



Lebanese American University Repository (LAUR)

Post-print version/Author Accepted Manuscript

Publication metadata

Title: Brand–brand relational moments

Author(s): Zahy B. Ramadan

Journal: Journal of Brand Management

DOI/Link: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-019-00163-9>

How to cite this post-print from LAUR:

Ramadan, Z. B. (2019). Brand–brand relational moments. Journal of Brand Management, DOI, 10.1057/s41262-019-00163-9, <http://hdl.handle.net/10725/11736>

© Year 2019

This Open Access post-print is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives (CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0)



This paper is posted at LAU Repository

For more information, please contact: archives@lau.edu.lb

Brand-Brand Relational Moments

Abstract

Marketing has evolved from being mainly transactional-based to relationship driven. As social media platforms facilitated a two-way communication channel between brands and consumers, they also made it possible for brands to have their own conversations. In fact, such brand-brand conversations are found on Twitter and are increasingly going viral as followers become intrigued and excited around such creative brand exchanges. Interestingly enough, when non-human brands engage in relational moments, they forge even further their brand personalities and become highly anthropomorphized by their followers. These relational moments present high risks and opportunities for companies and are still under-researched. Through a qualitative approach using an inductive thematic analysis to analyze a total of 17,136 comments from brand followers on Twitter, the research studies brand-brand conversations leading to the typology of such relational moments. The findings map 6 brand-brand relational moments alongside the different inherent strategies, objectives, and desired outcomes from such conversations. This research is among the first to establish the grounds for a brand-brand relationship alongside a typology for such relational moments. While most of the literature focus on relational building between brands and consumers, this research shows that brand-brand relationship moments could be an influencing factor on consumers' brand perceptions.

Keywords: Brand management; Brand-brand relationship; social media; marketing strategy; Twitter

Introduction

Relationship standards have for all intents and purposes substituted short-term trade ideas in both marketing thought (Webster 1992) and habit (Peppers and Rogers 1993), depositing what has been viewed as a change in perspective for the field all in all (Deighton 1996). Relationship marketing has been widely discussed in the extant literature, whether from a business-business (B2B) (e.g. Berry 1983; Crosby et al. 1990; Dwyer et al. 1987; Hunt 1983; Morgan and Hunt 1994; Ulaga and Eggert 2006; Wilson 1995), brand-consumer (B2C) (e.g. Duncan and Moriarty 1998; Fournier 1998; Fournier and Yao 1997; Grönroos 1997; Gummesson 1987; Harker and Egan 2006; Webster 1992), consumer-consumer (Pitta and Fowler 2005; Pons et al. 2006; Zhu and Zhang 2010), retailer-consumer (Keeling et al. 2013; Coutelle-Brillet et al. 2014; Farah et al. 2019), technology-consumer (Dai 2015; Huang et al. 2014; Farah and Ramadan 2017; Farah et al. 2018; Ramadan 2019), or social community platform-consumer (Bateman et al. 2011; Hayes et al. 2016; Ramadan et al. 2018; Abosag et al. 2019) perspective.

With social media's dominance as a communication channel, consumer-brand relationships in particular became highly sought after as consumers became able to interact with and connect with brands as if they were living persons in the different online brand

communities (Labrecque 2014). Brand communities form around brands that possess a strong position and that are known to have been competing for a long time (Muñiz and Hamer 2001). Advocates emerge from such communities mainly from the brand association and not specifically of the usage or ownership of the brand (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). Even more so, opposing community members define themselves by who they are not and not necessarily by who they actually are (Muñiz and Schau 2005). This increases a brand's referent power base which in turn, increases the consumer's consumption behavior.

For a relationship to genuinely exist, reliance between accomplices must be apparent, in the sense of, the accomplices must affect, characterize, and rethink the relationship (Hinde 1979). It is not a difficult task for consumers to consistently personify inanimate brand objects (Aaker 1997), in considering brands as though they were human characters (Plummer 1985), or in expecting the point of view of the brand so as to express their very own relationship views (Blackston 1993). At their center, connections are purposive: they include and structure meanings in a human's life (Hinde 1995). As brands become highly personified, every aspect of their conversational endeavors would become relevant and determinant on the consumer-brand relationship.

One brand behavioral aspect that is rapidly growing and that is yet to be fully researched is the brand-brand conversational encounter on social media. Such encounters are increasingly becoming viral as well as intriguing and exciting to consumers who are massively re-sharing them and commenting on them online. Examples of such conversational moments include Burger King asking Wendy's out for the prom night, Ikea providing its help and support to its neighboring Extra Stores which had a major in-store fire, and Hulu and Netflix engaging in virtual bullying over online streaming. These "non-human" conversational behaviors are mainly conducted on the popular micro-blogging social networking site, Twitter. While these relational moments, whether based on animosity or friendship, potentially present high risks and opportunities for companies, they are still under-researched. Accordingly, this study seeks to explore further the brand-brand relationship notion and to establish a typology of such relational moments.

Brand-Consumer Relationships

It is crucial to understand and use established consumer-brand bonds in a market where unpredictability, decreasing product differentiation, and increasing pressure on competition are taking over (Fournier and Yao 1997). Indeed, creating, maintaining, and enhancing relationships with consumers is considered to be highly beneficial for both customers and firms

(Berry 1983; Hunt 1983; Morgan and Hunt 1994). What differentiates relationships are the types of bonds that join participants together (Mrad 2018; Cui et al. 2018). These might be substantively grounded or emotionally based, extending in force from shallow effect to basic liking, cordial warmth, energetic love, and addictive fixation (Fehr and Russell 1991; Rasul 2016; Mrad and Cui 2017).

Brands have become important in helping to create a consumer identity that is closely related to the brand. Indeed, consumers are more likely to consider a brand that matches them so that they can express themselves fully and authentically (Tuškej et al. 2013; Mrad et al. 2018). Nonetheless, a distinction has to be highlighted between personal and social identification when it comes to the function of a brand. A personal identification is when consumers identify with a certain brand and develop a bond with it, while social identification is the brand's ability to be a communication instrument that allows consumers to join or stand out of groups of individuals (Del Rio et al. 2001). In the minds of consumers, brands are humanized and so they give a symbolic meaning as well as a social and cultural value (Loureiro 2013; Itani et al. 2019). Accordingly, a brand personality is based upon a collection of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral patterns that are special and unique to a specific brand over a consistent period of time, helping it to stand out in certain defining characteristics over any other brand (Aaker 1997).

Nonetheless, brand-consumer relationships are critiqued in that as brands are thought to be inanimate objects that cannot think or feel, they would hence lack a meaningful reciprocity with individual consumers (Bengtsson 2003). In fact, due to the nature of the one-to-many conversational pattern between brands and consumers, brands are expected to respond in a highly standardized manner, thus, they cannot be considered as meaningful active relationship partners (Bengtsson 2003). Unilateral feelings are another concern in brand-consumer relationships, whereby concepts such as love and commitment are seen to be mainly emanating from consumers toward brands in a one-directional way. Furthermore, as brands are inanimate objects, they are considered to be a reflection of the consumption moment rather than the end purpose by themselves (Belk 1988). These critiques have been however refuted in the literature as well as through the advance in online conversational technologies with the advent of Web 2.0 and its rapid development after the year 2004 (Valos et al. 2016; Onete et al. 2017).

Indeed, a brand's personality is further accentuated in online based brand-consumer conversations (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010). With the advent of Web 2.0 and social media, not only have brands taken advantage of it to interact with their existing customers and attract new

ones, but it shifted the communication flow from a centralized model to an active user participation (Mazurek 2009). Indeed, social media has changed the internet from a platform for providing information, to that of which provides influence (Labrecque 2014; Abu Khzam and Lamaa 2018). The buying behavior of consumers are shaped from the influence of communications done through social media (Ramadan and Farah 2017). Consumers are no longer passive recipients but rather have become content creators and active communicators (Onete et al. 2017). Also, it is believed that when consumers are connected on social media through social ties in a community, they buy more, increasing overall companies' sales especially in presence of sales people using social media based CRM (Saboo et al. 2016; Agnihotri et al. 2017; Itani et al. 2017). Web 2.0 can be considered as the people's web since consumer generated content are more easily shared rather than traditional marketing messages; this is because people tend to trust their peers more than they would a corporation. Most of what is said about companies on social platforms will probably not have been said by the brand itself which shows the power of consumers' reviews (Demailly 2008). Therefore, some brands have begun to use and encourage these consumer generated contents by collaborating with them (Chrisodoulides 2009).

Brand-consumer relationships are based on a complex web of components that include brand image, likeability, trust, and association, that are themselves affected by social influence factors such as interaction, similarity, strength of tie and eWOM on online platforms (Palmatier et al. 2006; Walker 2008; Valos et al. 2016; Ramadan 2018; Nieroda 2018). What makes such relationships more peculiar is the high anthropomorphization of brands through their behavioral endeavors on social media. One particular intriguing developing pattern in this area is the non-human brand-brand relation that is altering the marketing landscape.

Brand-Brand Relations

In the business world, competition is inevitable as well as important since it also serves as an effective tool to help businesses grow and improve. Competition drives companies to stand out and provide quality products and services that would appeal to customers (Aaker 2003). On the other hand, brand alliances such as co-branding, brand licenses and cross-marketing have also become an important part of business strategies (Desai and Keller 2002). Indeed, such collaborations can lead to brands broadening their consumer categories, reducing their costs, gaining exposure, and increasing their sales and profits (Tamble 2018). Brands have realized that by working with other brands, they can actually create more excitement towards existing segments or establish awareness over new ones (Escalas and Bettman 2003).

Through social media, brand managers are scoping out their competitors' activities to learn about their weaknesses and strengths as well as find out what it is that consumers are responding to (Renner 2017). Social media facilitates brands to interact and provide services to consumers whenever and wherever they may be, adding through this an extra layer to the competition between brands (Gurd 2018). Indeed, social media helps brands connect better, whether that is with consumers directly or with other brands, for the same purpose on gaining exposure. Conversations on social media help brands connect with consumers, as well as show off their personality and intertwine creativity (Romo et al. 2017). In fact, brands are encouraged to become part of existing conversations as well as to connect with consumers (Edgecomb 2017).

Not only are brand managers strategizing on how to connect with consumers using social media, but they are also increasingly connecting with one another as well. Whether it is friendly, playful or based on mockery, the aim is to gain recognition and attention from users of social platforms (Delo 2013). When it first became a new concept, many brand managers were hesitant and attempted to avoid venturing into such types of social media banter. Nonetheless, some brand managers have decided to take on the risk as today it has been received with mostly positive results from Twitter users (Parish 2013). Despite the shift in preference to social platforms like Snapchat and Instagram, Twitter has remained one of the most effective platforms for brand handlers to show off their wit and personalities, giving them the ability to gain popularity and respect (Frimpong 2017). Looking back, brand rivalry was always divided, and traditional competition prevented any sort of interactions with one another for the purpose of wanting to gain consumers to themselves (Berendt et al. 2018). Today, competition has taken a completely different turn where brands not only acknowledge one another through the acts of their brand strategists, but they engage in friendly banter in public settings (Ratcliff 2014). This is why brand managers for big brands have resorted to Twitter, which is the main social media platform that contains an environment most suitable for such conversations (Kagalwala 2017). Indeed, brands no longer compete based on the ability to pay for large campaigns as they can now use social media alongside an effectual marketing planning approach that has been deemed as an equalizer for marketers (Ramadan et al. 2018). When brand managers use the brand's social media accounts to share a given set of brand personality and humor, it takes away the negativity and mistrust that a lot of people feel about company posts on social media (Bernazzani 2018). In fact, one of the most important features of non-human brand-brand relationships is reciprocity. As non-human brands seem to engage in one-to-one dialogues in front of millions of followers, reciprocity and animated debates

ensuing from human-like personalities anthropomorphize even further these said inanimate objects.

Nevertheless, it is important that each situation is studied before any brand response could be done so as to avoid any negative reactions that may not be welcomed in certain given situations (Fisher 2018). In fact, some conversational forms, such as humor and ridicule, are giving rise to fierce oppositional rivalry (Ewing et al. 2013). In some cases, the brand identification is so strong amongst consumers that rivalry turns into a feeling of outrage (Converse and Reinhard 2016). While the heated communication between customers of competing brands was found to benefit brands by building interest in their products (Libai et al. 2009), consumers were also found to be entertained while further identifying themselves with one another through the inter-consumer brand rivalries (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001). Indeed, social transmission between consumers, or what is commonly known as a consumer-consumer relationship, is vastly influenced by emotions (Berger and Milkman 2012). Consumers were actually found that they would be more likely to share content when it evoked a heightened amusement or anger. This is mainly linked to consumers' high-arousal emotions and ensuing brand experience (Berger and Milkman 2012). In fact, consumers are usually interested in sharing entertaining, surprising and interesting content that turns to be viral (Berger 2011; Berger and Schwartz 2011). It is hence not surprising to see that companies are using their brand-brand conversations in order to generate viral content across social networks. Interestingly enough, the literature shows that negative emotions can increase social transmission among consumers (Berger and Milkman 2012), which some brands are translating into fierce and aggressive postings with other competing brands.

Methodology

The research approach of this study is qualitative whereby an inductive thematic analysis was used to identify and analyze themes in the data collected (Boyatzis 1998; Braun and Clarke 2006; Sayre 2001). The data was collected from Twitter which is one of the leading micro-blogging social networking sites with more than 320 million monthly active users (Statista 2018). The selection of Twitter is due to the wide usage of this platform by brands and their followers, as well as the immediacy of the distribution and proliferation of the tweeted message (Al Shehhi et al. 2019). Twitter users can follow any other user with a public profile, enabling them to seamlessly interact with those who regularly post on the social media site.

The study uses user generated content (UGC) extracted from Twitter relating to brand-brand conversations. The approach that was adopted in identifying these conversations came to be based on the following steps:

- **Step 1:** A search engine (Google) was first used to look for brand-brand posts that had gained enough momentum to be featured in relevant news sites (such as Adweek, AdAge, Econsultancy, and Mashable). For that purpose, the search criteria embedded keywords such as “brand-brand posts”, “brands talking to each other on Twitter” and “Twitter brand campaigns”. The search results listed back several brand-brand conversations with their direct link to the original post in Twitter.
- **Step 2:** These tweets were accordingly accessed within the Twitter platform and had their followers’ comments downloaded, analyzed, and categorized under their respective themes.
- **Step 3:** Other brand-brand tweets were then searched for within the downloaded followers’ comments, as many of them cross-tagged or had mentioned similar tweets by other brands. Accordingly, and following this snowballing effect, these additional brand-brand conversations were searched for within Twitter’s timeline, downloaded, analyzed, and added to the different thematic categories.

In total, 17,136 comments were downloaded into one database and analyzed. The analyzed comments were not confined to any particular region or country, but rather spanned across several geographies (analyzed tweets came from the U.S., Europe, Middle-East and Asia). The tweets’ dates ranged between the year 2012 and 2018.

Since the analysis was inductive thematic, the codes were inspired from the data collected, reflecting consumers’ opinions and reflections on the brand-brand relational moment. The key themes were identified from the conducted analysis and ensuing coding process (Braun and Clarke 2006). In order to ensure a high degree of reliability, two researchers coded separately the data into the different themes. These two iterations were then compared to ensure that the thematic coding reflected well the categories that the comments were put into. No inconsistencies were reported as the separate coding iterations resulted in the identification of the same key themes.

The themes were accordingly based on consumers’ comments relating to given brand-brand tweets. These comprised consumers’ perception of the brand-brand tweet. In other words, the themes categorized the type of the message sent between different brands as perceived by their followers. Once the different themes were finalized, the following additional

data sources were integrated into the database: “*who*” the brand was targeting (e.g. a competitor, indirect competitors, partner, etc...), “*why*” the brand engaged in such conversation (e.g. to build awareness, to build hype, to retain customers, to reflect on the brand’s personality, etc...), “*when*” the brand tweeted (e.g. was it part of a planned campaign, was it in response to an initial tweet by the other brand, was it proactive based on a given event, etc...). The “*what*” data source became accordingly the type of message the brand sent, which is the initial data that was first coded from consumers’ perceptions.

The overall integration of these different data sources resulted in 6 typologies that defined the different brand-brand relational moments.

Discussion of the Findings

The integration of the different data sets provided a thorough understanding on the typology of brand-brand relational moments. The first relational moment (RM-1), *friend supporting*, happens within a cordial context whereby the targeted brand is either a non-competing, partner or allied brand, and in some cases a competitor. The main reason(s) for this relational moment to occur is that when a sudden or unplanned event had happened that would have affected the other brand. The tone of the conversation becomes supportive and friendly, promoting the brand’s own values and garnering trust and affection from its own followers and customers. An example on this particular RM is when Extra Stores, a leading electronics store in Saudi Arabia, had a major fire in its Jeddah outlet located next to Ikea. Ikea Jeddah then tweeted a supportive message for its neighbor asking them if they would need anything they could support them with. Extra Stores replied back in kind, and followers of both brands were jubilant in their comments on that particular RM where one brand is reaching out to help another.

Another example was when Leicester City football club’s owner tragically died from a helicopter’s crash, several English Premier league teams such as Manchester United, Liverpool and Manchester City tweeted a message of support to the club. Followers of different football clubs were highly supportive of those comments, seeing rivalries disappear when the football world unites under such circumstances.

Rival confrontation and bullying (RM-2) is the complete opposite of RM-1, whereby the context of the conversation occurs in a highly competitive and aggressive situation. The brand looks for an opportunity to use against its competitor with the aim that it goes viral. These moments are usually created out of response to a competitor’s post or campaign, or even in response to a follower’s tweet while in some cases they are pre-planned as part of a campaign.

This particular RM seems to be the most used pattern on Twitter as confrontations and bullying usually get the highest number of re-tweets, followers' engagement, and interest from the news, making the story highly viral. One example is when in 2012 Old Spice tweeted "*Why is it that 'fire sauce' isn't made with any real fire? Seems like false advertising.*" Taco Bell responded with "*@OldSpice Is your deodorant made with really old spices?*". Old Spice ended it with "*@TacoBell Depends. Do you consider volcanos, tanks and freedom to be spices?*". Followers enjoyed the "fight" between the two brands.

Another example in 2017 is when Hulu tweeted "*Streaming only on Hulu. Not on Netflix. Try your free trial today!*". "*Welcome to your tape*" is what Netflix later replied in a reference to its hit series *13 Reasons Why*, hinting to a suicidal thought linked to this message in that series. This encounter generated around 3,200 comments.

Similarly, in 2017, we had T-Mobile airing a Super Bowl spot spoofing the movie "50 Shades of Grey". Verizon responded with a tweet "*Yes @Tmobile, we're into BDSM. Bigger coverage map, Devastating Speed, and Massive capacity.*" This tweet generated more than 7,000 comments and retweets and was considered funny and aggressive by many. Nonetheless, it also got a lot of backlash since many considered the whole encounter as inappropriate.

Another example was back in 2013 when a fan tweeted "*Can tell I like chocolate a bit too much when I'm following @oreo and @kitkat haha*". KitKat tweeted Oreo with "*The fight for @Laura_ellenxx's affections is on. @oreo your move #haveabreak*", challenging Oreo to a game of tic-tac-toe. Oreo tweeted back with "*Sorry, @kitkat we couldn't resist... #GiveOreoABreak*", showing a picture where the KitKat bar is bitten in the tic-tac-toe grid which followers seemed to view as funny and brilliant while others viewed it as immature.

An additional example is when IHOP tweeted "*WE ARE THE PANCAKE OG AND WILL BE RESPECTED AS SUCH*". Denny's replied with "*wait what's OG mean*", sparking a comment from IHOP; "*spoken like 2nd place*". This was seen by followers as aggressive and funny at the same time. This tweet had more than 18,000 retweets and 33,000 likes.

Finally, one example on a pre-planned confrontation was in 2017 when Burger King tweeted to McDonald's "**Sees clown* Nope. *Goes to BK**". This tweet was targeting McDonald's, which the majority of followers got and saw as funny. This tweet had 4,600 retweets and 5,800 likes.

The third RM, *cooperative play* (RM-3), focuses on non-competing and/or partner brands to co-create value. These are usually announcements that tag other brands. Examples on this RM

are as follows; in 2018 TSM tweeted, “*We are thrilled to announce our new partner, @drpepper! <https://tsm.gg/news/dr-pepper-and-tsm> ...*” the comments showed that most people loved both brands getting together. This generated 530 retweets and 5,700 likes. Another example was when Uber tweeted, “*We’ve teamed up with @Spotify to bring your music to your Uber. Learn more at <http://uber.com/spotify> #UberSpotify*”. This had 542 retweets back in 2014. Additionally, this RM was also present when H&M tweeted “*Gear up! A first look at the #ALEXANDERWANGxHM collaboration w /@AlexanderWangNY*”.

The fourth RM, *humorous romance* (RM-4), is a conversation tactic that some brands employ to build some hype and stay top of mind (TOM). The type of the sent messages is romantic, though fake in a humorous way. It sometimes links to the brand’s own personality and characteristics, making it a relevant relational moment. One high-profile example is when Burger King invited Wendy’s to the prom night in May 2018 showcasing on Twitter a picture of its storefront sign stating “*@Wendys prom?*”. Wendy’s responded back positively with “*Ok, but don’t get handsy and we have to be home by 10*”. Burger King replied with a “*she said yes!*” and “*looking forward to it. Let’s aim for king and queen of prom*”. This relational moment was labeled by followers as fast food romance which gathered more than 420,000 likes and 3,000 comments.

Another example is when Minecraft tweeted to Nintendo America and Xbox after they announced their cooperation. “*Well since you two seem so lovey-dovey now, why not try building something like this? Have fun!*”. A picture of a heart in the Minecraft game was under the tweet. This viewed the relationship to be a kind of romantic between the brands. The tweet had 1,700 retweets and 15,000 likes. Furthermore, in 2016 when GoPro and Red Bull partnered, a follower tweeted: “*The #RedBull & #GoPro global partnership seems a match made in heaven. Surprised it took them so long to get in bed together really.*” GoPro later replied with “*@Redbull had to at least take us to dinner first...#GoPro*”.

The fifth RM (RM-5) focuses on *promoting higher-end values and emotional bonding* whereby the brand puts the emphasis on certain CSR initiatives to promote trust and favorable intentions towards the brand. The message has a friendly tone and is usually pre-planned. One example is when Burger King suggested to McDonald’s to launch a “MacWhopper” as a ceasefire in the burger wars, raising awareness on the non-profit organization “Peace One Day”. McDonald’s rejected the idea, bringing backlash from thousands of followers.

Also, one very interesting tweet that involved the input of several brands was back in 2015, when Amazon India started a chain of tweets around its “Aur Dikhao” campaign (show more) that taps into the Indian culture by tweeting “@Zomato Loved all the logos you used in the last 6 months. Was #AurDikhao the brief to your designer? :)”. Zomato replied with “@amazonIN You should've seen the ones that didn't make the cut ;)” while featuring a picture of Amazon’s logo with the word “Zomato” instead of “Amazon”. This tweet alone had more than 1,200 retweets. Amazon further replied with “@Zomato That put a smile on our face ;)” with a logo of Zomato “the spoon” but including the arrow of Amazon as the smiley mouth. What was interesting enough is to see such an RM progress slowly into the humorous romance area (RM-5) as other brands joined the conversation. Flatchat replied to both with “@amazonIN @Zomato Aww! Get a room you two! If you can't find one, download Flatchat and we'll help you find one ;)”. Urban Ladder was also involved and tweeted “@amazonIN @Zomato We have mattresses, if things get a little more serious. <http://bit.ly/1aeAG28> @FlatchatAp”. Then Durex India joined the conversation and tweeted “@Zomato Spooning can lead to forking. Play safe: <http://amzn.to/1CFSIBc> @amazonIN @FlatchatApp @UrbanLadder”, changing Zomato’s logo to include a fork instead of a spoon and the Durex logo down in the right corner. Finally, BankBazaar.com tweeted, “@DurexIndia 98% effective. We've got Insurance to cover those 2% slips ;) @Zomato @amazonIN @FlatchatApp @UrbanLadder”. The tweets generated a total of 2,100 retweets.

Lastly, RM-6, *playing the game*, is based on a planned conversation with another brand to promote a joint feature versus other brands. The two brands would have already planned the relational moment with a specific key objective. One example is when Nintendo America tweeted “Hey @Xbox, since we can play together in @Minecraft now, did you want to build something?”. Xbox replied with “Our bodies are ready. What are we building?”. These tweets were planned for to mock Sony PlayStation’s approach on not allowing cross-platform support. Together, both tweets had a total of more than 2,800 comments, 17,400 retweets and 80,000 likes.

This RM is also based on targeting other non-competing brands with the aim to spark a conversation that would promote the new brand feature. The reactions are usually candid, sometimes even childish. One example was in late 2013 when Honda introduced a new minivan that had a built-in vacuum cleaner. Honda picked up on 60 brands that sell snacks and toys. Many of these brands (such as Oreo, Nestle Candy Shop, Yoplait Yogurt and Hellmann’s)

chose to respond and to play the game with Honda. Even Febreze and Pepsi joined the conversation increasing the overall campaign's total impressions.

Table 1 lists and summarizes the typology of brand-brand relational moments.

INSER HERE: Table 1 – A Typology of Brand-Brand Relational Moments

Following the typology and analysis of the 6 brand-brand relational moments, RM-2 (rival confrontation and bullying) was found to be the only RM with a high value co-destruction direction. While all other five RMs were relatively grounded on a value co-creation path, RM-1 (friend supporting) was found to be highest in relation to this component.

From an intensity level perspective, RM-2 (rival confrontation and bullying) and RM-4 (humorous romance) were found to have the highest impact (based on the combination of likes, retweets, quantity and intensity of comments, and having the RM featured in several news outlets). No single RM was found to have a low impact level alongside a value co-destruction direction. Figure 1 maps visually the relational moments based on (a) the value co-creation / co-destruction direction and (b) the intensity and impact level of each RM.

INSER HERE: Figure 1 – Relational Moments Mapping

Implications

From a scholarly perspective, this study adds a new perspective to the brand relationship literature. While most of the literature discuss today the brand-consumer relationship, no special attention has been given yet to brand-brand relationships. While social media makes it easier to have a two-way communication pattern between brands and consumers, the same facilitates potential conversations between brands themselves. Such conversations become increasingly important in light of the sheer volume of followers who would see their perception and relationship with these brands affected based on brands' conversational behavior. As brands are becoming more and more personified in the Web 2.0 era, every aspect of their behaviors, conversations and posts will become closely intertwined with their perceived personality, identity and values.

Managerial implications are sizeable. Brand management will become ever more complex as brand-brand conversations should be well scrutinized so that they do not become at odds with the set brand personality and values. Failing to integrate the communication strategy with brand relational moments would lead to a schizophrenic brand that would confuse consumers. Indeed, community management on social networking sites will not be confined anymore to managing the relationship with consumers but will also be based on managing a conversational triangulation between the company's brand, consumers, and other brands. As these three parties join the overall conversation, the brand-consumer relationship will be co-owned with other brands. While the own brand-consumer relationship would still aim to foster favorable feelings and intentions such as engagement, brand love, similarity, trust, commitment and loyalty (Algesheimer et al. 2005; Gustafsson et al. 2005; Sung and Campbell 2009; Valta 2011), the competing consumer relationship with other brands might lead to an own brand hate, cheating, switching and sabotaging (Grégoire and Fisher 2008; Farah 2017a; Farah 2017b; Msaed et al. 2017; Zgheib 2017). Ultimately, this would lead to value co-creation or co-destruction from the ensuing three-way communication pattern which will be reinforced by consumer-consumer conversations (see figure 2).

INSERT HERE: Figure 2 – Triangulation of the brand-brand-consumer conversation

While some opportunities might arise, the risks are much greater. Certain brand managers might drag their counterparts to react to certain provocations, leading them to act in a way that contradicts their posts on other channels or platforms. The brand would be then viewed as having dissociative identity disorder, or multiple personalities, whereby it is seen to act in a certain way on one platform, and in different way on another. In the age of omni-channel marketing where consumers engage with brands on multiple touchpoints and expect one integrated brand experience, this will be a major concern.

Furthermore, brand managers should be aware that they would need to diversify their brands' relational moments. Indeed, if brands become too focused on one single brand and alongside it a single pattern of conversations, followers might feel alienated and out of the conversation that they initially joined.

Conclusion

This research is among the first to establish the grounds for a brand-brand relationship alongside a typology for such relational moments. The findings put into perspective relational

patterns between brands whether they were initially intended and planned for or not by their respective companies. While most of the literature today focus on relational bonding and building between brands and consumers, the present research shows that brand-brand relationship moments could also be an influencing factor on consumers' brand perceptions.

This study is not without limitations due to its qualitative nature, its focus on one social networking site (Twitter), and the selection of specific brand-brand encounters which might limit the generalizability of the findings. Accordingly, future research could study other communication platforms and select a broader and vaster numbers of brand-brand encounters, alongside testing quantitatively the different relational moments to expand on this initial study. Moreover, future research could look into the relationship patterns over time, strategic shifts in the positioning of the messages, antecedents and consequences of such relationships in relation to the different positive/negative used directions. Future studies could also look at developing a brand-brand hate taxonomy emanating from negative relationships and their subsequent consequences on consumers. Furthermore, future research could look into building a model, depicting through qualitative and quantitative approaches with brand managers as well as with consumers, the areas that brands should be focusing on when connecting with other brands.

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

References

Aaker, D. 2003. The power of the branded differentiator. *MIT Sloan Management Review* 45(1): 83-87.

Aaker, J. 1997. Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research* 34(August): 347-357.

Abosag, I., Z. Ramadan, T. Baker, and Z. Jin. 2019. Customers' need for uniqueness theory versus brand congruence theory: The impact on satisfaction with social network sites. *Journal of Business Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.03.016>

Abu-Khzam, F.N. and K. Lamaa. 2018, April. Efficient heuristic algorithms for positive-influence dominating set in social networks. In *IEEE conference on computer communications workshops*, pp. 610-615.

- Agnihotri, R., K.J. Trainor, O.S. Itani, and M. Rodriguez. 2017. Examining the role of sales-based CRM technology and social media use on post-sale service behaviors in India. *Journal of Business Research* 81(December): 44-154.
- Algesheimer, R., U.M. Dholakia, and A. Herrmann. 2005. The social influence of brand community: Evidence from European car clubs. *Journal of marketing* 69(3): 19-34.
- Al Shehhi, A., J. Thomas, R. Welsch, I. Grey, and Z. Aung. 2019. Arabia Felix 2.0: a cross-linguistic Twitter analysis of happiness patterns in the United Arab Emirates. *Journal of Big Data* 6(1): 33.
- Bateman, P.J., J.C. Pike, and B.S. Butler. 2011. To disclose or not: Publicness in social networking sites. *Information Technology & People* 24(1): 78-100.
- Belk, R.W. 1988. Possessions and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research* 15(September): 139-168.
- Bengtsson, A. 2003. Towards a critique of brand relationships. *ACR North American Advances* 30: 154.
- Berendt, J., S. Uhrich, and S.A. Thompson. 2018. Marketing, get ready to rumble—How rivalry promotes distinctiveness for brands and consumers. *Journal of Business Research* 88(July): 161-172.
- Berger, J. 2011. Arousal increases social transmission of information. *Psychological science* 22(7): 891-893.
- Berger, J., and E.M. Schwartz. 2011. What drives immediate and ongoing word of mouth?. *Journal of Marketing Research* 48(5): 869-880.
- Berger, J., and K.L. Milkman. 2012. What makes online content viral?. *Journal of marketing research* 49(2): 192-205.
- Bernazzani, S. 2018. 12 of the Saggiest Brands on Social Media. <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/saggiest-social-media-brands>. Accessed 12 December 2018.
- Berry, L.L. 1983. Relationship Marketing. in *Emerging Perspectives on Services Marketing*, Berry, L., Shostack, G.L., and Upah, G.G., eds. Chicago: American Marketing Association, pp. 25-28.
- Bhattacharya, C.B., and S. Sen. 2003. Consumer-company identification: A framework for understanding consumers' relationships with companies. *Journal of marketing* 67(2): 76-88.
- Blackston, M. 1993. Beyond Brand Personality: Building Brand Relationships. in *Brand Equity and Advertising: Advertising's Role in Building Strong Brands*, ed. David Aaker and Alexander Biel, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, pp. 113- 124.

- Boyatzis, R.E. 1998. *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage
- Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology* 3(2): 77-101.
- Chrisodoulides, G. 2009. Branding in the post-internet era. *Marketing Theory* 9(1): 141-144.
- Converse, B.A., and D.A. Reinhard. 2016. On rivalry and goal pursuit: Shared competitive history, legacy concerns, and strategy selection. *Journal of personality and social psychology* 110(2): 191.
- Coutelle-Brillet, P., A. Riviere, and V. des Garets. 2014. Perceived value of service innovation: a conceptual framework. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* 29(2): 164-172.
- Crosby, L.A., K.R. Evans, and D. Cowles. 1990. Relationship quality in services selling: an interpersonal influence perspective. *Journal of Marketing* 54(July): 68-81.
- Cui, C.C., M. Mrad, and M.K. Hogg. 2018. Brand addiction: Exploring the concept and its definition through an experiential lens. *Journal of Business Research* 87(June): 118-127.
- Dai, X. 2015. *Aranica: Commercialization of a Drone Mapping and Sensing Technology*. Master diss., The Arctic University of Norway
- Deighton, J. 1996. The Future of Interactive Marketing. *Harvard Business Review* 74(November-December): 151-166.
- Del Rio A.B., R. Vazquez, and V. Iglesias. 2001. The effects of brand associations on consumer response. *Journal of consumer marketing* 18(5): 410-425.
- Delo, C. 2013. 9 Examples of Brands Engaging in Social Media Banter. <https://adage.com/article/digital/9-examples-brands-engaging-social-media-banter/243896/>. Accessed 18 December 2018.
- Demilly, C. 2008. The Business Impacts of Social Networking. A white paper in cooperation with Early Strategies Consulting. <https://www.alejandrobarrros.com/wp-content/uploads/old/Business%20-%20Social%20Networking%20Impact.pdf>. Accessed 20 December 2018.
- Desai, K.K., and K.L. Keller. 2002. The effects of ingredient branding strategies on host brand extendibility. *Journal of marketing* 66(1): 73-93.
- Duncan, T., and S.E. Moriarty. 1998. A communication-based marketing model for managing relationships. *The Journal of marketing* 62(2): 1-13.
- Dwyer, F.R., P.H. Schurr, and S. Oh. 1987. Developing buyer-seller relationships. *The Journal of marketing* 51(2): 11-27.

- Edgecomb, C. 2017. Social Media Marketing: The Importance of a Two-Way Conversation. <https://www.impactbnd.com/blog/social-media-marketing-the-importance-of-a-two-way-conversation>. Accessed 10 December 2018.
- Escalas, J.E., and J.R. Bettman. 2003. You are what they eat: The influence of reference groups on consumers' connections to brands. *Journal of consumer psychology* 13(3): 339-348.
- Ewing, M.T., P.E. Wagstaff, and I.H. Powell. 2013. Brand rivalry and community conflict. *Journal of Business Research* 66(1): 4-12.
- Farah, M.F. 2017a. Application of the theory of planned behavior to customer switching intentions in the context of bank consolidations. *International Journal of Bank Marketing* 35(1): 147-172.
- Farah, M.F. 2017b. Consumers' switching motivations and intention in the case of bank mergers: A cross-cultural study. *International Journal of Bank marketing* 35(2): 254-274.
- Farah, M.F., and Z. Ramadan. 2017. Disruptions versus more disruptions: How the Amazon dash button is altering consumer buying patterns. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 39(November): 54-61.
- Farah, M.F., M.J.S. Hasni, and A.K. Abbas. 2018. Mobile-banking adoption: empirical evidence from the banking sector in Pakistan. *International Journal of Bank Marketing* 36(7): 1386-1413.
- Farah, M.F., Z. Ramadan, and D.H. Harb. 2019. The examination of virtual reality at the intersection of consumer experience, shopping journey and physical retailing. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 48(May): 136-143.
- Fehr, B., and J.A. Russell. 1991. The concept of love viewed from a prototype perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(3): 425-438.
- Fisher, A. 2018. When Social Media Banter hits the Buffers. <https://www.mediafirst.co.uk/our-thinking/when-social-media-banter-hits-the-buffers/>. Accessed 24 November 2018.
- Fournier, S. 1998. Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research* 24(4): 343-373.
- Fournier, S., and J.L. Yao. 1997. Reviving brand loyalty: A reconceptualization within the framework of consumer-brand relationships. *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 14(5): 451-472.
- Frimpong, K. 2017. How Brands Use Twitter Banter to Gain Clout. <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/300278>. Accessed 19 November 2018.

- Grégoire, Y., and R.J. Fisher. 2008. Customer betrayal and retaliation: when your best customers become your worst enemies. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 36(2): 247-261.
- Grönroos, C. 1997. Value-driven relational marketing: from products to resources and competencies. *Journal of marketing management* 13(5): 407-419.
- Gummesson, E. 1987. The new marketing – developing long-term interactive relationships. *Long Range Planning* 24(4): 10-20.
- Gurd, J. 2018. Competitor analysis for social media strategies. <https://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/competitor-analysis-social-media-strategies/>. Accessed 19 December 2018.
- Gustafsson, A., M.D. Johnson, and I. Roos. 2005. The effects of customer satisfaction, relationship commitment dimensions, and triggers on customer retention. *Journal of marketing* 69(4): 210-218.
- Harker, M.J., and J. Egan. 2006. The past, present and future of relationship marketing. *Journal of marketing management* 22(1-2): 215-242.
- Hayes, J.L., K.W. King, and A. Ramirez. 2016. Brands, friends, & viral advertising: a social exchange perspective on the ad referral processes. *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 36(November): 31-45.
- Hennig-Thurau, T., E.C. Malhotra, C. Friege, S. Gensler, L. Lobschat, A. Rangaswamy, and B. Skiera. 2010. The impact of new media on customer relationships. *Journal of service research* 13(3): 311-330.
- Hinde, R.A. 1979. Towards Understanding Relationships. London: Academic Press. (1995), “A Suggested Structure for a Science of Relationships”, *Personal Relationships* 2(March): 1-15.
- Hinde, R.A. 1995. A suggested structure for a science of relationships. *Personal relationships* 2(1): 1-15.
- Huang, C., S. Yen, C. Liu, and T. Chang. 2014. The Relationship among Brand Equity, Customer Satisfaction, and Brand Resonance to Repurchase Intention of Cultural and Creative Industries in Taiwan. *The International Journal of Organizational Innovation* 6(3): 106–120.
- Hunt, S.D. 1983. General Theories and the Fundamental Explananda of Marketing. *Journal of Marketing* 47(Autumn): 9-17.
- Itani, O.S., R. Agnihotri, and R. Dingus. 2017. Social media use in B2B sales and its impact on competitive intelligence collection and adaptive selling: Examining the role of learning orientation as an enabler. *Industrial Marketing Management* 66(October): 64-79.

- Itani, O.S., A.N. Kassar, and S.M.C Loureiro. 2019. Value get, value give: The relationships among perceived value, relationship quality, customer engagement, and value consciousness. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 80(July): 78-90.
- Kagalwala, H. 2017. Twitter Conversations and How the Big Brands are Using Them. <https://iide.co/twitter-conversations-and-how-the-big-brands-are-using-them/>. Accessed 15 November 2018.
- Keeling, K., D. Keeling, and P. McGoldrick. 2013. Retail relationships in a digital age. *Journal of Business research* 66(7): 847-855.
- Labrecque, L. 2014. Fostering Consumer–Brand Relationships in Social Media Environments: The Role of Para-social Interaction. *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 28(2): 134-148.
- Libai, B., E. Muller, and R. Peres. 2009. The diffusion of services. *Journal of Marketing Research* 46(2): 163-175.
- Loureiro, S.M. 2013. Consumer-brand relationship: Foundation and state-of-the-art. In *Customer-centric marketing strategies: Tools for building organizational performance*, pp. 414-434. IGI Global.
- Mazurek, G. 2009. Web 2.0 implications on marketing. *Management of Organizations: Systematic Research* 51: 69-81.
- Morgan, R.M. and S.D. Hunt. 1994. The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing. *Journal of Marketing* 58(July): 20-38.
- Mrad, M. 2018. Brand addiction conceptual development. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 21(1): 18-38.
- Mrad, M., M.F. Farah, and S. Haddad. 2018. From Karl Lagerfeld to Erdem: a series of collaborations between designer luxury brands and fast-fashion brands. *Journal of Brand Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-018-00146-2>
- Mrad, M. and C.C. Cui. 2017. Brand addiction: conceptualization and scale development. *European Journal of Marketing* 51(11/12): 1938-1960.
- Msaed, C., S.O. Al-Kwafi, Z.U. Ahmed. 2017. Building a comprehensive model to investigate factors behind switching intention of high-technology products. *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 26(2): 102-119.
- Muñiz, A.M., and L.O. Hamer. 2001. Us versus them: Oppositional brand loyalty and the cola wars. *Advances in Consumer Research* 28(1): 355–361.
- Muñiz, A.M., and T.C. O'guinn. 2001. Brand community. *Journal of consumer research* 27(4): 412-432.
- Muñiz, A.M., and H.J. Schau. 2005. Religiosity in the abandoned Apple Newton brand community. *Journal of consumer research* 31(4): 737-747.

Nieroda, M.E., M. Mrad, and M.R. Solomon. 2018. How do consumers think about hybrid products? Computer wearables have an identity problem. *Journal of Business Research* 89(August): 159-170.

Onete, C.B., I. Albăstroi, and R. Dina. 2017. Consumer between Web 2.0 and Web 3.0. In *Consumer Behavior*, Senay Sabah, IntechOpen, Available at: <https://www.intechopen.com/books/consumer-behavior-practice-oriented-perspectives/consumer-between-web-2-0-and-web-3-0>

Palmatier, R., R. Dant, D. Grewal, and K. Evans. 2006. Factors influencing the effectiveness of relationship marketing: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Marketing* 70(2): 136-153.

Parish, W. 2013. Brands engaging in social media banter. <https://www.marketingdive.com/news/brands-engaging-in-social-media-banter/166560/>. Accessed 16 October 2018.

Peppers, D. and M. Rogers. 1993. *The One-to-One Future: Building Relationships One Customer at a time*, New York: Currency/Doubleday

Pitta, D.A., and D. Fowler. 2005. Internet community forums: an untapped resource for consumer marketers. *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 22(5): 265-274.

Plummer, J.T. 1985. Brand personality: A strategic concept for multinational advertising. In *Marketing educators' conference*, pp: 1-31. New York: Young & Rubicam.

Pons, F., M. Laroche, and M. Murali. 2006. Consumer reactions to crowded retail settings: Cross-cultural differences between North America and the Middle East. *Psychology & Marketing* 23(7): 555-572.

Ramadan, Z. 2019. The democratization of intangible luxury. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-11-2018-0490>

Ramadan, Z. 2018. The gamification of trust: the case of China's "social credit". *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 36(1): 93-107.

Ramadan, Z., I. Abosag, and V. Zabkar. 2018. All in the value: The impact of brand and social network relationships on the perceived value of customer endorsed Facebook advertising. *European Journal of Marketing* 52(7/8): 1704-1726.

Ramadan, Z., and M.F. Farah. 2017. The advent of the 'social moment of truth' in online communities. *International Journal of Web Based Communities* 13(3): 364-378.

Rasul, T. 2016. Web 2.0 Technologies' Influence on Customer Relationship Marketing. *Asia Pacific Journal of Advanced Business and Social Studies* 2(2): 182-192.

Ratcliff, C. 2014. What do we get out of brands interacting with each other on Twitter?. <https://econsultancy.com/what-do-we-get-out-of-brands-interacting-with-each-other-on-twitter/>. Accessed 16 October 2018.

- Renner, E. 2017. How 74% of Brands Use Their Competitors to Sell More & Grow Faster. <https://www.repsly.com/blog/field-team-management/working-with-the-competition>. Accessed 18 November 2018.
- Romo, M., M.J. Sanchez-Ruiz, and V. Alfonso-Benlliure. 2017. Creativity and personality across domains: A critical review. *Anuario de Psicología/The UB Journal of Psychology* 47(2): 57-69.
- Saboo, A.R., V. Kumar, and G. Ramani. 2016. Evaluating the impact of social media activities on human brand sales. *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 33(3): 524-541.
- Sayre, S. 2001. *Qualitative methods for marketplace research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Statista. 2018. Number of monthly active Twitter users worldwide from 1st quarter 2010 to 3rd quarter 2018 (in millions). <https://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>. Accessed 28 November 2018.
- Sung, Y., and W.K. Campbell. 2009. Brand commitment in consumer–brand relationships: An investment model approach. *Journal of Brand Management* 17(2): 97-113.
- Tamble, M. 2018. Cross-Promote Social Media for Great Corporate Communication. <https://maximizesocialbusiness.com/social-media-cross-promotion-strategies-corporate-communication-27566/>. Accessed 10 December 2018.
- Tuškej, U., U. Golob, and K. Podnar. 2013. The role of consumer–brand identification in building brand relationships. *Journal of Business Research* 66(1): 53-59.
- Uлага, W., and A. Eggert. 2006. Relationship value and relationship quality: Broadening the nomological network of business-to-business relationships. *European Journal of Marketing* 40(3/4): 311-327.
- Valos, M.J., F. Haji Habibi, R. Casidy, C.B. Driesener, and V.L. Maplestone. 2016. Exploring the integration of social media within integrated marketing communication frameworks: perspectives of services marketers. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 34(1): 19-40.
- Valta, K.S. 2011. Do relational norms matter in consumer-brand relationships?. *Journal of Business Research* 66(1): 98-104.
- Walker, R. 2008. *I'm with the Brand: The Secret Dialogue between What We Buy and Who We Are*, Constable & Robinson, London.
- Webster, F.E. Jr. 1992. The Changing Role of Marketing in the Corporation. *Journal of Marketing* 56(4): 1-17.
- Wilson, D.T. 1995. An integrated model of buyer-seller relationships. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 23(4): 335-45.

Zgheib, P.W. 2017. Advertising Deceit: Manipulation of Information, False Advertising, and Promotion. *In Advertising and Branding: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications*, pp: 1482-1494. IGI Global.

Zhu, F., and X. Zhang. 2010. Impact of online consumer reviews on sales: The moderating role of product and consumer characteristics. *Journal of marketing* 74(2): 133-148.