported by the research of Lee & Kang (2013), as strong and exciting brand personalities led to negative attributes such as wild and unreliable, whereas sincere and cute brands were seen as reliable and credible. Therefore, it could be argued that aggressive advertising is not likely a suitable long-lasting marketing approach but rather a way to spike interest and enhance the virality of current rivalries.

How are brand communities built?

Brand communities are important to companies and some are even willing to invest millions of dollars to build and manage brand communities (Hollebeek, Juric, & Tang, 2017). High engagement in a virtual brand community brings multiple benefits to the company. If a customer is very active in the virtual brand community and builds relationships with other community members they are likely to become more loyal towards the brand (Kaur, Paruthi, Islam, & Hollebeek, 2020). This leads to the community members engaging more actively in the brand community and helping to build it bigger and stronger. Obviously, a better community also ultimately will attract more participants and the fan base of the brand keeps on growing and improving.

According to Kaur et al. (2020), rewards systems are a great way to further encourage consumers and community members to engage more actively and build the loyalty even further. Brand loyalty is a key theme in the research paper. Loyal brand fans are likely to support the brand they love, even when faced with aggressive marketing efforts from the rivals. High engagement from brand community members leads to a brand being talked more positively about in online channels. Brand loyalty can also be utilized to receive more positive reception for aggressive marketing campaigns. Consumers that are on the side of the aggressive marketer respond more positively to humorous attacks against its rival and if something they support is under attack they tend to react negatively towards

even if the nature of attacks was humorous (Becker, 2014). Therefore, having loyal supporters can help in successful reception of aggressive marketing. An active community deciding to support a brand the community is built around, can also be a powerful attack if they decide to strike against the rival. According to Phillips (2020), in political attack advertising context, the effectiveness of the attack is better when it does not come as a direct attack from the one benefitting from the attack, which in the business context would be the company. Therefore, having a powerful brand community around the brand can help significantly in an online setting when rivals are compared in aggressive scenarios, as the opinions and comments of the consumers can be more effective than the company's own opinions and communications.

Brand and Consumer Co-Creation

Brand and consumer co-creation is an important aspect of managing a brand in today's world. Consumer co-creation does not only influence brand production but it also influences brand reputation and brand identity (Black & Veloutsou, 2017). Co-creation can be supported by recognizing the customer types and the key community members that can provide value. Correctly managing the community, building an environment of trust and a brand community to participate actively in, will lead to important participants engaging and creating value for the brand (Zhao, Chen, Zhou, & Ci, 2019). Many factors influence a person's willingness to contribute to the brand co-creation but making the community environment fun and interesting helps in growing and maintaining the community as a great place to partake.

Many brand communities use social media as the platform they communicate and engage in. There can be millions of people taking part and conversing on a daily basis online (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014). Understanding these communities and what is going on in Social media is important for all brands as brand communities have a lot of power. For the sake of this paper's research, it is important to understand that brand communities and co-creation with community members can be crucial for a brand. It can lead to places the brand managers were not intending or planning to go in. It can be a positive or a negative thing depending on the context and actions taken by the active community members. Having actively engaging virtual brand community is something to strive for and in order to achieve it, the brand community should be managed well. A large mass of

loyal brand fans can protect, co-create, lead and innovate in ways that the brand might never even consider without them. In attack advertising context, the most effective attacks might actually be those that are initiated by the members of brand communities rather than the brand itself.

2.2.3. How are consumers effected when faced with aggressive attack advertising and how do they react?

Consumer reaction to aggressive advertising and the change they have in their perception towards companies involved in heated marketing scenarios is the key interest and research focus of the paper. It is expected that brands that attack others are involved with the attacked company in some kind of a rivalry beforehand as otherwise the aggressive advertisement can feel out of character which would lead to increased risks of failure and bad reputation. It can also be assumed that depending on the aggressiveness of the attacks there will be two polarized views from different customer groups both for and against the company in question. Brand fans are likely to side with their favorite brand and being a strong part of the brand community, or an anti-brand community leads to feelings of belonging (Dessart et al., 2020). According to Dessart et al. (2020), brand communities can benefit brands greatly and anti-brand communities can harm brands particularly in an online setting. The participants of anti-brand communities could be seen as groups of individuals attacking a brand which can lead to the attacks being seen as more viable than an attack carried out by a rival brand itself. This effect can be seen in political setting as candidate attacks tend to be more ineffective than outside sourced attacks (Phillips, 2020).

Various ways to attack advertise and their effects on consumers

Attack advertisements can be done in various different ways. Direct attack advertisements that are not aggressive in nature are found in today's marketing as can be seen through examples shown later on in Graph 1. For example, Pepsi Max has run multiple adverts claiming that they are better tasting than their well-known competitor in the market. This advert is a direct attack even though the actual competitor is not mentioned. It is still very easy to interpret who Pepsi is targeting as the branding of the company is still hinted at through showing an unbranded red can as the opposition (Facebook, 2020). The advert is

obviously claiming that Pepsi Max tastes better than Coca-Cola. This campaign is unlikely to cause resentment or extreme negative responses as the aggressiveness of the advertisement is restrained. Nothing concrete regarding a company's operations or actions is being attacked, rather they are arguing a matter of taste where there are no right or wrong answers. The rivalry also has history which causes the consumers to already have a certain opinion and knowledge about the situation. It is also cleverly tied into a scenario that is already familiar to customers as they have most likely been in a situation where "Pepsi versus Coca-Cola" -argument has come up. Here both brand familiarity and rivalry history between brands are evident tools used in the marketing campaign. The case examples are discussed further in chapter 3.2.

Using brand familiarity as an advantage in advertising is good as consumers are likely to respond more positively towards it (Rhee & Jung, 2019). Therefore, it can be presumed that if consumers are faced with a marketing scenario, they are familiar with they are more likely to react better towards it. This conclusion can be done from the literature due to brand familiarity and rivalry history being factors that contribute towards a more positive reception towards advertisements.

Humorous advertising or messaging can be very aggressive but still subdue the response from the fans as the attack might be seen as harmless due to its funny nature. The context it is used in should be always researched as for example, the coupling of violence and humor can lead to drastically different results in different consumer groups (Swani, Weinberger, & Gulas, 2013). Overall, it is risky to use humor. When it is used successfully it leads to increased status in both new and existing relationships but when humor is used unsuccessfully it can harm status (Bitterly, T. B., Brooks, A. W., & Schweitzer, 2017). In recent marketing humor is one of the most utilized and effective techniques (Núñez-Barriopedro, Klusek, & Tobar-Pesántez, 2019). Humor is widely used in advertising and there are multiple advantages to using humor in marketing (Eisend, 2009). There are many examples of attack advertising cases in business contexts using humor. Using lighthearted humor is generally recommended as aggressive humor in brand to brand communications is accepted and viewed positively only when the responding brand uses the same aggressiveness (Thomas & Fowler, 2021). In real-life the aggressiveness of attack advertising and the humor used varies drastically. Examples of campaigns with differing levels of aggressiveness and use of humor are listed in Graph 1 in chapter 3.2.

Consumers attacking rivals and defending their favorite brands

The research on aggressive marketing practices and the effects it has on the consumers is not widely researched. This paper focuses on widening the understanding on what the consumer reactions are and how the two rival communities communicate when faced with attack advertising in business context. As the image of the brand and the amount of control that a company has is constantly moving more to the consumer side, so is the effects that their actions have. How will a brand community respond to a brand's marketing efforts especially when risky marketing techniques are used?

The brand community research would point out to consumers most likely defending the brand they initially like, when two rivals are pitted against each other. This is supported by the research of, for example, Dessart et al. (2020) and Becker (2014). In public online channels brand's humoristic responses on complaints shed some light on how the consumers might react to the attack advertising as well. Usually online observers respond more favorably when firms use humor that is not aggressive (Béal & Grégoire, 2021). Whether this correlates accordingly in attack advertising scenarios or not, will be researched further on in this paper's research as different types of responses on advertisements having harmless humoristic approaches are compared to the marketing campaigns that contain very aggressive humor and attacks.

Consumers that participate in anti-brand communities and brand hate are most likely to be involved in attacking brands by themselves. Brand communities are usually driven by pro-brand comments (Wong et al., 2018). Therefore, participants of brand communities will most likely side with the brand they support when faced with aggressive marketing scenarios and will defend the brand, but it is not likely that they would individually start attacking rivals. According to Wong et al. (2018), being a part of an online anti-brand community may need more inner triggers to join compared to pro-brand community. The distance from self and the brand can result in feelings of hatred (Rodrigues, Brandão, & Rodrigues, 2020). Therefore, it can be expected that the brand community members are actively supporting their favorite brands, whereas individual attacks are done by the anti-brand communities. This is important and relevant to this research as the most aggressive

consumer reactions are likely to be a cause of anti-brand community participation and pro-brand comments are likely to be originated by community participation.

How does the literature review answer the research question?

Overall, the literature concerning rivalry suggests that promoting rivalries and involving a brand in them is positive and desirable for a company as there are multiple positive effects to be benefited from (Ilhan et al., 2018). Aggressive marketing actions are not as recommended as lighthearted humor (Thomas & Fowler, 2021) and staying out of provocations seems to be the main consensus in the current research (Ramadan, 2019). This is not in line with how brands are operating currently in the real-life market and this is one reason why this paper focuses on and researches the theme.

The goal of this research is to answer the research question and to understand whether the consumer reaction is actually more positive than negative towards attack advertisements. There are many underlying concepts and themes that have been gone over in this literature review and will be further discussed in the discussion chapter 5. Next, the theoretical framework of the paper is introduced and explained.

2.3. Theoretical framework (Sentiment Analysis)

The theoretical framework is based on sentiment analysis. It is used to take “Big Data” sources that are impractical to process manually and helps in organizing and analyzing it (Dhaoui, Webster, & Tan, 2017). In sentiment analysis text is usually mined and the information is extracted in order to sort it into predefined categories (Rambocas & Pacheco, 2018). There are various different techniques that can be used in sentiment analysis which can mainly be categorized in machine-learning approach and dictionary-based approach (Alaei, Becken, & Stantic, 2019). In this paper dictionary-based approach is used in order to categorize and value comments. The data collection and analysis system used in the research will roughly follow the figure presented by Alaei et al. (2019) in their article which can be viewed below in Figure 1.

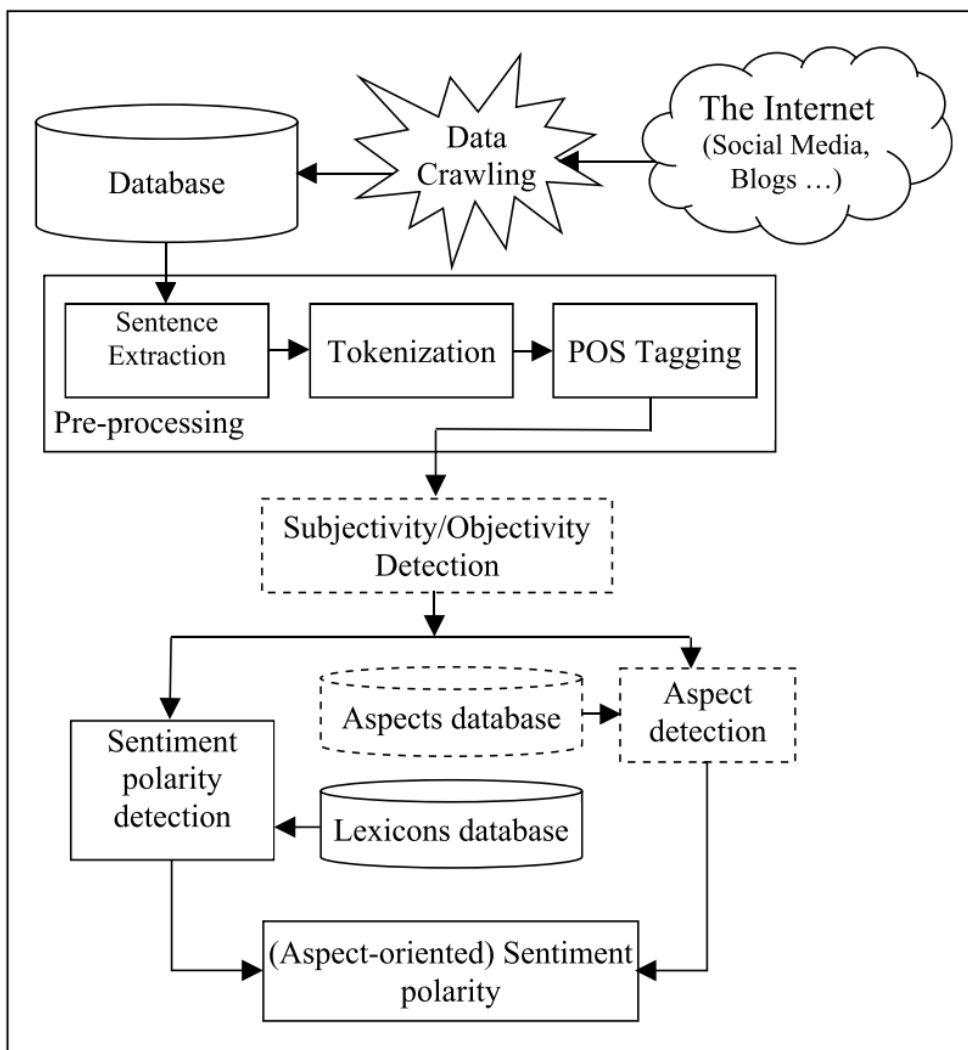


Figure 1. A general framework of the dictionary / rule-based sentiment analysis system as shown by Alaei et al. (2019)

The research process in this paper begins with choosing the attack advertising case examples which are further discussed in chapter 3.2. After this the information is extracted into analyzable form which in this paper is HTML-code. This will be the analyzable database. The pre-processing will be a creation of a coding system further explained in the data collection and processing chapter 3.4. The dictionary database and sentiment polarity detection will be a mix of words and the categories they are divided to by the sentiment dictionary. In this paper the sentiment dictionary will be according to the current standards meaning that the author will select a dictionary that has been used by other researchers in the field in order to fit the data in analyzable categories such as positive (trigger words e.g. “good”, “great”, “amazing”, “funny”, “awesome”) and negative (trigger words e.g. “bad”, “ugly”, “worst”). Overall, this data processing method could be categorized as a semiautomated dictionary or rule-based sentiment analysis. The results will be also commented on from a general standpoint and further calculations and analysis is performed by the author on the data received from the sentiment dictionary. This process is further explained in the data analysis section in the chapter 4.

3. Data and methods

3.1. Methodology of the study

The goal of the research in this paper is not only to answer the research question, but also further shed light on how aggressive marketing practices and techniques such as humor affect consumer's perceptions of the company and how they react when they are faced with attack advertising in business contexts. The aim is to not only push the theoretical research forward but also have practical implications that can guide marketers in their marketing strategy decisions. The method chosen for data collection, processing and analysis is built and decisions regarding the research are done accordingly.

The philosophic positioning of the research resembles mostly positivism as the objective of this paper is to produce facts and findings to implement in the real world. In positivism the basic idea is to find explanations and regularities in the studied environment (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011). Working with real-life case examples and observing the measurable data among it supports the ideas of positivism and leads the research closer to fulfilling the goal it has: Concrete practical implications and answering the research gaps present in current literature.

The research data consists of case campaign examples of which five were chosen for further data collection and processing. The processing of data is done according to the theoretical framework shown in chapter 2.3. The data research is quantitative, and the processing is done in a semiautomated manner with the author verifying and analyzing the results received from the code and calculations. Sentiment analysis methods used can have some issues in detecting for example, irony but the chosen dictionary for sentiment analysis is picked based on the current standards and practices applied in research globally. The selection of the sentiment dictionary was also verified with pre-testing to suit the research better than other popular alternatives. Reporting the findings, data analysis and comparison to the current literature's stance is done after data is processed and analyzed. In the following chapters, research methods are explained in detail to give the reader of this paper an in depth understanding on how the research was done.

3.2. Research Cases

The research is conducted on aggressive marketing cases that are attacking competitors in a direct way. The research question “How do attack advertisements affect customers, and how do they react to them when they are presented in a commercial business context?”, is answered by studying consumer reactions to chosen case campaigns. The cases chosen as part of the research had to be accessed online in order to collect accurate data, which also narrowed the research down to fairly recent marketing campaigns. The cases had to have notable amount of consumer reactions as well, to ensure there is enough data to be collected and analyzed. As the differing nature of aggressive marketing campaigns has not been previously sufficiently researched and it can be presumed to affect the consumers perception and reaction, it was chosen as a determinant in how the cases studied have been picked. Humor is a common aspect used a lot in advertisement and it has been one of the most used marketing techniques in recent years (Núñez-Barriopedro et al., 2019). Humor is great as an attention grabber but can turn the customer’s perception of the advertisement negative if it insults the viewer or the use of humor is excessive (Koneska, Teofilovska, & Dimitrieska, 2017). In aggressive marketing grabbing the attention of the viewer and walking on the border of good and bad taste is common. It is expected that when an attack advertisement is done that opinions will be divided. Therefore, humor was selected as one key determinant in selecting cases as it is one of the most utilized tools in marketing lately and also fits the aggressive marketing context well.

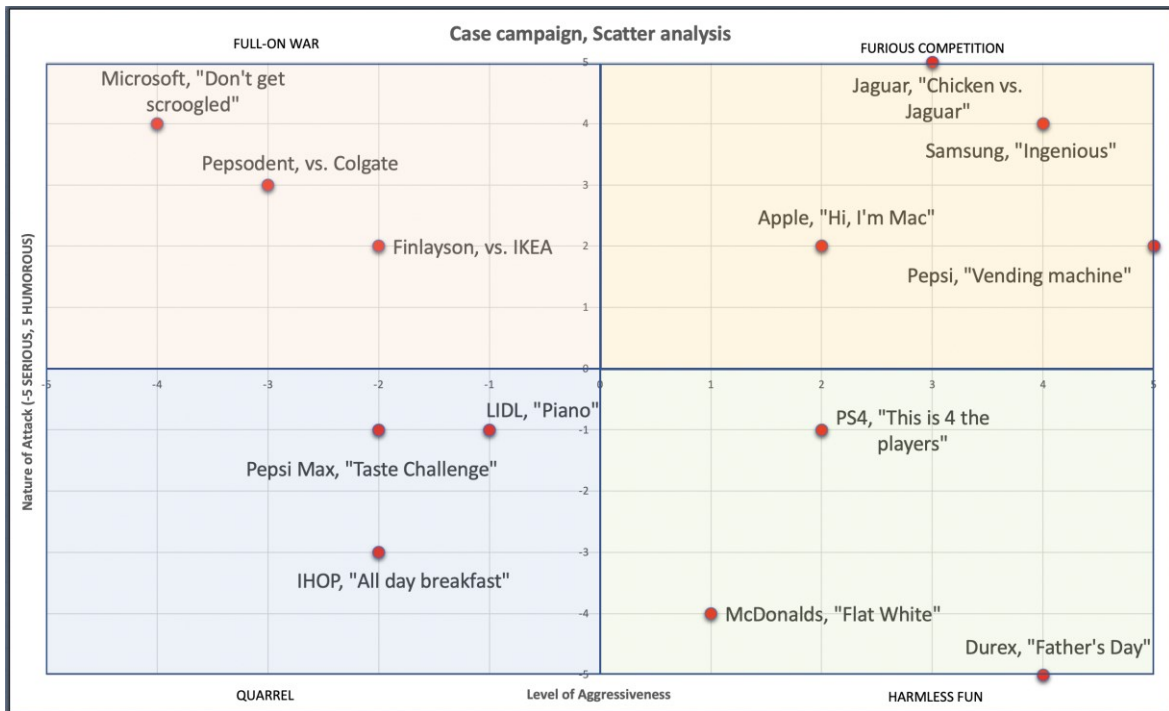
For the sake of this research, I divided campaigns into a graph involving two differing variables and 4 dimensions. The two variables are the level of aggressiveness in the marketing campaign and the nature of the advertising attack. The nature of the advertising attack that is focused on in this research is specifically the use of humor. These variables were chosen as they are factors that are utilized in many campaigns and can be fairly easily perceived and ranked. In order to differentiate the campaigns from each other they were scored on the two variables. The level of aggressiveness differs from mild to aggressive and the nature of the attack looked at specifically in this paper differs from serious to humorous. Humor and seriousness in particular were chosen because almost all of the brand versus brand attack advertisements entail some kind of a humorous aspect, as it is rarely reasonable to attack a competitor without hiding it behind humor or other softening element.

Scoring was done in the following manner. Nature of marketing is displayed on the X-axis with maximum seriousness being -5, neutral being 0 and maximum use of humor being at 5. To make the scoring less dependent on individual opinion I have set guidelines on how the scoring is done. This is also done in order to show and justify the case selections. If an advertisement is informational and educates the score differs from -5 to 0 and can therefore be seen as serious. If there is little to no humor in the advertisement the score differs between -5 to -2.5 and is therefore very serious in nature. If the advertisement relies on the viewers feelings and has a clear entertainment purpose rather than educative purpose it is scored from 0 to 5 and can be classified as humorous. If the driving factor is humor, making the viewer laugh or is surprising and ridiculing in its nature the advertisement is scored from 2.5 to 5 and is labeled as very humorous.

The level of aggressiveness on the campaign is displayed on the Y-axis with mildly aggressive being -5, aggressive being 0 and very aggressive being at 5. All of the cases examined are attack advertisements, therefore campaigns less aggressive than mild are not considered. If the advertisement does not directly attack any competitors but ridicules many brands in the field nevertheless the aggressiveness is scored from -5 to -2.5. If the attacked company can be identified fairly easily from the advertisement but is not directly named the aggressiveness is scored from -2.5 to 0. However, if the company directly names the competitor the aggressiveness is scored from 0 to 5. The top aggressiveness scores from 2.5 to 5 are given to advertisements that intentionally try to show the competitor in a very bad light and actual products or their features are commented negatively on.

Scoring campaigns based on these variables created four sectors which were named for the sake of illustration and easier understandability: FULL ON WAR (combination of serious and aggressive, $X < 0$, $Y > 0$), FURIOUS COMPETITION (combination of humorous and aggressive, $X > 0$, $Y > 0$), QUARREL (combination of serious and mild, $X < 0$, $Y < 0$) and finally, HARMLESS FUN (combination of humorous and mild, $X > 0$, $Y < 0$). The author selected the names according to the way the combination of the two variables usually presents itself as. This rough division of campaigns helps in creating a good understanding on what kinds of campaigns are present in the field of attack advertising. Real-life examples are listed in the graph below. For the sake of finding relevant data to analyze and in order to collect a diverse data set the cases selected for the data collection were chosen

according to the graph. This way, in the research of consumer responses and reactions to attack advertising, the sometimes drastically differing nature of campaigns can be accounted for and the results are understood on a more sophisticated level. It is especially interesting for this paper’s research whether the humorous nature affects the consumer reactions or not, as it can be a risk reducing factor in an otherwise dangerous area of operations.



Graph 1: Scatter analysis on the case campaigns (Scores listed in Appendix A)

The twelve (12) cases that were considered for the research are shown on the Graph 1. The four different sectors have also been colored to highlight which sector each case campaign belongs to. Initially it was planned that one case would be chosen from each category but eventually one sector entailed more significant campaigns than the others, basing on the amount of traction. Therefore, five cases were selected for further research with “FURIOUS COMPETITION” sector providing two cases and other sectors one.

All the cases and justifications on why each was selected or left out will be given next. The first chosen campaign starting from the “FULL-ON WAR” sector was Microsoft’s “Don’t get scroogled” advertisement. The advertisement is an attack against Google Chrome and in the advertisement Chrome’s own previous advertisement style is copied (YouTube, 2013) but instead of the benefits of the browser, all its security and privacy issues are listed

(Microsoft, 2013). The advertisement is no longer on Microsoft's own channel but even the re-uploaded video has almost 700.000 views and over 1.200 comments. Due to the extreme nature of the advertisement and the vast amount of attention it got, the case was further researched in this paper and was chosen as the case representing the "FULL-ON WAR" -sector. One campaign in the sector was Finlayson's front page attack on IKEA which was not chosen for further research due to the absence of direct page where comments could be collected (Ilta-Sanomat, 2019). The third case in the sector comes from Pepsodent (YouTube, 2013), which was not selected due to the author's language barrier and lack of knowledge of the history of the companies' rivalry in the Asian market.

The "FURIOUS COMPETITION" sector is aggressive rivalry marketing at its finest. Humorous attacks with aggressive communication that gets clicks and has potential to become a viral hit. The two cases chosen from this category were Samsung's "Ingenious" campaign and Jaguar's "Chicken vs. Jaguar". Samsung's case features its rival Apple's product and store service elements in a very clumsy light (YouTube, 2018). It was chosen as it is a highly aggressive attack advertisement and there are established brand fans and competitive history between the companies involved. The second chosen case was actually a response to Mercedes-Benz's own advertisement which was starred by a chicken in order to highlight the car's new feature named "Magic Body Control" to provide smoother driving experience (YouTube, 2013). Jaguar parodied the commercial and showed a chicken which a jaguar ate or mauled off camera accompanied with the text "Magic Body Control? We prefer cat-like reflexes." (YouTube, 2013). This was chosen as the advertisements are still featured on both companies' official pages and have both become viral hits with millions of views. The cases not chosen from this sector were notable in the category but too old for relevant research purposes as appropriate consumer reactions might not be found as nostalgia of the old advertisements could distort the results. Therefore, Apple's "I'm a Mac, I'm a PC" (YouTube, 2009) and Pepsi's "Vending Machine" (YouTube, 2017) have been left out from further research.

In the third sector "QUARREL" IHOP's "All day breakfast" aggressive tweets (Twitter, 2015) towards McDonald's expansion to all day breakfast offering was ruled out because the case should be processed as a part of the context of fast-food restaurant tweets. The author believes that to more thoroughly understand the nature of fast-food restaurant tweets, a separate research study should be done. LIDL's "Piano" campaign attacked the

department store John Lewis that had promoted an expensive piano (Twitter, 2018). The tweet mentioned John Lewis in its hashtag which usually would lead to aggressiveness scoring of $Y > 0$, but as the advert picture itself does not contain any indication of John Lewis, it was kept at the $Y = -1$ score for aggressiveness. The overall aggressiveness of the tweeted picture is quite mild and the rivalry history between the companies is non-existent. This Twitter advertisement did attract a lot of attention and positive top responses but was left out as the chosen case from the sector “QUARREL” was campaign with long tradition and history tied to the rivalry. Pepsi’s “Taste Challenge” campaigns have been long running and the case example chosen from multiple YouTube posts including the same campaign. Two re-uploads from a commercial ran in 1983 (YouTube, 2008 and 2015) and one recent campaign that ran with the same slogan from 2019 (YouTube, 2019). In the most recent advertisement Pepsi puts their sugar free Pepsi Max on the same line as red labeled cola drink with the notion that they won the nation’s biggest selling cola. This implies that their Pepsi Max would be chosen rather than the competitor’s product which can be assumed as Coca-Cola. A similar formula is shown in all commercials chosen. The two older commercials were chosen as well to add more consumer reactions to the data list even though the possibility of nostalgia affecting some reactions is present. This case was chosen for further research because it is a long running campaign that puts two rivals against each other in a very literal way

The fourth and final section “HARMLESS FUN” consists of campaigns that have humor as a driver of the advertisement and the aggressiveness is on a mild level. The best researchable representative of the found cases listed in the section was Sony PlayStation 4’s “This is 4 the players” campaign attacking Xbox which initially might not strike the viewer as funny but after understanding the competitive position which the advertisement was made in, the witty humor is at the forefront of the campaign (YouTube, 2013). Durex’s “Father’s Day” case is humor packed and attacks all its competitors but lacks reactions online (Facebook, 2015) and McDonald’s “Flat White” case lacks clear attack on any specific competitors and thus is not chosen for further studying (YouTube, 2018).

Therefore, the chosen five cases for further research were Microsoft’s “Don’t get scroogled”, Samsung’s “Ingenious”, Jaguar’s “Chicken vs. Jaguar”, Pepsi’s “Taste Challenge” and Sony PlayStation 4’s “This is 4 the players”. These advertisements all represent attack advertising characteristics well and have differing nature and level of

aggressiveness to them. In the next chapter the data collection process and coding of the data is explained.

3.3. Sentiment analysis dictionary

There are multiple different ways to execute sentiment analysis. Some predefined word lists and dictionaries can be used in order to, for example, divide words into positives and negatives. Multiple variations of these techniques have been used by different researchers including the use of dictionaries such as SentiStrength2 and LIWC (Rambocas & Pacheco, 2018). In this research the author tested some online comments on both popular sentiment analysis dictionaries which showed that in order to get reliable results some details had to be taken into account. For example, testing the LIWC on the YouTube comments brought non-existent results as comments were shorter than was expected by the system. At least with a quick testing round this seemed to be the root of the problem. Testing SentiStrength showed more reliable results on the positive – negative spectrum. It is also a system that has been used previously by other relevant researchers (Rambocas & Pacheco, 2018). The weakness in the system is that it produces general results differing from a simple positive score (1 to 5) to a negative score (-1 to -5). To further study the effects aggressive attack advertising has on consumers, it was apparent that modifying the system or adding author's own additional calculations on top of the system provides more fruitful results.

Comments were processed in the following way for the following reasons. Positive and negative in order to understand the overall consumer reaction, this was a classification that is commonly used by researchers in sentiment analysis research. There are also other statistics that can add to the final result making it more fruitful. Which brand is mentioned more in the comments, the “attacker” or the “victim” brand? How long is the comment? According to Rambocas and Pacheco (2018), the length of the message is associated with greater consumer engagement and emotion. The amount of likes of the top comments is also added into the mix as the likes can indicate that a comment resonates with people. The replies can indicate discrepancy among the commenters. Various calculations are done and presented in the chapter 4.

For this research SentiStrength is used as it has been utilized in other papers recently and is perceived as a better tool for the purpose of this research. This was concluded by studying current literature on sentiment analysis and doing a test round with a few comments.

3.4. Data collection process and the data coding process

In this research paper the data was collected from a social media platform making it a netnographic research. The comments were collected from YouTube and analyzed using sentiment analysis techniques. There were 3034 comments that were collected for this research. Five aggressive marketing case examples were chosen which were presented in detail in the chapter 3.2. The data and the comments on these posts were collected by downloading the data in HTML-files and processing the data through a Python code and SentiStrength 2.3 program. Further analysis was done by calculating and observing the results in order to understand what effects the case campaign had on the consumers, what reactions had they shown and what findings emerged from the data. After this more data analysis was done in SPSS using t-tests to test different groups and ANOVA to test the individual campaigns.

The data collection process and data processing

After finding the case examples and deciding which ones to choose for further research the author collected the data from each case by downloading the HTML-code of the website. This data does not however appear in a readable form that would allow SentiStrength program to process it. To get the data organized in a more logical way a Python code was used. This was the first part of the data processing. The author would like to give special thanks to Atso Galkin for helping with the data processing by creating the initial python code and helping the author modify and use the code for the research purposes. By running the HTML-files through the code, the code produced a .txt -file with the comments in a readable form, one comment per one line, and some statistics from the comments (likes, comment length, number of replies) was listed after each comment.

Using the sentiment analysis program: SentiStrength 2.3

The second part of the data processing was running it through the SentiStrength 2.3 software. To make the data function properly and to eliminate any errors some settings had to be changed within the software. The author used the “Analyse ALL Texts in File [each line separately]” -option and did not use the “Report Translation” -function under reporting options as it seemed to not be working with the data in question. The SentiStrength software produced a file containing the comments and data from each case with SentiStrength analysis containing a positive and negative score for each comment. From this data further research and calculations were done in Excel in order to analyze the results. Average positives, average negatives, comments per 1000 views, like/dislike -ratio and the distribution of the SentiStrength scores were some of the basic calculations that were done on the data.

Data testing and significance of the results

The third and final part of the data processing was using SPSS to further analyze the data and the significance of the results. T-tests were done on paired groups naturally formed from the data set: cases with Rivalry history versus no rivalry history, humorous versus serious advertisements, aggressive marketing approach versus mildly aggressive approach and high product investment versus low product investment required from the customer. T-tests are done to check for differences between the means of two groups. Some further analysis was done through conducting a one-way ANOVA test. This analysis was done to see if there are statistically significant differences between the means of independent groups, or case campaigns in this instance. After this Tukey’s HSD (Honest Significant Difference) which is an ANOVA post hoc test was utilized to see which case campaigns show significant differences. This was chosen instead of doing separate t-test with all campaign pairings as Tukey’s HSD is widely used and corrects for multiple comparisons problem, taking into account that there is a wider selection of data in the analysis than just the two cases compared. In the chapter 4.1 data analysis and the findings will be explained in more detail.

3.5. Ethics of the data collection

The ethics of the data collection methods used in this paper are not unambiguous as online research anonymity does have issues with some researchers suggesting that in a digital platform tracing of the data source is easy and therefore issues of anonymity and privacy are present (Sugiura, Wiles, & Pope, 2017). In this research though these issues of privacy are not as relevant as the main research objective concerns the overall comment section rather than the actual individuals commenting. The data and actions of individual commenters is not focused on and analyzed but rather the overall statistics and data drawn from the attack advertisement and the commenters as a group.

Netnography as a research method was chosen for this paper and it is widely used in various different fields and topics (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018). This also reassures the ethics of this paper's research as the practices are not differing from the usual methods that are used in research currently. There are also many arguments supporting the use of netnography as a method as it gives access to a unique set of information in a less expensive and faster way than many other research methods (Kozinets, 2002). YouTube commenting as research data is also public in nature as anyone online can see the comments a user has made and the YouTube Terms of Service are quite liberal overall (I. Berger, 2012). In conducting this research, the author has considered the current standard of ethical research practices and chosen a netnographic research method that is in line with the ethical expectations, current research practices and guidelines set by other researchers and service providers.

4. Findings

In the research of this paper comments were collected into a HTML-file, processed through a Python code in order to sort the data into a more readable form and finally ran through a sentiment analysis program called SentiStrength which ranks comments based on their positivity and negativity. The entire process is more specifically explained in the chapters 3.2. to 3.4. Through this process the final researchable data set was an Excel file with the comments from each case campaign scored according to the SentiStrength 2.3 program. The SentiStrength data was also processed through SPSS to do some significance testing and further data analysis. Next, in the paper we will go through the data analysis process.

The data was collected in order to answer the research question “How do attack advertisements affect customers, and how do they react to them when they are presented in a commercial business context?”. The researched cases were chosen in order to represent a wide variety of cases that fit in to the category of attack advertisements. This was done as the current literature had differing views of the effects attack advertising has on the customers. The seriousness of the attacks in the chosen marketing case campaigns varied heavily. With the varying nature of the selected campaigns, it is probable to reach a more specific understanding whether the nature of marketing has an impact on the customer reaction and if so, what the impact is like. The author hoped beforehand that in the findings some concrete recommendations could be reached in terms of what responses different types of attack advertisement campaigns cause in the audience and how these responses differ between campaigns.

In the first part of the data analysis some general data was gathered in Excel in order to have an overlook on the campaign cases and their success on a general level. Having numbers on display and calculating which campaigns seem to be overall most successful is necessary in order to further analyze which factors impact the results. This analysis included the amount of comments, views, likes, the positive and negative SentiStrength scores and averages of these scores. Averages were simply calculated through summing all positive scores and negative scores and dividing these with the number of comments researched. All of the data displayed and analyzed was collected in March 2021.

4.1. Excel and SentiStrength analysis

CASE CAMPAIGN	COMMENTS (TOTAL)	VIEWS (TOTAL, MARCH 2021)	COMMENTS PER 1000 VIEWS
Microsoft	1128	699000	1,613733906
Samsung	711	226000	3,146017699
Jaguar	902	4654000	0,193811775
Pepsi	111	292000	0,380136986
PS4	182	78000	2,333333333

CASE CAMPAIGN	POSITIVE (ALL)	NEGATIVE (ALL)	SUM (ALL)
Microsoft	1871	-1954	-83
Samsung	1090	-986	104
Jaguar	1428	-1302	126
Pepsi	167	-151	16
PS4	299	-272	27

CASE CAMPAIGN	AVERAGE SUM	POS AVERAGE	NEG AVERAGE
Microsoft	-0,07358156	1,658687943	-1,732269504
Samsung	0,146272855	1,533052039	-1,386779184
Jaguar	0,139689579	1,583148559	-1,44345898
Pepsi	0,144144144	1,504504505	-1,36036036
PS4	0,148351648	1,642857143	-1,494505495

CASE CAMPAIGN	DIMENSION*	LIKE-%
Microsoft	AGG. / SERIOUS	52 %
Samsung	AGG. / HUMOROUS	92 %
Jaguar	AGG. / HUMOROUS	89 %
Pepsi	MILD / SERIOUS	93 %
PS4	MILD / HUMOROUS	94 %

Table 1. General numbers from each campaign collected and calculated

*Dimensions categorized as discussed in chapter 3.2

First and foremost, it should be mentioned before starting further analysis that the number of views itself should not be compared between cases as some cases were still available on the brands original accounts and others were re-uploaded after the company had taken their own video down previously. This naturally skews the number of views shown on the table, as some campaigns might have been much more viral originally but then removed. The amount of replies and likes in comments could not be factored in either as some comment sections did not fully utilize these features while others did. This might be due to the settings of the uploader of the video or the platform having different features available at different times. Therefore, for example, comparing the number of comments per 1000 views and the average positivity of a comment is a much more fruitful and a deeper way to analyze the results than comparing views. In the Excel tables, the best performer in each category is shown with a green highlight while the worst performer in each category is shown with a yellow highlight.

To understand what the SentiStrength data means the reader should know that the SentiStrength 2.3 dictionary gives each comment a positive and a negative rating with the positive score ranking the comment from 1 to 5 and the negative score ranking the comment from -1 to -5. The most positive possible score, therefore, is 5 and the most negative score is -5. Positive and negative averages for comments have been calculated and are displayed in Table 1. Average sum is calculated by summing the positive and negative scores together. The author's choice to use SentiStrength specifically is explained in the chapter 3.3.

Finding 1 and 2: Rivalry history and higher investment products activate customers to comment more frequently

The number of views and comments are not analyzed by themselves, but the ratio is. The number of comments per 1000 views is taken into account as this can show how much each advertisement leads into commenting. The most comments per views is caused by the Samsung advertisement attacking Apple. Samsung managed to get 3,15 comments per 1000 views. This means that the advertisement is commented over 16 times more frequently than the worst performer in this category, Jaguar with 0,19 comments per 1000 views. The second most comments per 1000 views is on PS4's campaign attacking Xbox

with 2,33 comments per 1000 views, and the third most is on Microsoft attacking Google Chrome with 1,61 comments per 1000 views. The fourth most comments per 1000 views is Pepsi's advertisement attacking Coca-Cola, which factors in 0,38 comments per 1000 views. This is an interesting finding as brands with strong rivalry history and higher investment products seem to fare better than brands lacking previous competition.

Finding 3: Aggressive attack advertisement with a serious nature differs from the other researched campaign types in a negative way

Microsoft's campaign against Google stands out from the rest in the general data displayed in Table 1. The like and dislike ratio of 52% favoring likes, shows that the advertisement has not appealed to the viewers as well as the others. The second worst ratio is Jaguar's 89% so the difference is very apparent.

The average SentiStrength scores (third row of data: AVERAGE SUM, POS AVERAGE, NEG AVERAGE) display notable differences in the campaigns. Microsoft versus Google Chrome case campaign is the most polarizing with both positive and negative average scores being higher than in other cases. The positive average score for Microsoft was 1,659 and the average negative score was -1,732. It is the only case that averages negatively in its SentiStrength scores with the positive and negative average scores sum being -0,0736. The four other campaigns' positive and negative average sum was scored very close to each other differing between 0,140 and 0,148. Responsible for the most positive score was PS4's campaign and the second lowest beating only Microsoft was Jaguar's campaign. The significance of these results is researched and commented on later on under Finding 8.

SENTISTRENGHT 2.3 scores	Microsoft	Samsung	Jaguar
1	50 %	58 %	58 %
2	35 %	31 %	28 %
3	14 %	9 %	11 %
4	1 %	1 %	2 %
5	0 %	0 %	0 %
-1	56 %	74 %	71 %
-2	22 %	15 %	16 %
-3	15 %	8 %	9 %
-4	6 %	3 %	3 %
-5	1 %	0 %	0 %

SENTISTRENGHT 2.3 scores	Pepsi	PS4
1	61 %	53 %
2	28 %	31 %
3	10 %	13 %
4	1 %	2 %
5	0 %	0 %
-1	76 %	68 %
-2	16 %	17 %
-3	5 %	12 %
-4	4 %	3 %
-5	0 %	0 %

Table 2. Distribution of SentiStrength scores displayed in percentages for each case

Displayed in the Table 2 above is the distribution of the SentiStrength scores for each campaign. Highlighted with green is the most positive result and highlighted with yellow is the most negative result. Therefore, for the positive scores the highest percentage is highlighted with green. For negative scores the same logic is reversed, and highest percentage is highlighted with yellow. This is done in order to display that high percentages for negative scores are not a good thing while high percentages for positive scores is. Highlighting is used as a tool to pick up on the differences of the case percentages and not necessarily something that should be used to draw conclusions of without context. For example, Pepsi has the highest percentage for the negative score -1, which highlights it as yellow. However, this is not naturally a negative thing as the lowest negative score is -1 and it is actually positive that the comments have the lowest negative

score available. Therefore, the context should always be clear, and the data understood before jumping into conclusions.

As in the general data before, Microsoft’s case campaign shows drastically differing results compared to the other attacking advertisement cases. It has the lowest percentage of comments scored at both 1 and -1. This further indicates towards the polarizing nature of the advertisement. This also naturally leads to Microsoft’s case having higher percentages in the stronger positive scores of 2 and 3, while also having top percentage in all of the negative scores -2, -3, -4 and -5. Pepsi’s case campaign is the least polarizing and the results are opposite of Microsoft’s. The campaign has the highest SentiStrength scores in 1 and -1 which displays that the campaign did not really split opinions when compared to other campaigns.

Finding 4: Attacking advertisements receive more extremely negative comments than extremely positive

All case campaigns struggle in receiving strong positive scores of 4 or 5. High negatives are not common either, but they are present in the data. The only case campaign that got a positive score of 5 was Jaguar with 3 comments. The highest negative score -5 was received on comments from three different case campaigns: Microsoft’s, Jaguar’s and Samsung’s. The number of strong positives scores, meaning either a score of 4 or 5 was given for 45 comments out of 3034 comments. The number of strong negative scores, meaning either a score of -4 or -5 was given for 137 comments out of 3034 comments. The strong negative comments were more present in all case campaigns. Next, the average lengths of the comments in each campaign are discussed and displayed in Table 3.

CASE CAMPAIGN	AVERAGE WORDS IN A COMMENT	AVERAGE CHARACTERS IN A COMMENT	OWN BRAND MENTIONED MORE THAN COMPETITOR IN THE COMMENTS
Microsoft	23,45	128,54	NO
Samsung	13,70	73,09	YES
Jaguar	10,13	56,46	YES
Pepsi	14,95	80,21	YES
PS4	11,45	60,40	YES
Total average (Each campaign weighed at 20%)	14,74	79,74	

Table 3. Average lengths of the comments in words and characters

Finding 5. Serious advertisements have led to longer comments

Microsoft's and Pepsi's case campaigns are highest in average comment length in both words and characters. Both campaigns are serious in nature. Microsoft's average words per comment is 23,45 words and average characters 128,54 per comment. The shortest comments were left on average on Jaguar's campaign with 10,13 average words per comment and 56,46 average characters.

Finding 6. Microsoft's aggressive and serious campaign led to the brand being mentioned less times in the comments than the attacked brand's name

Microsoft's campaign was the only one that had its own brand name mentioned less times in the comment section than the brand that was attacked in the advertisement. 'Microsoft' was mentioned only 281 times, whereas 'Google' was mentioned 357 times. With other campaigns the results were the following: 'Samsung' was mentioned 134 times while 'Apple' was mentioned 120 times, 'Jaguar' was mentioned 214 times while 'Mercedes' was mentioned 209 times, 'Pepsi' was mentioned 42 times while 'Coca-Cola' and 'Coke' combined for 33 mentions and 'PS4' and 'Sony' combined for 51 mentions while 'Xbox' and 'Microsoft' combined for 21.

4.2. SPSS analysis: t-tests, ANOVA, and Tukey HSD (Honest Significant Difference)

In order to validate the previously listed results and to have statistically significant results, the author analyzed the SentiStrength scores in SPSS. First, the campaigns were grouped into 4 different groups and analyzed in order to see what effects differing characteristics have on the results. The groups were analyzed by doing t-tests. T-tests were done in order to see whether there are statistically significant results between the means of two groups. After this, one-way ANOVA test was done in order to see if the differences between the campaigns was significant and Tukey HSD (Honest Significant Difference) post hoc test

was applied to see which campaigns were responsible for the significant differences. The most notable results for the data processing in SPSS will be presented next.

Group analysis: Rivalry history vs. No Rivalry history, Aggressive vs. Mildly Aggressive, Humorous vs. Serious, High investment vs. Low investment

Next, some group analysis was done in order to see what results each group generates. For the group analysis t-tests are used in order to check for the statistical significance of the differences between the two groups means. The null hypothesis for all upcoming t-tests is $H_0 =$ no statistically significant differences exist between the means of the two groups. The significance level of at least $p < 0,05$ was used to reject the null hypothesis.

In all of the groupings it should be noted that as Microsoft's campaign differs from the other campaigns drastically, the grouping might be affected. This difference is displayed in detail in Table 9 and Finding 12. The effect this has is commented more on in the Discussion chapter and the limitations of the study at the end of the paper.

Groups were formed in the following way: Rivalry history consisted of Samsung, Pepsi and PS4 and no rivalry history consisted of Microsoft and Jaguar. Aggressive marketing group consisted of Microsoft, Samsung and Jaguar and mildly aggressive marketing group consisted of Pepsi and PS4. Humorous group consisted of Samsung, Jaguar and PS4 while serious group consisted of Microsoft and Pepsi. High investment group consisted of Samsung, Jaguar and PS4 and low investment group consisted of Microsoft and Pepsi. The rivalry group was divided based on the history of rivalry and whether the brands are top competitors of the brand they attacked. Samsung and Apple, Pepsi and Coca-Cola and PS4 and Xbox are involved in well-known rivalries whereas Microsoft and Google and Jaguar and Mercedes-Benz are not involved in a similar intense one-on-one rivalry. Aggressive versus mildly aggressive and humorous versus serious advertisements were divided to groups based on the logic used in chapter 3.2. where the campaigns were originally selected and divided depending on each campaign's level of aggressiveness and usage of humor. High investment products were chosen depending on the cost of the product marketed. For Samsung, Jaguar and PS4 all the products cost minimum hundreds of dollars while Microsoft's browser and Pepsi's beverage are either free or low cost.

Group 1: Rivalry history versus No Rivalry history

Finding 7. Being involved in a rivalry leads to less polarizing reactions and shorter comments when doing attack advertising

To start the testing a t-test was conducted in order to see if the two groups, brands with strong rivalry history (Samsung, Pepsi, PS4) and brands with no strong rivalry history (Microsoft, Jaguar) had statistically significant differences in their means of positive scores, negative scores and comment length. The results of the t-test are presented below in Table 4.

As seen in the t-test results below (Table 4a and 4b) there is a statistically significant difference in the means of the rivalry groups in all categories, when the significance level is at least $p < 0,05$. This means that the null hypothesis of the means between the groups being equal can be rejected. The comments are scored in a more polarized way when the company doing the attack advertisement was not historically in a rivalry with the attacked brand. The average positive score difference for a company grouped in the no rivalry history was +0,075. The average negative score difference was -0,201. The overall average score is therefore more negative for the no rivalry history -group. The comment length was typically 4,1 words and 24,9 characters longer for the no rivalry history -group.

Group Statistics					
	Rivalry	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Positive_Senti*	No rivalry history	2030	1.63	.771	.017
	Rivalry history	1004	1.55	.726	.023
Negative_Senti*	No rivalry history	2030	-1.60	.911	.020
	Rivalry history	1004	-1.40	.759	.024
Words	No rivalry history	2030	17.53	20.971	.465
	Rivalry history	1004	13.43	15.091	.476
Characters	No rivalry history	2030	96.51	114.808	2.548
	Rivalry history	1004	71.58	81.378	2.568

Table 4a. No rivalry history versus no rivalry history t-test

*Positive_Senti is the positive SentiStrength score and Negative_Senti is the negative SentiStrength score. This applies for all upcoming tables.

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Positive_Senti	Equal variances assumed	6.282	.012	2.581	3032	.010	.075	.029	.018	.133
	Equal variances not assumed			2.634	2109.493	.008	.075	.029	.019	.131
Negative_Senti	Equal variances assumed	78.383	.000	-6.019	3032	.000	-.201	.033	-.266	-.135
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.399	2351.500	.000	-.201	.031	-.262	-.139
Words	Equal variances assumed	69.788	.000	5.533	3032	.000	4.104	.742	2.650	5.559
	Equal variances not assumed			6.163	2642.313	.000	4.104	.666	2.798	5.410
Characters	Equal variances assumed	78.106	.000	6.158	3032	.000	24.932	4.049	16.993	32.870
	Equal variances not assumed			6.891	2670.432	.000	24.932	3.618	17.838	32.026

Table 4b. No rivalry history versus rivalry history t-test results

Group 2: Aggressive versus Mildly Aggressive

Finding 8: Aggressive attack advertisements lead into a more negative reaction and longer comments from the customers

Three advertisements (Microsoft, Samsung, Jaguar) were grouped as highly aggressive in nature as all these mentioned their competitors name and attacked them in the advertisement. Two of the advertisements (Pepsi, PS4) were grouped as mildly aggressive as the competitors were hinted towards but not mentioned and the attacks of the commercials were not as straightforward. These two groups (Aggressive, mildly aggressive) were researched and the difference between the means of the groups in

positive scores were non-significant with the significance level set at $p < 0,05$. This means that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected and the difference between the means of the two groups cannot be shown in a statistically significant way for the positive scores. For the negative scores however, the difference is statistically significant as $p < 0,05$. The aggressive campaigns score 0,1 more negatively on average than the mildly aggressive campaigns. The length of the comments was significantly different with the $p < 0,05$ significance level. The null hypothesis on this part can therefore be rejected and the difference between the mean length of the comment is different in a statistically significant way. Aggressive groups had an average difference of 3,8 more words and 22,5 more characters per comment. The results are detailed in the Table 5's t-test below.

Group Statistics					
	Aggressive	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Positive_Senti	Mild aggressiveness	293	1.59	.765	.045
	Aggressive	2741	1.60	.756	.014
Negative_Senti	Mild aggressiveness	293	-1.44	.786	.046
	Aggressive	2741	-1.55	.877	.017
Words	Mild aggressiveness	293	12.77	12.015	.702
	Aggressive	2741	16.54	19.910	.380
Characters	Mild aggressiveness	293	67.90	65.722	3.840
	Aggressive	2741	90.43	108.756	2.077

Table 5a. T-test between two groups: Aggressive and Mildly aggressive

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Positive_Senti	Equal variances assumed	.071	.790	-.232	3032	.817	-.011	.047	-.102	.080
	Equal variances not assumed			-.230	355.797	.818	-.011	.047	-.103	.082
Negative_Senti	Equal variances assumed	9.194	.002	1.948	3032	.052	.104	.053	-.001	.209
	Equal variances not assumed			2.127	374.123	.034	.104	.049	.008	.200
Words	Equal variances assumed	27.314	.000	-3.173	3032	.002	-3.762	1.186	-6.087	-1.437
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.712	484.127	.000	-3.762	.798	-5.331	-2.193
Characters	Equal variances assumed	28.026	.000	-3.479	3032	.001	-22.530	6.477	-35.230	-9.831
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.161	483.550	.000	-22.530	4.365	-31.108	-13.953

Table 5b. T-test between two groups: Aggressive and Mildly aggressive

Group 3: Humorous versus Serious

Finding 9: Humorous attack advertisements lead to less polarizing reactions and shorter comments from the customers

The third grouping divided humorous (Samsung, Jaguar, PS4) advertisements and serious (Microsoft, Pepsi) advertisements according to the logic of the chapter 3.2. Statistically significant differences are found in both means of positive and negative scores in the groups and in the length of the comments between the groups with the significance level of at least $p < 0,05$. The null hypothesis can be rejected and the differences between the means of the groups are statistically significant. In the humorous group the average positive score of the comment was 0,076 less than the serious group's score. For the

negative score humorous group's average was 0,273 less negative than serious group's score. The comments were on average 11,0 words and 60,8 characters shorter for the humorous group's campaigns than on the serious group's campaigns. Overall, the reaction for humorous group's campaigns was therefore less polarizing.

Group Statistics					
	Humor	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Positive_Senti	Serious	1239	1.64	.749	.021
	Humorous	1795	1.57	.761	.018
Negative_Senti	Serious	1239	-1.70	.962	.027
	Humorous	1795	-1.43	.778	.018
Words	Serious	1239	22.69	22.850	.649
	Humorous	1795	11.68	14.872	.351
Characters	Serious	1239	124.21	124.723	3.543
	Humorous	1795	63.45	81.237	1.917

Table 6a. T-test between two groups: Humorous and Serious

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Positive_Senti	Equal variances assumed	.046	.829	2.704	3032	.007	.076	.028	.021	.130
	Equal variances not assumed			2.712	2690.653	.007	.076	.028	.021	.130
Negative_Senti	Equal variances assumed	113.306	.000	-8.604	3032	.000	-.273	.032	-.335	-.211
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.280	2286.639	.000	-.273	.033	-.337	-.208
Words	Equal variances assumed	243.978	.000	16.070	3032	.000	11.009	.685	9.666	12.353
	Equal variances not assumed			14.918	1952.609	.000	11.009	.738	9.562	12.457
Characters	Equal variances assumed	248.071	.000	16.244	3032	.000	60.763	3.741	53.429	68.097
	Equal variances not assumed			15.082	1953.602	.000	60.763	4.029	52.862	68.664

Table 6b. T-test between two groups: Humorous and Serious

Group 4: High product investment versus Low product investment

Finding 10: Attack advertisements featuring high investment products lead to less polarizing reactions and shorter comments from the customers

Group Statistics					
	Product_investment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Positive_Senti	Low Investment	1239	1.64	.749	.021
	High Investment	1795	1.57	.761	.018
Negative_Senti	Low Investment	1239	-1.70	.962	.027
	High Investment	1795	-1.43	.778	.018
Words	Low Investment	1239	22.69	22.850	.649
	High Investment	1795	11.68	14.872	.351
Characters	Low Investment	1239	124.21	124.723	3.543
	High Investment	1795	63.45	81.237	1.917

Table 7a. T-test between two groups: Low investment and High investment

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Positive_Senti	Equal variances assumed	.046	.829	2.704	3032	.007	.076	.028	.021	.130
	Equal variances not assumed			2.712	2690.653	.007	.076	.028	.021	.130
Negative_Senti	Equal variances assumed	113.306	.000	-8.604	3032	.000	-.273	.032	-.335	-.211
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.280	2286.639	.000	-.273	.033	-.337	-.208
Words	Equal variances assumed	243.978	.000	16.070	3032	.000	11.009	.685	9.666	12.353
	Equal variances not assumed			14.918	1952.609	.000	11.009	.738	9.562	12.457
Characters	Equal variances assumed	248.071	.000	16.244	3032	.000	60.763	3.741	53.429	68.097
	Equal variances not assumed			15.082	1953.602	.000	60.763	4.029	52.862	68.664

Table 7b. T-test between two groups: Low investment and High investment

The fourth grouping divides the marketed products into high investment (Samsung, Jaguar, PS4) -group and low investment -group (Microsoft, Pepsi). The grouped campaigns are the same as in group 3 and therefore the results of the test are equal. The differences between the means of the groups are statistically significant in all the four categories with the significance level $p < 0,05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected and the mean between the groups is different in a statistically significant way. Low investment product group's campaigns comments scored 0,076 more on the positive score and -0,273 more negatively on the negative score. On average, the low investment product campaign comments were 11 words and 60,8 characters longer. Therefore, the low investment products led to more polarizing results according to the test.

Descriptives									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Positive_Senti	Microsoft	1128	1.66	.751	.022	1.61	1.70	1	4
	Samsung	711	1.53	.709	.027	1.48	1.59	1	4
	Jaguar	902	1.58	.793	.026	1.53	1.63	1	5
	Pepsi	111	1.50	.712	.068	1.37	1.64	1	4
	PS4	182	1.64	.793	.059	1.53	1.76	1	4
	Total	3034	1.60	.757	.014	1.57	1.63	1	5
Negative_Senti	Microsoft	1128	-1.73	.976	.029	-1.79	-1.68	-5	-1
	Samsung	711	-1.39	.747	.028	-1.44	-1.33	-5	-1
	Jaguar	902	-1.44	.794	.026	-1.50	-1.39	-5	-1
	Pepsi	111	-1.36	.736	.070	-1.50	-1.22	-4	-1
	PS4	182	-1.49	.813	.060	-1.61	-1.38	-4	-1
	Total	3034	-1.54	.869	.016	-1.57	-1.51	-5	-1

Table 8a. SPSS one-way ANOVA test report. Positive_Senti refers to the positive SentiStrength scores, Negative_Senti refers to the negative SentiStrength scores.

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Positive_Senti	Between Groups	8.674	4	2.169	3.798	.004
	Within Groups	1729.365	3029	.571		
	Total	1738.040	3033			
Negative_Senti	Between Groups	70.739	4	17.685	24.157	.000
	Within Groups	2217.478	3029	.732		
	Total	2288.217	3033			

Table 8b. One-way ANOVA done on the positive (Positive_Senti) and negative (Negative_Senti) scores of each case campaign

Finding 11: The total average score assessing the negativity versus positivity in the comments of attack advertisements is more positive than negative

Significance level of $p < 0,05$ is achieved clearly in both negative and positive scores so the null hypothesis of all the groups having equal means can be rejected. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between the group means. With positive scores the results are: Positive_Senti Total Mean = 1,60, $p < 0,01$. The negative scores' statistical significance is even stronger as the results show: Negative_Senti, Total Mean = -1,54, $p < 0.001$. These results show that the total average positive score (1,60) received from the SentiStrength 2.3 analysis is stronger than the total average negative score (-1,54) when all case campaigns are taken into consideration.

Next, Tukey's HSD (Honest Significant Difference) post hoc test is applied to the data set in order to locate where the differences between the case campaigns are. This way the positive and negative score means of all case campaigns are compared between each other and it is researched whether there are statistically significant differences between each pair. The results of the Tukey's HSD test are below in Table 9.

Multiple Comparisons

Tukey HSD

Dependent Variable	(I) Case Ad	(J) Case Ad	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Positive_Senti	Microsoft	Samsung	.126*	.036	.005	.03	.22
		Jaguar	.076	.034	.166	-.02	.17
		Pepsi	.154	.075	.242	-.05	.36
		PS4	.016	.060	.999	-.15	.18
	Samsung	Microsoft	-.126*	.036	.005	-.22	-.03
		Jaguar	-.050	.038	.677	-.15	.05
		Pepsi	.029	.077	.996	-.18	.24
		PS4	-.110	.063	.404	-.28	.06
	Jaguar	Microsoft	-.076	.034	.166	-.17	.02
		Samsung	.050	.038	.677	-.05	.15
		Pepsi	.079	.076	.839	-.13	.29
		PS4	-.060	.061	.868	-.23	.11
	Pepsi	Microsoft	-.154	.075	.242	-.36	.05
		Samsung	-.029	.077	.996	-.24	.18
		Jaguar	-.079	.076	.839	-.29	.13
		PS4	-.138	.091	.549	-.39	.11
	PS4	Microsoft	-.016	.060	.999	-.18	.15
		Samsung	.110	.063	.404	-.06	.28
		Jaguar	.060	.061	.868	-.11	.23
		Pepsi	.138	.091	.549	-.11	.39
Negative_Senti	Microsoft	Samsung	-.345*	.041	.000	-.46	-.23
		Jaguar	-.289*	.038	.000	-.39	-.18
		Pepsi	-.372*	.085	.000	-.60	-.14
		PS4	-.238*	.068	.005	-.42	-.05
	Samsung	Microsoft	.345*	.041	.000	.23	.46
		Jaguar	.057	.043	.678	-.06	.17
		Pepsi	-.026	.087	.998	-.26	.21
		PS4	.108	.071	.552	-.09	.30
	Jaguar	Microsoft	.289*	.038	.000	.18	.39
		Samsung	-.057	.043	.678	-.17	.06
		Pepsi	-.083	.086	.871	-.32	.15
		PS4	.051	.070	.949	-.14	.24
	Pepsi	Microsoft	.372*	.085	.000	.14	.60
		Samsung	.026	.087	.998	-.21	.26
		Jaguar	.083	.086	.871	-.15	.32
		PS4	.134	.103	.690	-.15	.42
	PS4	Microsoft	.238*	.068	.005	.05	.42
		Samsung	-.108	.071	.552	-.30	.09
		Jaguar	-.051	.070	.949	-.24	.14
		Pepsi	-.134	.103	.690	-.42	.15

Table 9. Tukey's HSD (Honest Significant Difference) test results. *. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Finding 12. One case campaign (Microsoft: Aggressive, Serious) shows significant differences in negative scores when compared to the other campaigns, other campaigns do not significantly differ

Microsoft's advertisement differs most as it has statistically significant difference from Samsung on the positive scores ($p < 0,01$) and from all the other case campaigns on the negative scores ($p < 0,01$, for all campaigns). All the other campaigns positive and negative mean scores are not different in a statistically significant way ($p > 0,05$).

Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected on the campaign pairs that meet the level of significance of at least $p < 0,05$ and therefore their means differ in a statistically significant way.

The mean difference in the positive score of Microsoft was +0,126 compared to Samsung's. This was the only significant difference found between the case campaigns' positive scores with the significance level set to the standard of $p < 0,05$. In the negative scores Microsoft's mean difference was -0,345 when compared to Samsung's, -0,289 when compared to Jaguar's, -0,372 when compared to Pepsi's and -0,238 when compared to PS4's. The other campaigns did not differ significantly from each other in their SentiStrength mean scores with the significance level set to the standard of $p < 0,05$. This means that in the group research each group that includes Microsoft's campaign is likely to have the group's result affected considerably by Microsoft's data. The effects of this are discussed more in the Discussion and Limitations of the research chapters.

Finding 13. Polarizing reaction to a campaign leads to an overall more negative than positive reaction according to the SentiStrength scoring, and longer comments

This finding can be seen especially from the previously presented grouping analysis that had statistically significant differences seen in Findings 7, 9 and 10. It could also be seen in the Finding 12 where Microsoft campaign was more polarizing and led to differences mainly seen in the stronger negative scores. The length of the comments was also consistently longer in a statistically significant way in the more polarizing groups.

5. Discussion

This paper's research broadens the current understanding of the reaction that attack advertisements have on the customers in a business context. As the current literature and research has lots of gaps and questions unanswered this paper cannot fully cover or explain the phenomenon and how different kinds of attack advertisements are affected. The paper's research shows that most attack advertisements are reacted to positively and this applies to the research by Ilhan et al. (2018) which agrees that involving a brand in a rivalry has many positive benefits to it. However, the current literatures overwhelming stance of recommending businesses to stay out of provocations (Ramadan, 2019) cannot be fully supported as only one of five cases that was researched had an overall more negative than positive reaction. According to this paper's research especially aggressive and serious attack advertisements lead to negative reactions from the customer side. This fits the current literature's claims as Thomas & Fowler (2021) argue that lighthearted humor mostly leads to better results than aggressive attacks. The research also showed that the polarizing advertisements led to an overall more negative result. Polarizing reactions were identified in advertisements that had no previous rivalry history, dealt with low investment products and had a serious nature to the advertisement.

The chapter is structured by going through the different types of attributes involved in attack advertisements and discussing how each of them affects the consumer reaction. The current literature's understanding on the effects each advertisement type should have is taken into account and compared to the results of this paper's research. The first attack advertisement attribute discussed is the rivalry history the advertised brand has with the attacked brand.

5.1. Rivalry history versus no rivalry history

The results of the research were in line with the current literature's stances of rivalries leading to benefits for the companies involved (Berendt et al., 2018). Strong brand communities being a positive factor as argued by Dessart et al. (2020) could also be a presumed factor to have an effect on the findings. The brands with strong rivalry history had on average more comments per 1000 views with Samsung's and PS4's campaigns

clearly standing out as shown in Finding 1. These brands can be assumed to have strong brand communities and the frequency of commenting seems to be affected by this.

Ilhan et al. (2018) and Dynel (2020) suggest that larger brands involved in rivalries can opt to making more aggressive advertisements if they are managed correctly. This idea is seconded by this paper's research as brands that are involved in rivalries that do attack advertising receive a less negative reaction than brands that are not involved in a strong rivalry. This is shown in Finding 7. According to the research of this paper, brands involved in strong rivalries had less polarized reactions from the consumers than brands that were not involved in rivalries but did an attack advertisement, nevertheless. This might be due to the attacks being more expected from brands that are already involved in rivalries and therefore, the customer's not being as shocked about it. The brand familiarity is in play and the customers tend to react more positively towards it (Rhee & Jung, 2019).

In the current literature, involving the brand in rivalries is seen as mostly beneficial. The author recommends a brand that is doing attack advertising to be involved in a rivalry with the attacked brand. This is recommended due to the more positive overall reaction received with brands involved in rivalries as is shown by the results of the research and the current literature.

5.2. Aggressive versus mildly aggressive attack advertisements

The understanding in current literature states that public provocations should generally be avoided (Berendt et al., 2018; Ramadan, 2019) which is not fully supported by the results of this paper's research. The overall reaction to attack advertisements was positive in this paper's research as shown in Finding 11. In Finding 8 however, it is shown that aggressive attack advertisement marketing leads to more negative reaction from the consumers. This means that while not all public provocations do necessarily need to be avoided, attack advertisements with aggressive nature against competitors are not reacted to as positively as milder attack advertisements. Phillips (2020) suggests leaving the attacking to others as it is more powerful when someone with no direct gain from the attack does it than a brand that is, for example, in a rivalry with the attacked party. This idea is in part seconded by this research as aggressive attack advertisements were not coming out as positive. Finding

ways to have outside sources, for example, brand fans deliver the more aggressive attacks could therefore be more beneficial to the company than being responsible for the aggressive attacks themselves.

The length of the comments was longer in aggressive attack advertisements which implies stronger engagement and emotional reaction from the consumer (Rambocas & Pacheco, 2018). This is quite natural as aggressive attack advertisements are likely to demand an aggressive reaction as well. The results of this paper's research combined with the current literatures stance, therefore leads the author to not recommend brands to choose aggressive approach to their attack advertisement if their goal is to receive a positive reaction from the customers.

5.3. Humorous versus serious

Humor is one of the most utilized marketing techniques (Núñez-Barriopedro et al., 2019), and not without reason, according to this paper's research. Finding 9 shows that humor is effective in making the customer reaction to even aggressive attack advertisements less negative. This result agrees with Eisend (2009) who argued there to be multiple benefits to using humor in marketing. The reactions to humorous campaigns were shorter than the reactions to serious campaigns as shown in both Findings 5 and 9.

Some literature claims that humor in advertising has risks of offending the customer (for example, Koneska et al., 2017 and Bitterly, T. B., Brooks, A. W., & Schweitzer, 2017), but this could not be confirmed in the findings of this research. Overall, according to the research findings and the stance of the current literature the use of humor generally makes an aggressive marketing attack result to less negativity and leads to less negative perceptions. Serious attack advertisements on the other hand tend to be more polarizing as shown in Finding 9 and induce the consumer to react with more emotion (Rambocas & Pacheco, 2018) as implied by the longer comments shown in Finding 5. Humor quite naturally affects the reaction to the aggressive advertisements in a taming way. If a brand attacks another brand in their marketing but uses humor while doing it, the attack might seem funny rather than serious. Attack advertisements that are serious in nature are likely to be taken much more severely and there is even a risk of offending viewers of the

campaign. This idea is supported by the Finding 9. As the serious more polarizing reaction favors negative scores more than positive, the author recommends using humor in attack advertisement campaigns in order to get a more positive consumer reaction.

5.4. High investment versus low investment products

The current literature shows that when a consumer is faced with uncertainty, the brand equity plays a crucial role in the consumers decision (J. Berger et al., 2010). If a consumer is faced with a decision of buying a big investment like a car, the uncertainty of the choice is bigger than when choosing a beverage to drink. This effect of high investment products playing a more crucial role on the consumer decision is apparent in the findings as the reaction to high investment product marketing tends to be less polarizing and less negative as shown in Finding 10. The reasoning for the less polarizing reaction could be due to the higher investments needing a more thorough decision-process from the customer side and leading into less spontaneous reactions from both sides. This can only be speculated though as this paper's research cannot confirm it. Nevertheless, high investment products fare better than low investment products in attack advertising as the reaction is less negative and less polarizing with higher cost products.

5.5. Polarizing campaigns

In this paper's research the attack advertisements that had polarizing reactions were more negative in total score than the campaigns with less polarizing reactions as shown in Finding 13. Polarizing brands usually have strong consumer reactions from hate to love (Osuna Ramírez et al., 2019). This is seen in Finding 12 which shows that the most polarizing campaign, Microsoft's campaign against Google, had the most negative and the most positive mean score. The mean differences were mainly only statistically significant for the negative scores, however. The attack advertisements are naturally campaigns that split opinions as two brands are set against each other, but having an extremely polarized reaction does not lead to a positive sum reaction according to the paper's research. Therefore, choosing to purposefully market in a polarizing way is not recommended.

The research of this paper cannot confirm or deny whether the polarizing nature of the campaigns has led to more visibility. It is possible that underdog brands might want to involve themselves in polarizing attack advertisements as they can benefit from any publicity as is claimed by Berendt et al. (2018). However, this research cannot comment on this further as underdog brands were not researched and reliable data on the effects of possible increased visibility of polarizing campaigns was not available in this paper's research. It is also stated in the current literature that polarizing brands can benefit from conflicts by creating stronger ties with their brand fans (Osuna Ramírez et al., 2019). Based on this paper's research it is unclear whether this effect is significant and if polarizing campaigns increase the loyalty of their customers.

5.6. Aggressive and serious campaign is the least attractive option

In the paper's research it is apparent that aggressive attack campaigns with serious nature are not recommended and the risks are bigger than the rewards. In Findings 3, 6 and 12 the aggressive and serious campaign is shown to average a significantly more negative reaction from the customers than any other campaigns.

Berendt et al. (2018) among others suggest that public conflicts should be generally avoided. J. Berger et al. (2010) argue that there are positive consequences from negative publicity. Neither of these claims can be fully supported by this paper's research as the studied attack advertisement campaigns that are not both aggressive and serious in nature received a more positive than negative overall reaction from the consumers as seen in Table 1 and Finding 11. All the attack advertising cases, however, received more extremely negative responses than they received extremely positive responses as shown in Finding 4. Therefore, the paper's research suggests that the aggressive and serious attack advertising campaigns are not recommended as the SentiStrength scored reaction of the customers was summed as negative. Other campaigns can be recommended, however, as the scores for customer reaction are summed as positive.

If a company decides to go forward with an aggressive and serious attack advertising campaign, they should understand that it is a combination that leads to a strong reaction. They enter a full-on war against the attacked brand and according to the research in this

paper the reaction is more negative than positive as is shown in Finding 12. It is quite natural that the customer reaction is negative in this instance as advertisements are not usually negative and attacking in nature. If a brand decides to go forward with this type of an attack advertisement the author would suggest the brand to evaluate the risks and benefits of entering such a conflict situation thoroughly and would generally not recommend it.

5.7. Answer to the research question

The research question in this thesis is “How do attack advertisements affect customers, and how do they react to them when they are presented in a commercial business context?” and it will be answered and discussed now based on the research and the literature review.

Aggressive rivalry marketing also known as attack advertising, usually leads to positive consumer reactions. However, the attack advertisement should not be both aggressive and serious as this leads to a more negative than positive reaction. Being involved in a strong rivalry with the attacked brand, using humor in the advertisement, not being highly aggressive and dealing with a high investment product are all positive things that are likely to positively affect the success of the attack advertisement campaign.

If a brand decides to proceed with an attack advertising campaign, they should be ready to face some extremely positive and negative reactions. Overall, judging solely on the customer reaction, attack advertising can generally be recommended as long as it is not both aggressive and serious in nature. Attack advertising is most positively affected by the following attributes in the following ways: When a brand is involved in a strong rivalry it leads to more active commenting, humor dilutes the negative reactions, high investment products lead to less polarizing reactions and when the aggressiveness of the attack is not strong it leads to less negativity in the reactions of the consumers.

6. Conclusions

In this chapter the research is first summarized. Then, the practical implications are given to marketers and businesses that are looking into assessing various marketing strategies or interested in trying attack advertising for their brand. After this the limitations of the study are discussed and finally the suggestions for future research opportunities are given.

6.1. Summary

Attack advertising is not usually something that would be recommended by academics (Berendt et al., 2018; Phillips, 2020; Ramadan, 2019). In the real world however, aggressive rivalry marketing is done by some of the largest companies that exist. The research in this paper was based on 5 attack advertisement campaigns that represented different styles used for aggressive marketing. There were 3034 comments collected in total which were processed through a Python code and the SentiStrength 2.3 sentiment analysis program. This data was then used for calculation in Excel, and t-tests and ANOVA testing were done in SPSS. The final result of the research claims that generally attack advertising is positively reacted to with the exception of highly aggressive and serious campaigns which are not recommended if the business wants to receive a positive reaction to its marketing. Positive attributes for a brand proceeding with an attack advertisement included strong rivalry history with the attacked brand, mildly aggressive rather than highly aggressive campaign approach, humor used as a marketing technique in the advertisement and high investment product being the marketed item or service. The research results would be more dependable and complete if there were more cases involved in the data. Finding such data, however, is quite difficult as many companies delete their aggressive marketing attacks after release.

6.2. Practical implications

The research of attack advertising has quite a lot of research gaps. Some light was shed on the nature and attributes of attack advertisements that should be used in order to receive a positive customer reaction. The author suggests that brands should not be afraid of using

attack advertising techniques in general. However, it is recommended to steer clear of the most aggressive and serious approaches. Humorous attacks aimed towards rivals possibly leading to the rivals answering back in the same tone can be fun, entertaining and an effective way to market. According to the current literature, it leads to a more positive perception of the company from the consumers and having back and forth attack advertisements between brands allow for more aggressive tones of marketing being viewed positively (Thomas & Fowler, 2021).

It is not recommended in this paper to use attack advertising if the marketer has not analyzed their company and the competing brand that they plan to attack thoroughly. The marketer should understand what attributes the brand itself has and what kind of attacks and humor is appropriate for a marketing campaign. The aggressiveness of attack advertisements between different fields can be drastically different and things that are viewed as distasteful, for example, can vary.

Involving the company in some rivalries is beneficial and recommended by the author. Rivalry benefits are agreed on in the current literature (Berendt et al., 2018; Ilhan et al., 2018) and this paper's research shows rivalry benefits in its findings as well. Having active brand communities should also be a key interest for a company as strong brand communities can be beneficial in various ways (Dessart et al., 2020; Phillips, 2020).

6.3. Limitations of the study

This study has some limitations that will be discussed in this chapter. First of all, the current research tools and dictionaries for sentiment analysis are not yet complete and cannot be trusted fully. SentiStrength 2.3 dictionary which was used in this research cannot detect sarcasm and might lead to false positive and negative results when the processed sentence contains words classified as positive or negative words regardless of the real intention behind the comment. The dictionary was however chosen due to the popularity of it and it showing the most accurate results with initial testing.

The second limitation of the study was that the number of researched cases was relatively small as there were only five campaigns researched. This was due to the small amount of

attack advertising cases still available online and the limited resources the author had available when doing the research. The researched cases were also differing in the amount of data available. The Pepsi's campaign case had to be combined from multiple different videos featuring the 'Taste test Challenge' -campaign as none of the videos had enough data available to include in the research alone by themselves. However, it is also notable that as the research subjects have been unaware of the research occurring, the reactions they have showed are more reliable than in a research scenario where they know they are being observed, which improves the used data set's quality.

A limitation that should also be brought to the reader's attention is the Microsoft's campaign being significantly differing compared to the other campaigns. Drawing definite conclusions on whether the significant difference was due to the effect the advertisement's serious and aggressive nature had or the campaign just being an outlier is not possible with the current data available. The author could not find a similar campaign with sufficient data available to research to explain and further investigate this limitation. The results Microsoft's differing campaign had were understandable and interesting nevertheless, and the author does suggest some future research along the theme of the advertisement. The future research suggestions are discussed next.

6.4. Suggestions for future research

Attack advertisements are not well covered in the current literature and therefore, there are multiple different research avenues that could be taken to study the phenomenon further. First suggestion the author has is focusing on aggressive and serious campaigns that are similar to the Microsoft's case campaign used in this paper's research. Further studying whether the combination of aggressiveness and serious tone of the attack advertisement are the most negative and polarizing attributes, could push the findings of this paper's research further.

The second suggestion the author has is to research how the brand community attacking rivals differs in the effects of consumer perception of the brand compared to the attack advertisement's effects. Phillips (2020) has suggested that the outside attackers that do not have their own benefits for the downfall of the attacked can be much more effective in

political contexts. The author would like to see whether this claim holds in business context as well as could be expected.

The third suggestion the author has, has to do with the financial benefits of attack advertising. The research in this paper only takes into account the customer reaction to the advertisements. A positive customer reaction does not necessarily account to a financially successful campaign. Further studying the financial viability of attack advertising overall could broaden the understanding of whether it is something that should be seen as a desired approach by companies.

The fourth and final suggestion the author has, is to study the underdog effects of attack advertising campaigns as it was something that was discussed and hinted towards in previous literature (Berendt et al., 2018; J. Berger et al., 2010). Researching whether underdogs are mainly the brands that start provocations could be fruitful. Studying when involving a brand forcefully in rivalries is recommended would also be intriguing. The polarizing marketing campaigns overall as a way to receive visibility for an underdog brand could be focused on as well.

Are aggressive and serious attack advertisements ever beneficial approaches for a brand's marketing campaign? How are community driven attacks different from brand driven attack advertisements? How do attack advertisements affect the company's financial figures and are underdogs more likely to involve themselves in and benefit from attack advertising? These are some of the questions that are left unanswered that would push the research on attack advertisements further.

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8. Appendices

Appendix A: Case scatter analysis

Campaign	Nature of Attack	Level of Aggressiveness
Pepsi, "Vending machine"	3	5
Pepsi Max, "Taste Challenge"	-2	-1
Jaguar, "Chicken vs. Jaguar"	5	2
Apple, "Hi, I'm Mac"	2	2
McDonalds, "Flat White"	1	-4
LIDL, "Piano"	-1	-1
Samsung, "Ingenious"	4	4
Pepsodent, vs. Colgate	-3	3
Finlayson, vs. IKEA	-2	2
Durex, "Father's Day"	4	-5
PS4, "This is 4 the players"	2	-1
IHOP, "All day breakfast"	-2	-3
Microsoft, "Don't get scroogled"	-4	4