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“Would You Like a Side of Fries with That Roast?”

Is Wendy’s Roasting Social Media Marketing Strategy a Viable Strategy for Swedish Companies?

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Abstract: The roasting social media marketing strategy introduced by Wendy’s in 2017 was met with great reception, vastly increasing the company’s Twitter following and profits. With other companies in the USA following suit to capitalize on their social media platforms, could Swedish companies also improve their social media presence using this strategy? This study investigates how transferable the roasting social media marketing strategy is to the Swedish market by examining whether it positively influences social media customer engagement amongst Swedish consumers. The research question is answered through four focus groups composed of 20 Swedish consumers between the ages of 18 and 30. This study finds that the strategy is transferable to the market due to the relatable internet-based humor being used in the content, but faces several limitations such as quality of content, its perceived foreign nature, potential lack of authenticity, and inability to build long-term customer-firm connections and relationships.

Keywords: Roasting, Transferability, Sweden, Communication, Digital Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Customer Engagement, Branding, Authenticity

Introduction

In these contemporary times dominated by digitalization and the proliferation of social media in many aspects of our daily lives, businesses must understand how they can reach their target audience online and the fact that traditional advertising strategies differ from online social media ones (Bala & Verma, 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2015; Evans, 2010). Companies need to constantly adapt to ever-changing online trends and consumer expectations, adjusting their marketing and communication strategies accordingly in order to reach their target audiences. Social media platforms allow brand managers to take advantage of the intimate

communication channel and build connections with consumers (Fisher, 2012). By creating online brand communities and fostering friendly relationships with consumers, customers are given an opportunity to engage more closely with brands (De Vries et al., 2012; Shin et al., 2015; Tsai & Men, 2013; Vargo, 2016).

In recent years, companies in the USA have become more active on social media platforms such as Twitter. Their brands have developed personalities and managed to amass substantial followings. Through the use of aggressive and relatable posts that feature insults towards their competitors, jokes, and comebacks, some companies have employed a new strategy

and approach to social media in order to better appeal to customers. One particular company, Wendy's, is known for setting the stage with its so-called roasting social media marketing (SMM) strategy (Dynel, 2020). As the company faced declining store traffic and stagnating sales figures within the fast-food industry (Cheng, 2018), Wendy's unintentionally stumbled upon the social media strategy after one of their tweets went viral. Following its virality, the company implemented the communication style as a full time strategy in 2017, hiring a group of mostly millennials and people with knowledge of internet culture or comedic expertise to manage their Twitter account (Reddit, 2017). The social media approach was immediately successful, increasing Wendy's follower count on Twitter by 125% in 2017 (Dynel, 2020). The strategy also had an immediate effect on Wendy's sales figures, increasing the net income to \$159,3 million in 2017 from \$28,9 million in 2016 (Wendy's, 2017). Today, Wendy's has managed to successfully spread its brand awareness on a global scale, amassing 3,9 million Twitter followers in the process (as of June 1st 2022).

In an attempt to emulate Wendy's success, other American brands have followed suit, including McDonald's, KFC, Popeye's, Pringles, Netflix and others, by becoming more vocal and engaging with their target audiences on their various social media accounts. With how successful these brands have been in expanding their online following, one may ask why companies abroad are slower to follow the trend. There seems to be obvious benefits in its adoption, yet they have been hesitant. Therefore, it is of immense value to investigate if the SMM strategy would function in these markets, so companies all over the world can better capitalize on their social media presence. There is a small precedent of companies in the Swedish fast food industry comparing themselves to competitors on their

websites and social media pages while referring to surveys regarding what restaurants prepare the best burgers (Bastard Burgers, 2022). However, jabs between companies in Sweden have been mostly limited to this and the humor-based roasting SMM strategy seems to be non-existent in the market. When the strategy has been so effective in increasing the visibility of fast food chains in the USA, why are companies not jumping at the chance to gain popularity through its implementation? Should companies in Sweden follow Wendy's lead?

A Swedish counterpart to Wendy's, in terms of being in the same fast food industry, is MAX Burgers AB (MAX). The company is an actor of Swedish origin operating since the late 1960's and finds itself among an array of fast food burger chains operating in Sweden. The company is Sweden's most profitable restaurant chain largely due to its domestic origins and emphasis on providing higher quality food items (Hatchman, 2021). Despite their popularity in Sweden and other neighboring European countries, MAX currently finds themselves with only 3333 followers on Twitter (as of June 1st 2022). This number can be considered minuscule in comparison to Wendy's. One may wonder if MAX could benefit from incorporating a roasting SMM strategy and grow their social media page from its current lackluster position. At first glance, this might look like a reasonable idea to gain a larger following and build a more appealing and vivid brand image. However, the Swedish culture is different from the American one. One of many key elements of the Swedish culture is *Jantelagen* (English: Law of Jante), a cultural phenomenon functioning as a code of modesty amongst Scandinavians, represented in the idea that no one should consider themselves to be above or different from others (Cappelen & Dahlberg, 2018). Swedish people are also frequently characterized as

conflict-avoiding and consensus seeking, valuing compromise and commonality (Syvertsen et al., 2014). These cultural barriers could make differentiating oneself through an aggressive SMM strategy inefficient in the Swedish market, as the messaging might not be received with the same enthusiasm as in the USA.

Oatly is a previous example of a company in the Swedish market that implemented an aggressive communication strategy towards their competition. Many of their earlier advertising campaigns can be deemed controversial, as their aggressive (bordering on slanderous) communication towards competitors in the milk industry was widely met with criticism and public backlash, creating widespread dissatisfaction amongst consumers (Goldberg, 2019; Pearce, 2021; Simpson, 2021). Some of the campaigns also led to legal repercussions in Sweden (Wisterberg, 2015), which has had an overall negative impact on their brand image and reputation, coupled with controversies concerning misleading environmental claims.

The Oatly case raises questions as to why the campaigns were unsuccessful. Is a Wendy's-like aggressive marketing strategy not transferable between different nations? Are consumers in other markets less drawn by this style of marketing? Or is Oatly just an isolated case where the company unknowingly crossed a line? The Oatly case demands further research on the topic of roasting as a SMM strategy and its transferability to other markets as there seems to be great potential for social media growth but also a clear risk for detrimental effects on brand perception. This could prove crucial for companies considering adopting the strategy.

To answer these questions and investigate how effective the roasting SMM strategy would be in Sweden, this study will answer the following research question

from a customer engagement perspective: *How transferable is the roasting SMM strategy to the Swedish market?* Therefore, this study aims to provide insight as to how the Swedish public would react to a Wendy's-like aggressive SMM strategy from a company in the Swedish market, which in turn can be used to give insight as to how transferable the strategy is between different countries in general. The outcome of this research could be of use to companies considering a change in their SMM strategy in hopes of reaping the same rewards that Wendy's did (e.g. boosting their social media follower count, augmenting their brand image, increasing brand awareness, connecting and interacting more deeply with their audience) by using a more aggressive and interactive communication strategy.

Literature Review

This study's literature review chapter presents previous research done on the subject of roasting from a historical, social, linguistic, and customer engagement perspective, as well as the significance of cultural context in humor and the use of comedy in communication and advertising. The chapter also identifies existing knowledge gaps regarding transferability in the field of roasting.

Roasting

Roasting in its comedic form has been described through previous studies as a traditional American ritual and interaction consisting of jibes and witty insults directed towards a person (Dynel, 2020; Ödmark, 2021). To roast is denoted as the "hurling of jocular insults" (Dynel, 2020, p. 2) at the expense (and with the consent) of the roastee (the subject of the roast) in a playful context, for the sake of the shared humorous experience of the group (Dynel & Poppi, 2019; Dynel & Poppi, 2020). The interaction itself can be described as possessing a benign character, being

inherently free from spite and genuine aggression (Dynel, 2020). It is not intended to cause any offense to the subject, contrary to the appearance of the aggressive and potentially insulting messages being hurled toward the roastee (Dynel, 2020).

Previous research has highlighted the existence of boundaries within comedy (Kolk, 2005; Friedman & Kuipers, 2013; Popovic, 2018). Boundaries are set by society to exempt topics that should not be subjected to humor, being considered off limits, and socially unacceptable to joke about (e.g. taboos and aspects beyond personal control). As an explanation to what is considered appropriate and within the comedic boundaries of roasting, humor is to be understood through social codes (Billig, 2005), with social norms and culture dictating and judging what is improper, offensive, and irrelevant in terms of humor (Douglas, 1968; Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). Depending on the context it is executed within, roasting could be perceived as a transgressive form of comedy that challenges boundaries and puts subjects at unease and discomfort as personal matters are often brought up to elicit amusement. Literature on the subject of comedy also demonstrates humor to be difficult to translate between cultures, in both linguistic terms and cultural embeddedness (Popa, 2004; Low, 2011), with the relatability towards humor playing an important role in the acceptance of humor in an advertising context (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). This becomes a critical aspect to be aware of, in relation to this study, as the transferability of the roasting SMM strategy might be hindered by differing comedic boundaries found in different nations and cultures. Furthermore, humor is recognized as an effective communication tool, managing to break the ice, appeal to common sentiments, and disguising a preconceived set of ideas behind the guise of entertainment (Basu, 1999; Tabares, 2009).

Roasting can be seen both in private such as retirement parties, and in public contexts like political roasts of U.S. presidents and celebrity roasts on TV (Dynel, 2020). Its origins in popular culture can be traced back to 1949, when New York Friars Club held their first roast (Cantor, 2011). Roasting is now a part of mainstream U.S. pop culture through televised roasts such as Kraft Music Hall, Dean Martin's Celebrity Roast, and Comedy Central (Kies, 2021). Dynel and Poppi (2019) mention that the traditional roast present on traditional media has expanded to an offshoot practice on social media called 'RoastMe', susceptible to the same overall interpretation, despite minor interactional differences between the participants and the roastee due to its online nature. The popular online practice, which attributes its origins to Reddit in April 2015 (Dynel, 2020), consists of anonymous users voluntarily submitting a post composed of a photograph showing the roastee along with a caption generally containing a short description about them and a challenge for the community users to roast them. The posts are subsequently commented on and roasted by anonymous members of the group or community while abiding by the rules set forth by the Reddit community. These rules, which are monitored and enforced by Reddit moderators, are intended to regulate and secure the activity's playful and benevolent character and not have it derail into hate and bullying (Dynel, 2020). As in the case of the traditional format of roasting, the main purpose is to have fun by producing self-inflicted, autotelic humor (i.e. humor for its own sake without communicating any applicable and sincere meaning about the roastee) in joint entertainment of the community (Dynel, 2020).

In the context of social media marketing, roasting is a relatively recent social media strategy and trend, started and popularized by Wendy's on January 2nd, 2017 (Dynel, 2020). Kauppila (2019) and Oliver (2018)

explain that the goal of the strategy is to use roast culture to increase customer engagement on their social media pages and, in turn, grow their brand visibility and build customer relationships. Roasting can be considered part of Wendy's social media content strategy on Twitter, basing itself heavily on the humor used in RoastMe related social media posts (Dyner, 2020). Wendy's Twitter communication strategy consists of interaction with both ordinary users and brands that actively seek out Wendy's roasts and responses, communicating with the company in a vernacular sense (Dyner, 2020; Lind, 2019b). Oliver (2018) characterizes the roasting humor used in Wendy's social media marketing efforts as satirical, ironic, and ludicrous. The researcher also finds that when Wendy's does use this style of humor in their tweets that there is significantly more customer engagement than when tweets are non-humorous. Kauppila (2019) describes the two-way consumer-firm communication channel along with the humor-focused Twitter content as an effective way to create value for the Wendy's brand, making it more than just a fast food chain. The study explains that instead of advertising directly, the content is being used to connect with the company's audience in order to encourage customer engagement and develop stronger customer relations (Kauppila, 2019). In contrast to following the usual one-way, monologic tendency of organizations on their Twitter accounts, failing to fully capitalize on the platform's ability to engage with the public (Lim & Lee-Won, 2017), Wendy's manages to start dialogues with their audiences. This approach has gained Wendy's a strong position in an otherwise fast-paced ground of online marketing, as their account's reputation for being able to roast audiences allows them to connect with their audience, whilst at the same time disarming consumers from the fact they are being sold a brand image involving

fun, relatability, and being in touch with contemporary attitudes (Baker, 2018).

Although there is some limited literature covering how Wendy's uses specific language and humor in their roasting content and incorporates it into their social media strategy for customer engagement purposes, there is a noticeable void when it comes to the transferability of this strategy between markets. Previous literature mentions that the humor being used in the social media content is inspired by the American ritual of roasting, one can therefore question whether this SMM strategy would be equally effective in engaging customers in other countries with differing cultures. This study seeks to answer this question and contribute to the growing research area of roasting and social media marketing by examining the Swedish consumer's perception of roasting as corporate social media content and as a SMM strategy.

Theoretical Framework

The following chapter introduces the theoretical perspective of customer engagement as an overarching theory that can be affected by different factors such as experiential engagement, drivers, brand authenticity, and brand connection (see figure 1 below). These four factors can be thought of as sub-theories to customer engagement as customer opinion and experience of these sub-theories will influence their engagement rate of social media content. As customer engagement is dependent on the aforementioned sub-theories, they are especially relevant when investigating the strategy's transferability to the Swedish market.

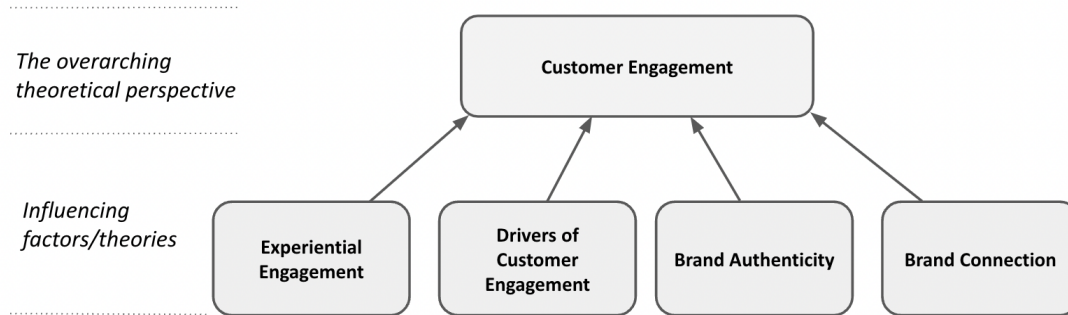


Figure 1. Factors that influence the Customer Engagement of SMM strategies.

Customer Engagement

The transferability of roasting to the Swedish market can be analyzed through the lens of customer engagement as the theoretical framework gives insight into how successful a social media strategy can be in receiving likes, comments, and shares (Coelho et al., 2016; Ge & Gretzel, 2017). Jaakkola and Alexander (2014, p. 248) define customer engagement as the “behaviors through which customers make voluntary resource contributions that have a brand or firm focus but go beyond what is fundamental to the transaction.” These non-transactional resources include but are not limited to the customers' network assets, meaning their peers, connections, and social ties, as well as their persuasion capital, as in their ability to give a more trustworthy, authentic, and influential recommendation to a potential customer within their social network (Harmeling et al., 2016). These active and voluntary contributions help co-create value and expand the firm's brand visibility through, in this case, word of mouth on social media platforms (Harmeling et al., 2016; Li et al., 2020). Therefore, this theoretical perspective helps this study understand the factors that may encourage consumers to engage with a company's social media marketing efforts, specifically a roasting strategy.

Experiential Engagement

One factor that can influence the success of a social media strategy is the type of customer engagement that consumers experience when interacting with a company. Harmeling et al. (2016) breaks down customer engagement marketing into two categories, these being experiential and task-based. Experiential customer engagement marketing is formulated in a way that is more fun than work, resulting in a positive experience on the consumer side (Harmeling et al., 2016). The strategy can be seen as an experiential event that brings people together physically or digitally into a community, and by doing so, motivating customers to engage and contribute through the building of psychological connections with said customers and making them feel that they are a part of something larger than themselves (Schouten et al. 2007). This form of marketing also tends to have an emotional and social aspect (Arnould & Price, 1993). These initiatives are believed to lead to longer lasting customer-firm relationships due to the emotional attachments that consumers start to form with the firm (Schouten et al., 2007; Arnould & Price, 1993). Tasked-based marketing, on the other hand, refers to an initiative in which a consumer is given a task, like writing a review for example, and in turn they receive a reward, like a discount (Harmeling et al., 2016). Verlegh et al.

(2013) stress that this strategy often leads to short-lived relationships and leaves companies in danger of customer abuse. How Swedes experience and categorize the roasting SMM strategy between the two types of customer engagement can therefore be telling when considering the potential success of the strategy in Sweden.

Drivers of Customer Engagement

When firms use the concept of customer engagement marketing as a strategic tool in their social media initiatives, their initiatives must have ‘drivers’ that encourage people to engage with their social media activities and motivate virtual word of mouth spread (Harmeling et al., 2016; Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Li et al., 2020; Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Libai et al., 2013). Li et al. (2020) explain that consumers use social media to satisfy their psychological needs and that this should be considered when planning social media activities. They emphasize the proactive delivery of valuable content that is compelling, educational, or useful in some way, and its role in boosting customer engagement. Muntinga et al. (2011) build on this idea by adding that social media engagement is primarily motivated by valuable content that features “entertainment, information, remuneration, personal identity, social interaction, and empowerment” (p. 19). Posts that are entertaining and humorous by nature provide individuals with an escape and distraction from their regular lives along with a positive feeling and emotional release (Luarn et al., 2015), which effectively inspires these individuals to ‘like’, comment, and share said posts (Ge & Gretzel, 2017; Meyer, 2000). Sternthal and Craig (1973) also state that the presence of humor in advertisements can be perceived and interpreted in different ways. Riecken and Hensel (2012) further support this claim, stating that the humor orientation of an individual can influence their reaction to the humor found in the

content; implying that people appreciative of one particular type of humor will be more responsive to this type of content. Whether or not the Swedish consumers appreciate the roasting SMM strategy and find it to be a proactive initiative with valuable content in regards to their psychological needs and desires (for example through entertainment or humor) will therefore most likely influence how driven they are to engage with the content and in turn the transferability of the strategy to the Swedish market.

Brand Authenticity

Previous research within the field of consumer engagement has found that authenticity is an important factor when consumers evaluate advertisements (Morhart et al., 2013; Spiggle et al., 2012). Before engaging with a brand's social media content, consumers often already have a preconceived notion or idea of the brand along with an expectation of how the brand should act, speak, and advertise (Beverland, 2006; Eigenraam et al., 2021; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). When inconsistencies are observed between the pre-established perception of the brand and the social media strategy, it negatively affects how authentic consumers perceive the content of the strategy to be (Eigenraam et al., 2021). If a customer engagement initiative is regarded as inauthentic, it will result in less engagement among consumers, with consumers preferring initiatives that are consistent and authentic for the company (Eigenraam et al., 2021). The perceived authenticity of a Swedish brand adopting the roasting SMM strategy may therefore be an important factor in how Swedes evaluate the brand's social media content and decide to engage with it, affecting the overall success of the roasting SMM strategy in the Swedish market.

Brand Connection

In accordance with the social exchange theory, both the customer and firm parties

can benefit from social media initiatives as customers are given valuable content they can connect with and firms are provided with valuable customer resources such as network assets and persuasion capital for word of mouth spread (Blau, 1964; De Vries et al., 2012; Harmeling et al., 2016; Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Swani et al., 2017), resulting in a sound and personal win-win relationship between the two parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This new enriched customer-firm relationship has a deeper effect on how the customer perceives themselves in relation to the firm and gives them a feeling of psychological ownership of the brand (Harmeling et al., 2016). This new feeling will in turn encourage the customers to continue their role as pseudo-marketers, enhance the company, and expand the communication flow from just a firm-customer one to one that also includes customer-customer communication (Harmeling et al., 2016; Li et al., 2020). Analyzing whether Swedes could feel connected with a brand after engaging with roasting social media content therefore becomes relevant as it may give insight into the potential for long-term customer-firm relationships and customers' willingness to act as pseudo-marketers. Evaluating how these outcomes from the roasting SMM strategy might look in Sweden could provide a deeper understanding of its potential success and transferability to the Swedish market.

Methodology

Formation of the Study

As the initial step of the research, a literature review was done to discover previous research on the topic of roasting and to explore what could be further investigated in relation to the phenomenon. Transferability of roasting as a SMM strategy was chosen as it was previously observed that Swedish

counterparts in the same industry as Wendy's have had minimal success on Twitter (in terms of following and customer engagement with brand content). A theoretical framework based upon customer engagement was then decided on as it was the most relevant perspective from which to analyze the transferability of roasting in a Swedish context. This is because the theory is often used to evaluate social media success in terms of likes, comments and shares (Coelho et al., 2016; Ge & Gretzel, 2017). Given this context, this study aims to explain and better understand the roasting SMM phenomenon and its transferability between markets by finding new theories on the topic, giving this study an inductive approach (Patel & Davidsson, 2011).

In order to most aptly analyze the transferability of the roasting SMM strategy to the Swedish market, the qualitative research study was organized and divided into two parts. Initially, research regarding social media activities was conducted, serving as a precursor to the main method. The aim of this step was to gain a general understanding of how Swedish companies communicate on social media, in contrast to how Wendy's conduct their roasting strategy and engage with customers through their Twitter page. This study then proceeded on to focus group interviews with Swedish consumers between ages 18 and 30 from Gothenburg. The objective of the interviews was to discover how Swedish consumers would react to different SMM activities with Wendy's roasting strategy in focus, searching for consumer patterns regarding how they would engage with roasting related content. During the focus group discussions, the previous social media research also functioned as referencing material for the participants, deepening their understanding of corporate social media approaches.

MAX was deemed as the more appropriate case to research, instead of McDonald's, Burger King, or any other fast-food chain operating in Sweden, because MAX is one of the largest Swedish fast-food chains but would still benefit from a more engaging SMM strategy due to their small following on Twitter and low engagement rate in respect to likes, replies, and retweets. Their main Twitter account (original and older account with more followers and activity) is also specific to the Swedish market (as their Twitter handle is @maxburgers_se, with 'se' being short for Sweden), making the Swedish consumer perspective of their content crucial for SMM success. Although similar to MAX in terms of industry and having a long-standing operative history in Sweden, McDonald's and Burger King's main Twitter accounts are larger and international. They also possess a more established social media presence and have shown to be more adept in executing a relatively more engaging SMM strategy.

Oatly's social media content was also incorporated in this study for comparative purposes as they possess a more amiable style of communication on Twitter. This is in comparison to Wendy's, which features a more abrasive tone coupled with a focus on comedy and roasting as means of customer engagement. This observation was identified during the earlier social media research stage. When put in juxtaposition with each other, the distinct approaches to customer engagement were believed to yield interesting discussions in the focus groups, helping this study draw conclusions regarding the attitudes and preferences of corporate social media content amongst the participants.

Participant Sampling

This study chose to interview young adults between the ages 18 and 30 as this demographic seems to be the main age segment Wendy's is targeting with their roasting communication strategy. This

group also has a deeper familiarity and understanding of social media and internet culture (incl. internet specific humor such as memes and internet etiquette). This study also chose to solely interview individuals that grew up in Sweden as they were believed to have a better understanding of the country's culture and values. The participants for the focus group interviews were selected through a convenience sampling method, being acquaintances of this study's researchers and easy to access (Bryman & Bell, 2013). For practical reasons, the interviews were conducted within the city of Gothenburg, and the participants were also pooled from the city and its surrounding areas. This did, however, limit the understanding of the Swedish consumer perspective of roasting as participants living in other areas of Sweden were not interviewed.

Focus Groups

The focus group interview method was chosen as it is advantageous in providing an understanding of collective experiences around a subject, as well as the thoughts and feelings about certain matters in social contexts (Crang & Cook, 2007; Erik & Kovalainen, 2008). In relation to this study, this methodological choice is helpful as the objective of this study is to investigate whether the roasting SMM strategy positively influences social media engagement amongst Swedish consumers. The focus group discussions are more efficient in producing shared understandings and possible underlying cultural motifs that could influence Swedish consumers' perception of roasting. Thus, in comparison with individual interviews, focus groups would give better insight into how Swedish consumers in general would react to roasting SMM content. The shared social opinion was believed to be more important than individual statements on humor, culture, and customer engagement.

Crang and Cook (2007) discuss focus group sizes and the impact it may have on the range and depth of the discussion, stating that group sizes that are too large (e.g. 10-12 participants) could both intimidate some people and restrict the speaking time of participants, negatively affecting the quality of discussion. Group sizes that are too small (e.g. 2-3 participants), on the other hand, can reduce the number of experiences that can be drawn upon, limiting the discussions' potential (Crang & Cook, 2007). Thus five participants was deemed to be the optimal number of participants per group, enabling deeper discussions while also being more advantageous when booking venues for the interviews, scheduling, and coordinating.

Depending on the range of topics and discussions, the suggested duration of a meeting varies. Bellenger et al. (1979) suggest one and a half to two hours as reasonable, while Erik and Kovalainen (2018) consider two hours as an optimal time frame for one session. This study therefore decided to have focus group interviews averaging two hours in length. The number of focus groups to reach saturation was initially estimated to be around four to five, with the first group interview considered a pilot session in case further improvement of the semi-structured interview guide was needed. In the end, four focus group interview sessions, including the pilot session (with a total of 20 participants, see appendix 1), were sufficient to produce a saturation point.

Regarding the topic of assuring attendance for the focus groups, Crang and Cook (2007) suggest offering a monetary incentive for participants. This could, however, have raised complications regarding financing while also having a potential impact on the findings. Hence the decision was made to instead offer coffee and snacks (Swedish: *fika*) alongside being interviewed as a form of incentive to

recruit busy students and professionals. The coffee and snacks further proved to be beneficial as it offered a more relaxed setting, opened up the participants, and helped them get comfortable with each other. This ties in with Crang and Cook's (2007) suggestion of creating a homely atmosphere to put the participants at ease.

During the focus group interviews, participants were first asked about their social media habits and their general opinions on corporate SMM content. After that, they were presented with four different types of social media content to analyze and discuss amongst themselves. They were initially introduced to Wendy's tweets and roasting strategy, then the Twitter content of MAX, followed by a new set of Wendy's tweets that had been photoshopped to look like MAX published them to give the participants visual suggestions on how a potential roasting strategy conducted by a Swedish company would look, and finally tweets from Oatly's page to compare with. The material presented can be found in appendix 2. The interviewers led the discussions by asking open questions from a semi-structured interview guide, allowing for the possibility to delve deeper into interesting answers and topics with spontaneous follow up questions (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). This interview guide can be found in appendix 3. The questions and presented material aimed to gather insight into how Swedish consumers would react and engage with roasting related social media content compared to other content currently being published by companies in the Swedish market.

Analysis

The empirical material was analyzed through content analysis, comparing focus group discussions to find common themes and patterns. Content analysis is described as "a research tool based on the systematic examination of the entire set of empirical data, with the unit of analysis being the

whole group, the group dynamics, the individual participants, or the participants' utterances" (Erik & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 187). Content analysis was deemed as the most appropriate method in relation to the objective of this study, as the method would allow for the finding of patterns regarding the Swedish consumers' perception of the roasting SMM strategy.

The participants were both audio and video recorded during the interviews, with their unanimous consent, to have their statements stored and reproduced. The recordings were done in order to assure that the participants' statements could be collected and later transcribed. The video recordings served as a method to accurately discern between the different voices participating in the interview sessions, whereas the audio recordings were uploaded to the website Wreally for transcription (see appendix 4). Notes were also taken during the interview sessions as a supplementary way of writing down common themes and highlights, as well as physical cues and indications from the participants that could be omitted from the audio recordings and left missing from the transcripts. The task of moderating and leading the interviews was assigned to one researcher, whereas the other one was responsible for observing the interviews, taking notes, and checking the technical appliances used to tape and record the interviews. Both asked supplementary questions throughout the interview process to clarify and further develop specific answers from the interviewees.

The perspectives gathered from the focus groups were analyzed by initially transcribing the recorded material from the four separate group interviews. These transcriptions were subsequently coded using Quirkos (see appendix 5), a software program that facilitates the coding of considerable amounts of transcribed material. Once the transcriptions were coded, the underlying themes found from

the interviews were compared to the theoretical framework in order to draw conclusions regarding the possible transferability of roasting as a SMM strategy to the Swedish market.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the course of this study, ethical principles in research brought forward by Crang and Cook (2007), Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), and Lind (2019a) have been meticulously followed. Voluntariness, integrity, confidentiality, and anonymity are especially important in research within social sciences (Lind, 2019a). Prior to the focus group sessions, the participants in this study were informed about its purpose, their consent to be recorded was requested and agreed upon, and they were presented the opportunity to be anonymous to protect their personal information. These steps were in line with the recommendations from Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008). To ensure the opportunity for anonymity, the participants were presented with this possibility as a group before the group interviews took place, as well as privately after the transcripts had been produced. Out of the 20 participants involved in the focus group interviews, two participants decided to be anonymous. This request was met by changing the participants' first and last names. This study took participants' integrity and confidentiality into consideration by responsibly handling personal information, with an important part being that the empirical material was not accessed by unauthorized people or third parties (Lind, 2019a). The interviewees were also informed about their ability to cancel their participation at any point without having to state their reason as to why.

Reliability

The researchers have sought to ensure this study's reliability and credibility by considering these aspects as well as authenticity and validity throughout its

methodological choices (Lind, 2019a). The authenticity of this study, which refers to whether the gathered information is genuine and reproduced correctly, has been managed by using primarily sourced information through focus group interviews (Lind, 2019a). Interviews are often useful as they provide first-hand information about a phenomenon (Lind, 2019a). This information may not always be reliable, however, as it is given from the participants' perspective. The participants may mislead, remember poorly, or give answers that they believe the interviewers desire instead of answering honestly (Yin & Nilsson, 2007). However, the researchers did not feel that the focus group participants showed any signs of this. The participant discussions were believed to be truthful, genuine, and provide an extensive understanding of the topic. By consistently describing and outlining this study's methodological processes, the degree of reliability was also strengthened, as the transparency allows for the replication of this study (Yin & Nilsson, 2007).

Limitations

Although beneficial in producing shared understandings, the focus group method is coupled with its associated risks and limitations. Focus group research is regarded as open-ended in its nature and cannot be fully predetermined despite the extent of planning, as some participants might be reluctant to talk in a group setting (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). When grouped together, participants can be susceptible to so-called 'groupthink', exemplified by Crang and Cook (2007) as a leading figure setting out an opinion early on that can be difficult to disagree with, in the face of possible hostile reception. This would limit any potential for deeper discussions as the group setting could increase the pressure for consensus and acquiescence. This is especially relevant for this study, as humor can be highly subjective and a private matter that

participants may not be completely honest about when expressing to others who might not share their views. If the topic is sensitive or difficult to discuss, there is a risk that the participants do not pursue an active and open discussion (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The researchers guiding the discussion through their delivery of questions can also affect the answers given by the participants, having the ability to influence and being co-producers of the qualitative results together with the interview subjects (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Another limitation regarding this study is the lack of understanding of how Americans perceive roasting and their attitudes towards the social media content. This study assumes that it is positively met by these consumers due to the large following and level of engagement that the Wendy's Twitter page has. This study solely focuses on the transferability of the roasting SMM strategy to specifically the Swedish market and how Swedish consumers could perceive it. It does not compare the consumer attitudes between the USA and Sweden. This decision was made due to the lack of resources and time available.

Precautions were taken during this study to minimize methodological limitations. For instance, to ensure that the participants were comfortable with being interviewed in a group setting, they were familiarized with the interview style ahead of time and asked if they approved of being interviewed in this way. During the interview, the participants were also asked open and non-leading questions in order to reveal their true opinions and attitudes about the interview topics (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). Specific individuals who did not express themselves were specifically called upon to have an opportunity to share their thoughts so that no participant was left out of the discussion. The participants' answers were also met with words of confirmation and encouragement (e.g., "great answer") to

build participant courage and promote discussion (Dalen, 2015).

Findings

The findings chapter analyzes factors positively affecting customer engagement among Swedish consumers, how cultural differences may affect customer engagement, and consumers' avoidance of inauthentic content. The analysis will give insight into Swedish consumers' perception of the roasting strategy, with high-quality and relatable content incentivizing engagement, and perceived foreignness, lack of authenticity, and inability to foster customer-firm relationships limiting engagement.

Factors That Positively Affect Customer Engagement Among Swedish Consumers

Quality of Humor in Content

Through the course of this study, focus group participants emphasized that the quality of the content is a determining factor in encouraging them to 'like' or share the branded content with their social circle. When asked what specific attributes would elevate the value of the posted content, humor was nearly unanimously agreed upon. They answered that they would engage with humorous social media content to a far higher degree than content that was not. This can be understood through different customer engagement theories established by Muntinga et al. (2011), Luarn et al. (2015), Ge and Gretzel (2017), and Meyer (2000). These studies suggest that content with entertaining and funny aspects are effective in encouraging consumers to 'like', comment, and share. Their findings are mirrored in the focus group discussions with participants saying that they want to share funny content with their friends, especially on social media, as these individuals are already sharing memes and other jokes on the different platforms to satisfy their psychological

needs (Li et al., 2020). Agnes presents Pantamera as an example:

“But remember those Pantamera commercials? I thought they were so hilarious. I shared almost every single one with my friends.” - Agnes

Humor having a positive effect on customer engagement (Muntinga et al., 2011; Luarn et al., 2015; Ge & Gretzel, 2017; Meyer, 2000) was also found to be transferable to roasting. In the focus groups, consumers were asked what they thought of the social media strategy and interviewees unanimously agreed that they enjoyed the content, with nearly all participants saying they would also 'like' and share the content with their friends. A minor but significant group of participants even expressed a willingness to follow a page like Wendy's to keep receiving similar content. When asked why, participants explained that the funny nature of the content makes it valuable and worth sharing.

“It's jokes, everybody likes jokes. If it's a good clever joke, people are going to like it. People are going to think, ‘Oh, that's cool!’ and retweet.” - Olle

It seems that companies can draw customers to them and encourage engagement by providing consumers with content that they are anyways seeking out on social media, such as meme-humor and jokes in Wendy's case. However, participants do stress that the quality of the content and jokes is essential for its success. It therefore becomes crucial for the humor, jokes, or memes being used in the content to be up to date and relevant. This can be explained by the findings from Li et al. (2020) regarding the importance of being proactive in order to promote customer engagement. It would not function to use old and outdated humor, as this would make the content less valuable

to the consumer, and they would in turn no longer seek it out.

“Yeah, you can really tell which ones are actually funny, which ones are very forced.” - Oscar J.

Consumers enjoy and are curious about novelty and the latest trends. The same applies to Wendy’s and their roasting content. Swedish companies will not be able to copy old content from Wendy’s for example, but must instead proactively search for the latest jokes and trends in order to stay relevant and provide content that is perceived as valuable by consumers. The roasting format could be applied, but the jokes and humor being used must be new and fresh. Fia explains that companies will have to keep updating the humor being used on their social media pages in order to stay relevant:

“It’s important to follow and keep up with the times, and understand the discourse of today’s youth.” - Fia

According to participants, when the content being posted is of quality and fulfills the aforementioned criteria of being truly funny, relevant, and up to date, it is deemed more valuable and consumers are therefore more likely to engage with the branded content and act as pseudo marketers (Muntinga et al., 2011). Wendy’s roasting content was appreciated by Swedes and could therefore initially function as a strategy for customer engagement. However, for the content to maintain its value to consumers and secure customer engagement over time, it must be updated in accordance with the latest internet humor and trends.

“If it’s good content, if people think it’s funny, and if it’s good roasting, I think it is definitely a good way to reach many people very quickly.” - Agnes

Relatability of Content

Another factor that participants emphasize regarding how engaging social media content is, is the relatability of said content. This is in agreement with previous literature about the importance of relatability in the acceptance of advertising (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). When presented with the Wendy’s roasting content, they found it to be relatable and therefore worthy of engagement. The humor, based on internet and meme culture, being used is specifically what the participants found to be relatable. Having grown up with the internet, the age demographic that the interviewees find themselves in (18-30 years old) has a pre-established community composed of people participating in a culture and humor specific to the internet. They, therefore, appreciate the jokes being made by Wendy’s as they are based on the community’s culture.

“Everyone that sort of has grown up with the internet, I’d say. They would appreciate it. All jokes are based around the same internet culture.” - Hannes

The focus group discussions can be understood through Riecken and Hensel’s (2012) theory on how people are more appreciative of content that matches their humor. As the participants in this study can identify their internet-based humor and culture in Wendy’s content, they find it funnier and are more likely to respond positively and engage with it. Nora vocalizes this when she states:

“I feel more connected with Wendy’s since I personally think it’s funny and something I can relate to. Wendy’s content is something I can interact with and like and comment and share with my friends.” - Nora

Wendy’s takes advantage of the already established culture that exists on the internet among the younger generation and

tries to tie themselves to it by producing jokes and content based on the culture. In this manner, Wendy's manages to digitally bring in the younger internet community and draw them to their content. Wendy's success within customer engagement makes sense when analyzed through the perspective of experiential engagement as explained by Harmeling et al. (2016) and Schouten et al. (2007). Wendy's SMM strategy brings people from a community together while making themselves a part of it, establishing connections with consumers and encouraging them to engage with their content by making them feel as though they are a part of something larger (Harmeling et al., 2016; Schouten et al., 2007). This even seems to be the case for Swedes, as participants in this study also felt that they were a part of this internet community and could also relate to the internet humor being used by the roasting SMM strategy. They see the content as relatable to themselves and most people in their age demographic, suggesting that these people are more likely to engage with roasting content and act as pseudo marketers (Harmeling et al., 2016). The strategy may therefore, for the most part, just be transferable to the younger Swedish age demographic rather than older ones, as these are not a part of the community to the same extent. The participants in this study took notice of this specific targeting.

"This feels more targeted towards a younger audience, than an older one. Our age would find this funny. My mom would probably not find it that funny." - Malin

The participants do believe that there may be some difficulties in relating to the Swedish consumer if companies decide to adopt the roasting strategy, however. They discuss a language and humor barrier, believing that it would be weird if a Swedish company suddenly decides to start posting Americanized content in English. From a brand authenticity

perspective, it seems that the participants already have an idea of how Swedish brands should advertise and believe that American-based content in English would not be fitting (Beverland, 2006; Eigenraam et al., 2021; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). They express that it would be odd if Swedish companies were to move on from their Swedish style of communication in favor of one that was more American:

"I think many would perceive that this Swedish company is copying the strategy of a larger American company. So I think if they started the exact same thing on Twitter, people would probably think that these guys just copied what others did in the USA." - Nestor

"It would be weird if a random company here started to do this and just ripped it off." - Fia

Participants in the focus groups express that they would feel more connected to a Swedish brand and its social media content if their posts were in Swedish and used Swedish humor rather than just copying Wendy's roasting humor. This makes sense from a brand authenticity perspective as the companies would no longer be deviating from their preconceived expectations (Beverland, 2006; Eigenraam et al., 2021; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). It would also make their content more relatable when taking the experiential engagement perspective into account, as companies would establish a smaller and tighter sense of community based not only on the internet but also on nationality and language (Harmeling et al., 2016; Schouten et al., 2007). The participants in this study value and desire to maintain the Swedish communities and connections they have with Swedish brands (Harmeling et al., 2016; Schouten et al., 2007). They therefore describe a need for adapting the content to fit with the style of humor and memes prevalent in Sweden, rather than

blatantly copying Wendy's more American style of humor:

"I think if they wrote in English it would be kind of obvious that it was a strategy. I would be more aware of it. Maybe if they wrote it in Swedish and it was very relatable to Sweden and what's happening now, I think I would find it really funny."
- Ebba

The disconnection of Swedish companies posting American styled content was apparent when participants of the focus groups were presented with the photoshopped Wendy's tweets that were made to look as if MAX posted them. The participants felt that the fit was weird and did not believe that their new content reflected the company properly. This study therefore finds that for the roasting SMM strategy to be truly transferable to the Swedish market, the content of the strategy should be adapted to the Swedish language and humor. The participants believe that this would make the content more relatable and valuable, and that they would in turn be more likely to engage with the content:

"Maybe they can do Swedish memes or something that the Swedish population can relate to. They would have to adapt the humor to Sweden. Since they are a Swedish company and don't have that many restaurants worldwide. I can't really relate the memes or the content to MAX as a company." - Nora

These findings open up the question if Swedes have a sense of national pride and preference when it comes to their domestic brands. There seems to be a desire among consumers for their Swedish companies to act Swedish and maintain their heritage in their communication. The extent to which this is true should be further investigated in future research. Companies hoping to improve customer engagement and build strong connections with consumers through the use of the roasting SMM

strategy should still keep this into account though and adapt the content accordingly.

Brand Connection

During the focus groups, participants mentioned that having a deeper connection with brands made their content more valuable and was an effective way to promote long-term engagement and stronger customer relationships. When they were presented with Wendy's tweets, they felt less connected to the brand and therefore the tweets since they had not previously eaten at or interacted with Wendy's. In contrast with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the participants of this study did not necessarily feel a deeper connection to Wendy's as a brand, even though they found their content fun and engaging. Despite being willing to 'like' and share the content they deemed valuable with their social circle, creating a win-win relationship between the firm and customers (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), the relationship was limited to this, and no deeper sense of connection was observed between consumers and the brand.

"Since this company is not local, I don't think it is as relatable, because it's so far away. So maybe you don't care when you see it and you just see it as a funny thing."
- Lisa

According to Harmeling et al. (2016) and Li et al. (2020), this could mean that roasting would only be transferable for a short initial time period, as consumers will lack the feeling of psychological ownership of the brand that would help with long-term customer engagement. Not having a deeper connection and relationship could therefore lead to diminishing effectiveness of the strategy over time. Participants in this study echo this opinion:

"So in that sense, regarding short-term visibility, likes, and interactions, Wendy's

strategy is great. But I'm not sure if it's sustainable in the long-term.” - Agnes

To achieve a longer lasting strategy, the participants in this study express a need for a deeper meaning of the brand such as MAX's efforts with social and environmental responsibility, a topic that is very popular and meaningful among Swedes. Participants in this study also refer to Oatly in this case, explaining that their customers have stronger relationships with their brand because their brand is deeply tied to environmental activism. Oatly's SMM strategy specifically targets their customers and the community they have built around individuals interested in environmental responsibility. From an experiential engagement perspective, Oatly brings their community together by providing content that attracts and brings customers to their social media pages (Harmeling et al., 2016; Schouten et al., 2007). Their content is centered around environmental topics such as EU regulations and their failure to be stricter regarding emission reductions. This content provides customers with more opportunities to engage with the company and its values, and can lead to long-term customer-firm relationships due to the emotional and social connections consumers start to make with the company (Schouten et al., 2007; Arnould & Price, 1993).

“Oatly stands for a lot of big values. They're trying to be personable with their tweets and interact closely and exclusively with their customers because they have a very specific customer base.” - Hanna E.

Oatly also speaks to their customer base directly through their social media posts by asking their customers if they are having a good day and if they have had a latte today. The interviewees appreciate the positive tone and direct communication to customers found in this content. They

also experience their content as intimate and humanized. In terms of the experiential engagement theory, the participants believe that creating stronger communities around real values and then communicating directly and intimately with said communities would be more effective in building and maintaining longer lasting customer-firm relationships (Harmeling et al., 2016; Schouten et al., 2007; Arnould & Price, 1993).

“Yeah, the tweets are great. They give like a personal touch to it, you feel like it's a real person behind this.” - Andreas

Oatly has a strongly defined brand regarding environmental responsibility that their customers already find themselves attached to. The participants find this to be an important factor in the sustainability of their content engagement, as they believe individuals that were already connected with the brand are more likely to 'like', comment, and share their content in the long-term. Their approach therefore functions better in retaining their current consumers over time rather than gaining new followers (Harmeling et al., 2016; Schouten et al., 2007; Arnould & Price, 1993). The interviewees do however still agree that, although it may be unsustainable in the long-term, Wendy's strategy would have more engagement and a larger reach through their striking and humoristic approach. Here this study finds a difference between the effect Oatly's and Wendy's strategies may have. While Oatly's strategy is focused on retaining long-term company-customer relationships and engagement, the roasting SMM strategy seems to be more focused on high engagement and visibility in the short-term. For roasting as a strategy to be transferable in the long-term, it can therefore be argued that companies need a brand with a deeper meaning in order to build stronger communities and thereafter couple this meaning with their SMM content. It is most likely not enough to be

solely funny on the companies' social media platforms since it will not build strong relationships with Swedish customers, as participants in this study did not feel company connections through the roasting content, which will probably result in an unsustainable and short lasting strategy.

A Differing Culture May Lead To a Differing Appreciation for Roasting

Most interviewees stated that they have previously been exposed to roasting in various contexts, overseas and domestically, between people, companies and sports teams through both traditional media and online settings. The examples they give include social media, celebrity roasts on television, and message boards such as Reddit. Roasting thus seems to be a concept that Swedish consumers have been familiar with since before. They did, however, perceive it as foreign to Swedes in some capacity and associate the practice with American culture and humor:

"...Because when I see this, I think it's American." - Alva

When faced with questions about roasting and their perception of the phenomenon, the interviewees recognized and attributed various characteristics, describing the roasting content as being an overall 'fun' approach to SMM, while also being 'ruthless', 'unexpected', and 'aggressive' at the same time. It was also described as basing itself on sarcastic humor, which oftentimes could be perceived as mean by some individuals. A few participants characterize some of Wendy's retorts and replies on Twitter as particularly aggressive and 'too personal'. The sarcastic American-styled humor being employed by Wendy's can therefore be appealing to those Swedish audiences that are appreciative of this type of humor, but also serve as a potential deterrent for some consumers that might find their remarks and jibes to be mean-spirited and

offensive. These findings can be understood through research from Sternthal and Craig (1973), and Riecken and Hensel (2012), which emphasize that the presence of humor could be interpreted in different ways and that groups of people are more likely to engage with content that features a specific type of humor that they enjoy. Wendy's SMM roasting strategy could therefore be especially polarizing in that it may successfully engage consumers with a matching sense of humor but also have adverse effects and exclude other customer audiences in Sweden that are not familiar with or appreciative of a more American and coarser style of communication. This is in accordance with previous literature regarding the difficulty of translating humor between cultures (Popa, 2004; Low, 2011). This roasting humor would consequently not function as an effective driver for customer engagement for these less enthusiastic audiences in Sweden (Harmeling et al., 2016), leading to lower customer engagement if the communication style does not fit in the cultural context.

"I think also, if you have a bit of sarcastic humor then you easily connect with the brand, but I think it could do the opposite if you just think that sarcasm is a way of being mean, then, I think they can lose customers as well." - Andreas

Although the roasting content is described as funny and entertaining by the Swedish participants in this study, some consumers may not find themselves fully aligned with the Americanized approach to communication, as it may clash with their collective Swedish personal identity and values, and therefore limit potential customer engagement (Muntinga et al., 2011). The difference in values between the USA and Sweden was emphasized by the participants as Sweden was described as more politically correct. This could make it more difficult to post roasting jokes as the comedic line might be more

sensitive, making the already polarizing humor riskier as it may not only alienate certain audiences, it may even offend them (Sternthal & Craig, 1973; Riecken & Hensel, 2012). Thus, Swedish brands and companies adopting roasting as an SMM strategy should take these cultural differences into account. Ignoring the different communicative and cultural nuances could lead to adverse outcomes such as negative word of mouth spread.

“I think we're more politically correct here in Sweden. This could be taboo, like ‘is it really okay to say this to others?’.”
- Andreas

When reflecting on this, participants in this study also brought up that Swedish consumers are accustomed to companies communicating in a more professional and reserved manner. In line with the brand authenticity theory, they believe that brands deviating from these cultural norms and expectations by using the roasting style of communication could be unsuccessful in promoting engagement as Swedes are less used to this form of humor in social media marketing. They may therefore find it weird and undesirable (Beverland, 2006; Eigenraam et al., 2021; Grayson & Martinec, 2004).

“Maybe, maybe it'll work, but I don't know. I feel like Swedes want their commercials to be half boring, maybe that's just me.”
- Olle

On the other hand, the participants also emphasize the shock value that this social media strategy could have if a Swedish company were to adopt it. The same deviation from the norm could have the opposite effect of the one previously discussed in the Beverland (2006), Eigenraam et al. (2021), and Grayson and Martinec (2004) theories, with positive outcomes. Since this form of aggressive communication is unusual for Swedish corporations, the interviewees all describe

the potential for big reactions. Several participants say they would engage with the content and share it with their friends just because of the shock value, and some believe that it would even trend on traditional media platforms. This would surely lead to high levels of engagement and visibility, but would most likely be short-lived.

“The Swedish press would write about it.”
- Hanna E.

Despite the possible shock value, most participants in this study state that they would prefer the more cordial approach observed in Oatly's style of communication, rather than Wendy's blunter and more aggressive approach. The positive and community oriented content seems to better satisfy their psychological desires (Li et al., 2020). They believe that Swedish consumers will also prefer this softer tone in the long-term and that a roasting SMM strategy will most likely be short-lived as it feels unfitting in the context of Swedish culture. This particular finding is expected in conjunction with the theoretical basis on Scandinavian culture by Cappelen and Dahlberg (2018) and Syvertsen et al. (2014), as Swedish culture regards characteristics connected to politeness and humility not only as virtuous, but the conventional and expected way individuals and organizations should act within the Swedish cultural context. Wendy's on the other hand is perceived as brash and boastful by the interviewees, which could be valuable to consumers in the short-term due to its shock value. However, in the long-term, consumers seem to value minimal deviation from the cultural expectations placed on brands (Beverland, 2006; Eigenraam et al., 2021; Grayson & Martinec, 2004).

“This one (Oatly) you can like consistently. The same strategy can be used in the long-term and have a bit of

longevity. With Wendy's strategy it's probably a trend and is going to die out soon, you can't keep doing it forever, and you will have to build a new image for your brand."

- Hannes

Participants in this study also perceive the roasting strategy as nonchalant and offhanded with an 'I don't care'-attitude. They continue to explain that a brand using this type of communication is thought of as less serious by consumers. This is crucial when considering the company limitations in the transferability of the roasting strategy. Companies that wish to be perceived as serious or that have already established this brand image should avoid the SMM strategy as it would be inconsistent with their branding and deemed bizarre and undesirable by consumers (Beverland, 2006; Eigenraam et al., 2021; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). This study found a trend that the roasting SMM strategy seems to be a better fit for low-involvement categorized companies with a less serious brand image while being a worse fit for high-involvement categorized companies with more serious expectations regarding the quality and experience offered.

"But roasting is more like the brand doesn't really care. Like the brand is less serious about itself." - Agnes

Furthermore, the choice of platform was deemed to be a crucial part when successfully implementing a roasting strategy in Sweden. The interviewees found Twitter to be a great platform due to its technical features such as re-tweets and shorter communication style, which other social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook lacked. Participants do, however, mention that platforms like Instagram and TikTok are more popular than Twitter among the younger age demographic in Sweden. It might therefore be worth expanding their content to fit on

these platforms as well. Although roasting started on Twitter, the Swedish internet culture is more prevalent on Instagram and TikTok. In order to properly reach, connect with, and bring the desired internet community and age demographic together around their content (Harmeling et al., 2016; Schouten et al., 2007), companies may have to adapt their content to these social media platforms.

"I think it would have worked, mostly for the younger generation that thinks it's really funny, but maybe that they also need to expand outside of Twitter to like Tik-Tok, Instagram, and other platforms so that they can interact with younger generations. My friends aren't active on Twitter and it's not something that I use. So maybe if you would like to reach out to more youngsters in Sweden, maybe you have to think of Instagram and Tik-Tok."

- Nora

An Avoidance of Inauthentic Content

Throughout this study, participants were questioned on the type of social media content that they enjoyed and what factors would lead them to engage more with branded social media posts. A factor that was repeatedly mentioned throughout the interviews was authenticity. Several interviewees mentioned that they can often see through a company's efforts to be 'relatable' or 'likable' and are in turn just seen as a company trying to exploit a trend for financial gain. Olle explains:

"It's all about the quality of the adverts and how pandering it is, how genuine it is or at least how genuine it comes off as."

- Olle

A factor in the perceived authenticity of a SMM strategy is whether or not the company in question is the originator of the strategy, such as Wendy's with roasting. This can be understood through the lens of the Li et al. (2020) study, as consumers value the proactive delivery of

new content instead of brands just hopping on social media trends. The trend-like nature of the roasting strategy has a negative impact on the perceived authenticity of the adopting actors. The interviewees agree that companies hopping on social media trends can be seen as inauthentic. This, in turn, could affect customer engagement negatively according to Eigenraam et al. (2021). The participants echo this train of thought when explaining that brands found copying other companies' social media content or style are seen as uninteresting.

“Once everyone starts to do it, it's not new anymore and it's not funny and it just becomes another commercial that you skip.” - Ebba

In relation to being perceived as authentic, the findings emphasize the need to have a first-mover advantage in order for the strategy to gain legitimacy from the consumers' point of view. According to the interviewees, the original creators of a trend have more credibility and their brands can therefore be identified and synonymous with their corresponding form of social media communication. This study finds that once consumers view roasting as being associated with Wendy's, due to being the originator of the strategy, ensuing brands and companies that adopt this strategy may be perceived as inauthentic. Once too many companies start jumping in, the marketing strategy is perceived solely as a fad and merely the original actors that pioneered the trend are thought of as genuine:

“If you're first, then it becomes something that's unique for your brand and your marketing. When someone else does this, they won't have the same advantage, and it suddenly feels more corporate and fake.”
- Oscar K.

This study also finds that an overall oversaturation of the same SMM strategy and content seems to have a negative effect on consumer perception of the strategy and its authenticity. This is because the oversaturation of the content makes it seem like a fad that companies are trying to jump on and exploit for personal gain. Repeated usage over time by multiple companies therefore seems to diminish the effectiveness of the roasting strategy and possibly lead to diminishing marginal benefits for the adopting brands. This can be understood through the Li et al. (2020) study as consumers are not satisfied with copied content and instead desire proactive SMM activity. This could imply that adapting the Wendy's-styled roasting strategy could be minimally effective due to the strategy's popularity in the US. However, this may not be the case when considering the roasting strategy's transferability to Sweden as the strategy is essentially non-existent in the Swedish market.

“But I remember that everyone else also adopted the same kind of strategy and then everything was so relatable all the time. And I got so burned out. It didn't matter anymore because companies were only posting it because it worked. So it stopped being relatable. You saw through it and it wasn't genuine anymore. It got saturated.”
- Olle

A risk that participants in this study wanted to lift during focus group discussions was the risk for brand image inconsistency. They described a need for consistency between the content published by a company and its original branding. When asked how they would react to MAX adopting the roasting strategy, they explained that it would be unfitting for them as they have previously built their brand around being providers of relatively higher quality products and profiling

themselves as sustainability-focused in their operations. These participant opinions make sense through the theoretical perspective of brand authenticity as consumers have a preconceived opinion on MAX and how they should act and communicate (Beverland, 2006; Eigenraam et al., 2021; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). As their identity is perceived as a more serious one, the interviewees feel that it would clash to have an unserious presence on social media by the means of roasting, thus making the content seem less authentic and in turn less valuable to consumers, leading to lower levels of customer engagement (Eigenraam et al., 2021). Companies hoping to adopt the roasting SMM strategy must therefore evaluate if the communication style matches their previous brand image or risk being deemed as inauthentic and trend hopping.

“It would be such a big shift from the company perception they have right now. It would honestly feel like an obvious marketing gimmick more than anything else because it's so far from what they are right now.” - Hannes

The interviewees build on this idea when they go on to say that adopting a social media strategy like roasting would be more effective for a company without an established brand or identity. This study's findings indicate that not having a strong previous brand image may make adopting a new one through SMM communication smoother and easier. There would not be the same risk of company branding clashing with its communication style. These companies would also have less of a reputation to lose and more to gain in terms of visibility and building initial brand recognition.

“If you don't have that kind of differentiating characteristic like MAX does with social responsibility and having better meat. If you're stuck in the middle,

you don't stand out, and you have no prior history, I think it will work.” - Andreas

Another important aspect to consider in the adoption of the roasting strategy is the industry in which the company finds itself. Many participants believe that companies operating within industries that are expected to be serious by consumers are bad fits for the roasting strategy. Some examples that were given were B2B companies, the high-end fashion industry, and high-end restaurants. Companies in these industries are perceived and expected to maintain a more serious image, in line with providing a higher standard and quality of products and experiences. Moving away from the brand image expectations by adopting a less serious communication style could have adverse effects (Eigenraam et al., 2021) and lead to a loss in credibility and trustworthiness. Companies that require these characteristics in their brand image should therefore avoid adopting the roasting SMM strategy, as it can otherwise have detrimental effects to their reputation amongst Swedish consumers.

“I feel like a fast food company, there doesn't need to be a lot of trust in the company. You just grab a burger. I don't need to have a lot of trust in the company. But if it would be a little bit more serious of a company, I would probably not feel that good about them having a roast Twitter account.” - Hannes

Through the course of this study, a noticeable trend was found that content with a higher degree of authenticity was found to be more valuable and compelling amongst the Swedish participants, whereas inauthentic and copied content was not. Swedish consumers should thus be marketed towards accordingly, as they otherwise aggressively avoid content that feels ingenuine and disconnected from the original brand image. A Swedish company looking into adopting the roasting strategy

for customer engagement purposes should therefore have a brand image that corresponds well with the strategy, find themselves in a suitable industry, produce original content, and avoid copying an already saturated SMM communication style.

“If it's just pandering to me as a demographic, generally you kind of see through that. I would like to think anyway, and then you're ignoring the commercials out of spite and not interacting with it.”

- Olle

Conclusions

Through the course of this study, Swedish focus group participants discuss their reactions and evaluations of the roasting SMM strategy and how consumers in Sweden would most likely perceive it. This study concludes that the roasting SMM strategy is in fact transferable to the Swedish market due to the relatable humor being used in the content. The participants in this study found the roasting content to be funny enough to engage with through likes, comments, and shares. They also thought the content was relatable as it was based around an internet culture, humor, and community they themselves felt a part of, making them feel comfortable with contributing non-transactional resources.

However, clear limitations were also found that could affect the possible transferability of the SMM strategy to Sweden. These include the need for high-quality content, the perceived foreign nature of the roasting SMM strategy, and the strategy's inability to build long-term consumer-firm connections and relationships. These limitations are further explained in the discussion chapter, and how they can be managed is discussed in the managerial implications chapter.

Discussion

As mentioned in the conclusion, this study finds that transferring the roasting SMM strategy to Sweden is possible, but it is difficult and includes several limitations. A limitation that the participants stress in the adoption of the strategy is the quality of the content. The quality must be kept high, and if the jokes being used are not funny or up to date, consumers will not feel inclined to interact and engage with the content, limiting the transferability of the strategy. Another limiting factor is that Swedish consumers may perceive the content as too American, possibly restricting how relatable the content is to certain Swedes that are unused to this more aggressive form of communication. Swedes are used to a particular form of brand communication and deviating too far from this may be polarizing and alienate certain consumers. This study also finds that consumers might find it weird and off-putting if Swedish brands start posting content in English and with American humor, with this study's participants claiming this would be unfitting. There seems to be a preference among Swedish consumers that Swedish brands act and stay true to their Swedish origins and not divert too far from this. Furthermore, this study concludes that authenticity is another key factor in the perceived value and therefore customer engagement of the roasting content. Brands that are perceived to be hopping on a trend will most likely be seen as inauthentic by Swedish consumers, and their content will therefore be ignored. This study finds that being the first employer of a SMM strategy is of value as the form of communication becomes tied to the brand's identity and gives the company credibility. Companies will thus be unable to just copy the roasting content published by Wendy's but must instead adapt it and make it their own. This study also concludes that there is a need for brand consistency. If a company wishes to employ a roasting

SMM strategy, this form of communication must match their previous brand image and the expectations their industry places on them.

The roasting SMM strategy seems to also have problems regarding its long-term sustainability in Sweden. This study finds that roasting content in itself is not enough to build strong connections with Swedish customers and that there instead is a need for a deeper brand meaning around strong values for customers to tie themselves to. This is in order to build more long-lasting relationships with customers that allow for more intimate communities with a feeling of psychological ownership of the brand in question, in turn allowing for longer lasting customer engagement.

Managerial Implications

Although the roasting strategy was found to be transferable to the Swedish market, the strategy also faces several potential limitations that companies looking to adopt the strategy should consider and manage. One is that the successful adoption of the roasting SMM strategy is limited to specific types of brands and companies. Companies looking to employ the strategy must have a brand image that matches the strategy's style of communication. Consumers will otherwise find the lack of brand consistency weird and perceive the content as inauthentic and less valuable, leading to lower engagement levels. The roasting SMM strategy is found to be most befitting new market entrants or start-ups looking to distinguish themselves as market disruptors or challenge incumbent market leaders, as these will not have a previous brand image that the communication style might clash with. Companies interested in the strategy should also consider the industry they operate within, as the strategy is found to be more transferable to industries characterized by low-involvement goods and services (e.g. fast-food and FMCG) rather than industries and markets

characterized with providing high-involvement goods or services. The latter features more serious branding and is expected to provide a higher perceived standard of quality, expertise, or experience delivery. The unserious and nonchalant tone of the roasting SMM strategy was deemed by this study's findings to be in conflict with these companies' more serious expectations. It would therefore be ineffective in helping them with their customer engagement. Similarly, roasting should be seen as a B2C strategy for awakening wider brand visibility and customer engagement, rather than being utilized in B2B contexts due to its potentially detrimental effects on their expected professional and expert brand image.

In light of the evidence presented in this study, roasting could function as a short-term strategy in order to gain brand visibility and reach, but unsustainable for a longer time period, due to its inability to build long-lasting brand connections with consumers through solely comic relief. Actors that wish to build long-lasting connections and relationships with their Swedish consumer audience should consider adapting the strategy by making it more cordial, community-based, and focused around strong Swedish values such as environmental and social responsibility. Companies should therefore first build their brand around similarly strong values and then produce content that is connected to and consistent with said values. This will in turn give the content a deeper meaning for Swedish consumers to identify themselves with, making it more relatable and valuable to its consumers. Through this process, companies will be able to build stronger connections and communities. Companies should then communicate with their communities cordially, intimately, and directly, similarly to what Oatly currently does with their SMM strategy, in order to make company audiences feel even more

deeply connected with their brands. A more intimate and cordial communication style will also be less striking to an average Swedish consumer who is less used to an aggressive SMM strategy such as Wendy's, potentially making the content more pleasing and digestible. The roasting SMM strategy, as currently presented, is perceived as a shallower, more crass, and short-term communication strategy on social media. This, in high likelihood, could diminish the marginal effectiveness of the strategy as time progresses, as consumers may perceive a direct adoption of the strategy as gimmicky and inauthentic due to its trend-like nature.

Adopters of the roasting SMM strategy should also be aware that the strategy can be relatively demanding regarding resources as they will need to keep up with the latest internet trends and humor in order for the content to be of quality and effective in promoting customer engagement. It should therefore not be employed unless the necessary resources are in place to effectively execute the strategy with high-quality content. Actors operating in the Swedish environment should also adapt the content to the Swedish context by incorporating the Swedish language as well as comedic material about Swedish news, culture, and society. This will make the content more relatable to Swedish consumers and create a tighter community around not only internet culture and humor but also nationality and language. The closer and stronger community will most likely allow for higher levels of engagement in the long term. It will also allow brands to stay true to their Swedish heritage, something that was found valuable amongst Swedish consumers. Companies should moreover be considerate not to overstep Swedish customs regarding humor and delicate PC culture, as this study finds the comedic boundaries to be more sensitive in Sweden in relation to the USA. This could otherwise alienate certain Swedish

audiences and possibly even offend individuals into spreading negative word of mouth about the company.

Theoretical Contributions

Through the execution of this study, it was found that the roasting SMM marketing strategy is transferable to the Swedish market due to the content's relatable humor. The question then becomes whether this is a unique case for Sweden or if the consumer behavioral patterns could also be seen in other nations. When considering the fact that the content was valuable to the participants of the focus groups because of its basis on internet humor and culture, this study argues that the roasting content should therefore also be valuable and engaging to consumers in other nations as long as these consumers also have an attachment to internet humor and culture. The demographic would however still be limited to the younger population that grew up with the internet. That would most likely also mean that the strategy is probably less transferable to lesser developed countries with scarcer access to the internet. As Sweden is one of the more developed countries in the world regarding this aspect, it is most likely one of the easier markets to introduce the roasting strategy to. Theories should therefore consider the technological maturity of different markets when analyzing the transferability of different SMM strategies and content.

Sweden may be a more technologically developed country, but it was also found to have a more politically correct culture, possibly limiting the transferability of the roasting SMM strategy in this market. In accordance with previous studies done by Popa (2004) and Low (2011), the cultural differences, such as the acceptance of jokes, makes it more difficult to translate humor between different nations. This should therefore be a definitive factor that is considered when analyzing the transferability of SMM strategies using

humor to different countries. Although humor is found to be a strong motivator for customer engagement, there is a noticeable limitation in its ability to create long-lasting customer-firm connections. This, in turn, limits customers' feeling of psychological ownership of the brand, community building, and long-term engagement. This is in direct disagreement with the social exchange theory that says when both the customer and firm parties benefit from each other's activities, in this case through the exchange of valuable content and customer resources, they can connect and build an enriched and personal win-win relationship (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; De Vries et al., 2012; Harmeling et al., 2016; Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Swani et al., 2017). Although the participants in this study enjoyed and found the roasting content valuable, they experienced no deeper connection with the brand despite the fact that they would 'like' and share the brand's SMM content with their social circle. This theory should therefore be updated with respect to customer engagement on social media and specify that consumers, at least in Sweden, need a deeper brand meaning in addition to the comedic relief provided on social media to truly feel connected with a brand. The participants in this study cite social and environmental responsibility as examples of how to build the desired customer-firm relationships and strengthen brand communities.

This study finds that a successful implementation of the roasting SMM strategy is dependent on not only the adopter's previous company brand image but also on the industry branding and domestic context they find themselves in. Similarly to how consumers have a preconceived idea and expectations of companies based on their previous branding (Beverland, 2006; Eigenraam et al., 2021; Grayson & Martinec, 2004), this study's findings show that consumers have similar expectations on companies based

on the industry and country they operate within. Prior theories on brand consistency can therefore be expanded to include these factors as they also affect how effective the adoption of a SMM strategy might be. An unserious social media communication style might be unfitting for companies in more serious industries for example B2B companies, the high-end fashion industry, and high-end restaurants. An aggressive style of communication could also be unfitting for companies operating in more soft spoken countries like Sweden, with these consumers more than likely preferring cordial and polite content that evokes positive emotions. Existing in these contexts presents companies with certain expectations with their communication that, if not followed, can be perceived as ingenuine and off-putting. This particular insight could further be connected to Oatly's case and change of communication and tone from their aggressive stance against the Swedish milk industry to a friendlier and more community-based one better befitting of Swedish culture and behavior.

This study's findings also suggest that the first-mover advantage is also relevant when it comes to SMM strategies, with participants in the focus groups believing that actors who pioneer a style of communication are perceived as more authentic and credible by consumers. This, in turn, will lead to an increased likelihood of their social media content being engaged with by the consumers. Copying other companies' communication on social media, on the other hand, is seen as inauthentic, making the content less valuable and therefore less engaging. Oversaturation of the same SMM strategy was also seen to have a negative effect on the perceived value of the SMM content, as it would then be viewed as boring and corporate if too many companies start using the same communication style. Theories that seek to evaluate the factors that give certain SMM content a higher

perceived value should thus include the first-mover advantage and oversaturation as possible reasons.

Another factor that this study found that could affect the perceived value of SMM content is the choice of language and humor and its correspondence to the national and cultural context. If the language and humor being used in a SMM strategy are perceived as foreign, it was found to limit the relatability of the strategy's posts. Swedish consumers found it inauthentic and weird for Swedish companies to adopt a SMM strategy in English and with American humor, which may be the case for other countries as well. It seems that consumers find it inauthentic and corporate when companies post content of another language and humor than of its national origin as it is perceived as an exploitative attempt to jump on a trend to reach a wider international audience. Consumers wonder, for example, 'why else would a Swedish company write in English?' This study's findings, therefore, suggest that social media content must be more directly targeted at their consumer base and niche; otherwise the content ends up being too broad and feels pandering and inauthentic to consumers. Theories seeking to explain the transferability of SMM strategies should consider these factors and their potential effect on perceived authenticity and, in turn, customer engagement.

Further Research

This study found that the roasting SMM strategy was transferable to the Swedish market and possibly other countries due to its relatable humor based on the internet, a consumer perception that could be shared in several countries due to the internet's world-wide presence. However, this study's findings only suggest this and further research should be done in other countries to confirm whether or not this is the case. How transferable the roasting strategy is across different industries is

also worth investigating, and whether consumer perceptions follow the same pattern observed in fast-food industries across other ones providing low-involvement goods such as FMCG. It would also be of note whether the product involvement rate of an industry affects the transferability of the roasting SMM strategy such as this study suggests, and whether industries providing high-involvement products would be unfitting for similarly unserious forms of social media communication.

Earlier it was mentioned that having solely funny content is not enough to build long-term connections and relationships with Swedish customers. These customers desire deeper brand values and meaning in order to feel more connected and be willing to engage with a brand in the long term. This was found to be in disagreement with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; De Vries et al., 2012; Harmeling et al., 2016; Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Swani et al., 2017). It would be interesting to see whether this is an isolated case in only Sweden or if consumers from other nations would feel similarly. Is solely providing content that is valuable due its function as comedic relief on social media also insufficient in building connections with consumers in countries outside of Sweden?

Oversaturation of the roasting SMM strategy and the strategy being perceived as copied by consumers were found to be possible limitations in a successful adoption of the SMM strategy. This study, therefore, suggests in managerial implications that companies should adapt the content and make it their own. The question then arises whether these potential variations in execution would be sufficient enough to validate the adopters to be perceived as authentic or if consumers would see through the effort. This would also be worth researching

further as it could have implications on how to best adopt the roasting strategy and possibly SMM strategies in general.

The roasting SMM strategy should be adapted to the Swedish country and culture for it to more effectively function in the Swedish market. In the case of the roasting strategy, it was largely due to the foreign humor being used and the difficulty in translating this humor between cultures without some form of adaptation. It would be interesting whether this finding also applies to other types of SMM strategies that do not involve humor. Should all social media content be adapted to the host country and culture in order to avoid being perceived as inauthentic?

Another interesting finding in this study was that Swedish consumers seemed to want their brands to uphold their Swedish roots and branding in their communication. It could be of value to investigate whether these consumers are more drawn to companies whose communication is deeply tied to the country. There are precedents to this country based marketing such as IKEA with their colors and MAX with their 'Sveriges godaste hamburgare' (Sweden's most delicious hamburger) slogan. It would therefore be interesting to investigate whether this form of marketing would also be effective in a social media context.

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environment. *European Journal of
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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Participants

Name	Age	Occupation
Agnes Ahlman	26	Student
Alva Rydberg	23	Student
Andreas Wetterström	25	Student
Ebba Rydnell	24	Student
Ellen Håkman	28	Student
Emma Svensson	28	Student
Fia Rönnquist	26	Student
Hanna Ericsson	24	Student
Hanna Gutemar	23	Student
Hannes Norberg	25	Student
Lisa Andersson	25	Student
Malin Johansson	29	Student
Nestor Stensson	22	Student
Nora Wångerud	20	Student
Olle Rosenholmer	22	Student
Okka Köster	25	Student
Oscar Haarala	26	Security Specialist
Oscar Johansson	28	IT-Consultant
Oscar Kauffeldt	26	Student
Susanne Hermansson	22	Student

Appendix 2: Focus Group Material

[Wendy's Tweets]

The Irrelevant Streamer @Arozhh · 18 Dec
Replying to @Wendys

I want Wendy's But My Girlfriend wants McDonald's what do I do

Wendy's @Wendys

There are plenty of fish in the sea
7:52 PM - Dec 18, 2017
12 143 2,247

boredpanda.com

McDonald's @McDonaldsCorp

Black Friday **** Need copy and link****
6:00 AM - Nov 24, 2017
1,476 22,851 72,463

Wendy's @Wendys

When the tweets are as broken as the ice cream machine. [twitter.com/McDonaldsCorp/...](https://twitter.com/McDonaldsCorp/)
4:59 PM - Nov 24, 2017
8,441 287,069 766,309



McDonald's @McDonalds

Today we've announced that by mid-2018, all Quarter Pounder burgers at the majority of our restaurants will be cooked with fresh beef.
1:16 PM - Mar 30, 2017
1,241 5,893 8,051

Wendy's @Wendys
Replying to @McDonalds
.@McDonalds So you'll still use frozen beef in MOST of your burgers in ALL of your restaurants? Asking for a friend.
4:00 PM - Mar 30, 2017
7,672 73,582 182,087

Glorious One @lunaticfringe38 · Jun 16, 2017
@Wendys i ordered Burger King what do i do?

Wendy's @Wendys

Learn from your mistake
57 6:48 PM - Jun 16, 2017

See Wendy's's other Tweets

Wendy's @Wendys · Jan 12

Dang, your hair didn't even show up to your birthday party.
#NationalRoastDay

Zach Light @zachlight · Jan 12
Replying to @Wendys
Roast me. Bury me softly burger lady...

60 182 4,449

Pringles @Pringles · Feb 11, 2021
Replying to @Wendys

We like our roasts how we like our crisps- Parmesan & Roasted Garlic flavored.



Wendy's @Wendys

Tennis ball can, tennis ball flavor.
🤪 #NationalRoastDay
10:44 PM · Feb 11, 2021

HISTORY @HISTORY · Feb 11, 2021
Replying to @Wendys

On #ThisDayInHistory, the HISTORY Channel was roasted. Let's hear it.

Wendy's @Wendys

How's it feel knowing all your ratings come from nursing homes that lost the remote?
#NationalRoastDay
9:44 PM · Feb 11, 2021

Justin @Ys0204 · 13 Feb
Going to In n Out what should I get?@Wendys

Wendy's @Wendys
Out
4:24 PM - Feb 13, 2017
1 29 109

boredpanda.com

Patrick D. Jenkins @Drchoker
Replying to @Wendys
If the beef is never frozen, then how do you guys keep it fresh ?
8:39 PM - Dec 20, 2017
1 1

Wendy's @Wendys
Replying to @Drchoker
REFRIGERATORS
8:40 PM - Dec 20, 2017
1 3 83

boredpanda.com

SniperSwiper @SniperSwiper200 · 13 Feb
@Wendys My friends like wendy's but i dont, what do i tell them?

Wendy's @Wendys
Apologize for being wrong.
9:23 PM - Feb 13, 2017
4 70 242

boredpanda.com

Lewis @PolarSaurusRex · 4d
Replying to @Wendys
You know Burger King also has spicy chicken nuggets.
13 38 184

Wendy's @Wendys · 4d
Yeah, and there's also water in the bottom of the dumpster out back, if you're thirsty.
69 711 4,997

Jordz @jordanmasele
Replying to @Wendys
If you reply I will buy the whole Wendy's menu right now
7:54 PM - Dec 18, 2017
1,362 349 people are talking about this

Wendy's @Wendys
Replying to @jordanmasele
prove it
7:54 PM - Dec 18, 2017
2 348 2,648



Jordz @jordanmasele
Replying to @Wendys
Here's your proof
8:01 PM - Dec 18, 2017
26 513 2,486

Wendy's @Wendys
Replying to @jordanmasele
Thanks for sharing your baby pictures
8:30 PM - Dec 18, 2017
155 3,082 14,646

Hillary Dunkle... @LitheFaerie
Replying to @Wendys @jordanmasele
Why are y'all like this 🤔
8:43 PM - Dec 18, 2017
1 10 289

Wendy's @Wendys
Replying to @LitheFaerie @jordanmasele
We tried to keep it friendly. But we aren't here to get trashed by someone
8:44 PM - Dec 18, 2017
8 163 2,192

boredpanda.com

[Max's Tweets]

MAX Burgers @max_burgers · Sep 25, 2019 ...
 #DeliciousClimateAction has arrived. 800+ million meals a year are getting a climate-friendly makeover



coolfood.org
A Delicious Way to Help the Climate
 Cool Food, a delicious way to make a difference. A sustainable, plant-rich diet is a simple way to help fight climate change. Find out more.

1 3 12

MAX Burgers @max_burgers · Oct 18, 2018 ...
 Planting trees as climate compensation is about carbon offset and also about enabling farmers to a better future and fight poverty. @Zeromission_@johannabgrant #Klimatkompensation #Klimatpositiv #PlanVivo #climatechange #climatepositive



Johanna Brunge Grant

3 6

MAX Burgers @max_burgers · Jul 2, 2018 ...
 10 voices on MAX's Climate Positive burgers
[linkedin.com/pulse/10-voice...](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/10-voice...)

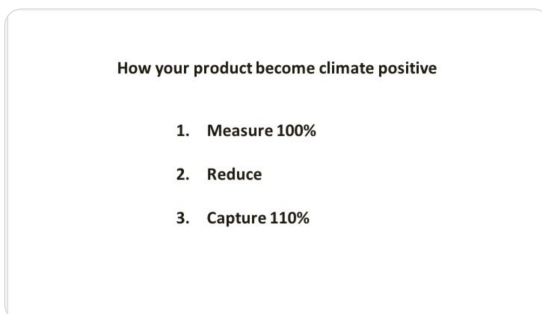
Thx @svanteaxelsson @GreenSolitaire @mattiasgoldmann @owengaffney @jonathonporritt @sprillo



linkedin.com
 10 voices on MAX's Climate Positive burgers
 "MAX takes another step in their climate work. They now start to do what the rest of the world also must do – not just work to "zero" the ...

1 7 8

MAX Burgers @max_burgers · Jun 8, 2018 ...
 Thanks @SustainBrands & everyone at #Sb18Vancouver for this empowering week! We hope our launch of #climatepositive burgers will inspire more Obi Wan Kenobis-companies to help consumers become climate heroes in their daily lives. Hope to see you at clipop.org



1 2 8

Kyle @Kyle_mitt_namn · 2022-02-21 ✓
 Hej,

Vad anser ni om kritiken av att er mat/ restauranger blivit betydligt sämre under de sista 10 åren? Min personliga reflektion är att det blivit betydligt sämre. För 10 år sedan fick man en bra burgare, varm och estetiskt fin. Idag är det ofta burgaren är en kladdig hög. Mvh

1

MAX Burgers @max... · 2022-02-21 ✓
 Hej, Vi jobbar med ständig förbättring och kommer att se över feedbacken. Initialt vill vi stötta berörda restauranger för att rutinerna ska förbättras. Våra måltider är komponerade för bästa smak med fina råvaror där vi stöttar svenskt lantbruk. Se gärna:



1

09:16 4G

Tweet

 **cc** @bby pandabror

@maxburgers_se snälla gör det möjligt att byta köttpattyn mot vegopattyn även på dem små burgarna

20:43 · 2022-03-22 · Twitter for iPhone

🗨️ ↻️ ❤️ 📤

 **MAX Burgers** @maxburgers_se · 1 d

Svar till @bby pandabror

Hej! Jag tar vidare ditt önskemål till vårt menyteam 😊

🗨️ ↻️ ❤️ 📤

09:17 4G

Tweet

 **Simon Lindström (Mini Couch Guy)** @Schismatron

Max hamburgare sötpotatispomes = cringe

Mvh en sötpotatisälskare

20:22 · 2022-03-21 · Twitter for iPhone

3 gillamarkeringar

🗨️ ↻️ ❤️ 📤

 **MAX Burgers** @maxburgers_se · 2 d

Svar till @Schismatron

Hej Simon! Skicka oss gärna ett DM så ska vi hjälpa dig.

🗨️ ↻️ ❤️ 📤

 **Fologab** @fologab · 2 d

Svar till @Schismatron

Har du testad Bastard Burgers sötpotatispomes? de är godlike

🗨️ ↻️ ❤️ 📤

09:39

Tweet

 **AgentGuL** @AgentYella · 2021-02-12

@maxburgers_se its so ugly!



🗨️ 1 ↻️ ❤️ 📤

 **MAX Burgers** @maxburgers_se

Hi! Sorry to hear that you feel disappointed. Please write us a PM and tell us more.

Översätt tweeten

08:25 · 2021-02-15 · Falcon Social Media Management

🗨️ ↻️ ❤️ 📤

09:23 4G

Tweet

 **vektor** @Vektor_ · 2021-11-04

@maxburgers_se mina nuggets är ju kritvita. hur glömmer man ströbrödet bror??



🗨️ 1 ↻️ ❤️ 📤

 **MAX Burgers** @maxburgers_se

Hej! Skicka gärna ett PM så ska vi hjälpa dig vidare.

08:47 · 2021-11-05 · Falcon Social Media Management

🗨️ ↻️ ❤️ 📤

09:28

Tweet

 **Oskar** @oskarthfc_ · 2021-10-13

@maxburgers_se Lite väl vegetarisk för min smak, saknar burgare helt! Hur gör jag för o få tillbaka mina pengar?



🗨️ 1 ↻️ ❤️ 📤

 **MAX Burgers** @maxburgers_se

Hej! Vad tråkigt att höra om detta, skicka oss gärna ett DM så ska vi hjälpa dig!

09:42 · 2021-10-14 · Falcon Social Media Management

🗨️ ↻️ ❤️ 📤

09:44

Tweet

 **Roffe** @LIGMA86723612

@maxburgers_se jag beställde en burgare av er igår, de så jävla mycket hår i den 😬👎 Hjälp!

17:56 · 2020-11-26 · Twitter for iPhone

1 gillamarkering

🗨️ ↻️ ❤️ 📤

 **MAX Burgers** @max... · 2020-11-27

Svar till @LIGMA86723612 @terrainxyz och @mcdse

Hej, så ska det inte vara. Skriv ett DM till oss så ska vi hantera detta.

🗨️ 1 ↻️ ❤️ 📤

 **Roffe** @LIGMA86723612 · 2020-11-27

De lugnt, det var gott.

🗨️ ↻️ ❤️ 1 📤

[MAX's Fake Tweets]



MAX Burgers @max_burgers · Feb 9
Soggy fries where? I don't have any.

1,178 280 6,752



MAX Burgers @max_burgers · Nov 24, 2021
How do you eat our hot and crispy fries?

Fist Full - Feast Mode	31.6%
One. By. One - Pinky out	45%
Sobs deeply - VULNERABLE	12.4%
Hands free - Look Mom!	11.1%

5,862 votes · Final results

440 88 847



MAX Burgers @max_burgers · Feb 11, 2021
Looks like you're about to open up a circle pit at a Build-A-Bear.
#NationalRoastDay



MAX Burgers @max_burgers · Jan 12
I heard when they breed the dogs to have faces like that it's really bad for the animal. #NationalRoastDay

Zack a @reglakcaz · Jan 12
Replying to @max_burgers
Roast me! :)

188 142 3,309



MAX Burgers @max_burgers · Feb 11, 2021
Creating a food empire off of insulting people to stay relevant? Real original, Gordon. #NationalRoastDay



Gordon Ramsay @GordonRamsay · Feb 11, 2021
Replying to @max_burgers



167 1,623 19.6K

Karla @KC_Amaya13 · Feb 11, 2021

Replying to @max_burgers
Roast mee



127 753 12.4K



MAX Burgers @max_burgers · Oct 4, 2021
where the things that should be fresh are frozen, and the things that should be frozen are out of order.

McDonald's @McDonalds · Oct 4, 2021

if u were the person who ran the McDonald's account for a day, what would u tweet

[Show this thread](#)

860 3,702 29.3K

[Oatly's Tweets]



Oatly @oatly · Jan 21, 2021

Look! It's 60 seconds of stupidity featuring an EU proposal that contradicts climate goals and basic common sense, brought to you by friends of the European milk lobby. Or skip the show and just sign the petition at stopam171.com. #StopPlantbasedCensorship #StopAM171



Oatly @oatly · Dec 23, 2019

Here is a creamy oat latte just hanging out, minding its own business before being gulped, because every tweet doesn't have to be really exciting, even during the holidays.



2 60



Oatly @oatly · Aug 23, 2019

Who's had an oat latte today?

20 4 74



ami @AmiKabba · Feb 22

I need @oatly to fix whatever issue you guys have with the damn lids... how are you telling me to shake it but the whole of it is dripping out?

1



Oatly @oatly · Feb 28

Hi Ami, we're sorry you're experiencing this! The good news is that we're working on it. Have you tried gently shaking it side to side?



Brenna @brennaq222 · 14h

So @oatly yogurt is amazing. To be fair oatly everything is amazing

1



Oatly @oatly · 3h

You're too kind Brenna, this definitely brightened up our day!

1



Kumara22 @Kumara220 · Feb 23

My special talent: I can literally drink a whole carton of @oatly chocolate oat milk in one sitting. It's soooooo good. 😊😋

1 6



Oatly @oatly · Feb 23

Pic or it didn't happen! Well, thinking about it for a bit longer, we remember that this chocolicious oat drink is indeed so good that we don't even request proof to believe you. We would probably even join the chug-a-lug-competition. Sending love from the oat central!

2



Oatly @oatly · Dec 27, 2019

Dear Oatly fans,
Are you having a good day? Hope so.
Love,
Oatly

23 17 221



Oatly @oatly · Dec 27, 2019

Dear Oatly fans,
Are you having a good day? Hope so.
Love,
Oatly

23 17 221

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Focus Group Questions:

Elapsed time for each interview: approx. 2h

Objective: To see what patterns can be derived from the interviewees on how they would engage with roasting

Sample:

- **Interviewees pooled from Gothenburg and its surrounding area (due to geographical proximity).**
- **Interviewees between the ages of 18-30 (generally seen as more familiar with social media communication/culture).**

[Disclaimer]

Before we begin, we would like to inform you that this session will be taped and recorded for the convenience of our research. This will be done to keep track of what is said and by whom. This recording will not be shared with a third party, like for instance a company. Your statements will be kept only for the purpose to reproduce it in a later stage of the study. Furthermore, if anyone wishes to be anonymous, you can freely state it now or later as you please. You are also able to leave the interview or study whenever you wish. Do we have your unanimous permission to continue with this interview?

[Start to interview]

- Please introduce yourselves (name, age, occupation/profession)
- Ask if they are active on social media and ever share content.
 - Are you restrictive with what you choose to share with your network?
- What type of brand content do you find valuable on social media? (informative, educational, funny, memes)
 - What type of content are you more likely to share or subscribe to?
- How does brand content affect your perception of a brand?
- Do you often share brand content? Is it important to you?
 - Do you enjoy helping your favorite brands with publicity?
- Are any of you familiar with RoastMe on Reddit/social media, how that works?
 - *Answer:* It's when you submit a picture of yourself and challenge the community members to roast you.

[Introducing Wendy's]

- Are you familiar with Wendy's since before?
 - How about their social media presence?
 - Have you heard about their tweets (i.e. in which they respond to consumers and provide roasts)?
 - Have you heard about this type of roasting communication before? And its rise in popularity among different companies in the USA?

- If not: [*a brief intro on the matter*].
- **Show Wendy's tweets**
 - What are your feelings about these tweets?
 - Do they awaken any particular emotions?
 - What do you think they are striving for with this strategy?
 - How does this engagement affect your perception of the brand?
 - Do you believe it builds stronger relationships with consumers?
 - Would you follow their profile to keep receiving their content?
 - Would you like these tweets? Reshare them? Tell your friends about them?
 - Is this content valuable according to you?
 - Do you believe this content would garner followers?
 - Does the content make you trust or like the company more? Feel more connected to the brand?
 - How do you think this content makes Swedish people feel?
 - Would they find this content valuable (i.e. value = being like worthy, share worthy, follow worthy, worthy of going viral)?
 - Are they likely to follow for more of this type of content?
 - Do you see this (roasting) strategy being successful here in Sweden?
 - Possibility of going viral?
 - Are there any particular industries/companies you think could adopt this strategy? (i.e. who do you think this will work for?)

[Introducing MAX tweets]

- **Show MAX current tweets/social media content**
 - What do you think about their current content?
 - Do they awaken any particular emotions?
 - What are your feelings about these tweets?
 - What do you think they are striving for with this strategy?
 - How does this content affect your perception of the brand?
 - Would you follow their profile to keep receiving their content?
 - Would you like these tweets? Reshare them? Tell your friends about them?
 - Is this content valuable according to you?
 - Do you believe this content would garner followers?
 - Does the content make you trust or like the company more?
 - How do you think this content from MAX makes Swedish people feel?
 - Would they find this content valuable (i.e. value = being like worthy, share worthy, follow worthy, worthy of going viral)?
 - Do you believe people are likely to follow for more of this type of content?
 - How would you compare it to Wendy's?

- Which strategy do you believe builds stronger relationships with consumers?
- What content do you believe is more valuable?
- What content do you believe will garner more followers, likes, and shares?
- What content do you believe is more likely to go viral?
- What content do you wish to see from brands?
 - Does the industry they find themselves in affect the type of content you wish to see?
- How do these different types of content affect your perception of the brands?
- Which type of content makes the brands more likable/trustworthy? Feel more connected with the brand?
- Which type of content do you think would be accepted more successfully in Sweden?

[Introducing Fake MAX tweets]

- **Show photoshopped MAX tweets with roasts**
 - What do you think about this content now?
 - How does this affect your perceptions of MAX now?
 - Is it fitting for them to communicate in this way instead?
 - Is this content something that would engage you from a company like MAX?
 - Are you likely to share, like, comment, follow, tell your friends about such content?
 - Do you think changing their social media strategy would be successful?
 - Would it garner a larger following? Increase brand visibility? Go viral? Build stronger relationships with consumers? Increase trust?
 - Do you see this maybe backfiring?

[Introducing Oatly tweets]

- *Show Oatly tweets*
 - “Instead of a roasting strategy, Oatly has engaged with their consumers in a nicer way.”
 - What do you think about their tweets?
 - Do they awaken any particular emotions?
 - What are your feelings about these tweets?
 - How would you compare this to the previously seen roasting content?
 - Which of these two strategies do you believe builds stronger relationships with consumers over time?
 - What content do you believe is more valuable?
 - What content do you believe will garner more followers, likes, and shares?

- What content do you believe is more likely to go viral?
- What content do you as a group wish to see from brands?
 - Does the industry they find themselves in affect the type of content you wish to see?
- How do these different types of content affect your perception of the brands?
- Which type of content makes the brands more likable/trustworthy? More connected?
- Which type of content do you think would be accepted more successfully in Sweden?

Appendix 4: Audio-Recording Being Transcribed in Wreally (Screenshot)

The screenshot shows the Wreally transcription interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'transcriptions', 'how to transcribe', 'help', 'customers', 'reviews', 'guide', 'account', and 'logout'. Below this is a video player for 'Masters interview 4.m4a' with a progress bar and playback controls. The transcript is displayed in a text area with a rich text editor toolbar above it. The transcript includes several paragraphs of dialogue from participants like Hannes, Andreas, Agnes, Danijal, and Malin. A 'Dictate' button is visible in the toolbar. On the right side, there are 'Keyboard Shortcuts' listed, such as 'Esc: pause/resume', 'F1: slow down', 'F2: speed up', 'F3: rewind 2 seconds', 'F4: forward 2 seconds', and 'F6: insert timestamp'. A 'Reset to automatic transcript' button is also present.

Masters interview 4.m4a

Esc F1 F2 F3 F4 F6 Auto Loop: OFF Foot Pedal Reset Masters interview 4.m4a

01:56:03 02:14:10 1.0x

Keyboard Shortcuts

Mac users: switch F1-F11 keys to function as standard function keys.

Esc: pause/resume
F1: slow down
F2: speed up
F3: rewind 2 seconds
F4: forward 2 seconds
F6: insert timestamp

» Learn to use Dictation

Reset to automatic transcript

Hannes: but like if you factor in, that they were getting actually a lot more retweets and replies and stuff. So many more people are going to see it. So even if 50% people see these posts, even 5% of Wendy's users are going to like the post, is going to be more likes and retweets anyways.

Andreas: I mean looking at their interactions and numbers, you can see that they don't have that much comments and retweets.

Agnes: Yeah if we can compare each of these to Wendy's.

Danijal: Oh yeah, sure [Handing out the papers again].

Hannes: Like a percentage of the people that are seeing this [01:56:03], on volume Wendy's are going to have so much more attention.

Agnes: Because on one of their posts, we they have 14,000 likes and 3,000 reshares. So in that sense, the visibility and likes, and the interactions... then Wendy's would win. But I'm not sure if it's just sustainable in the long term [People agreeing in the background].

Hannes: Like if you, because now we can compare Qatly's to Wendy's. Wendy's already got a lot bigger brand than Qatly does. So if you have like two same, regular sized companies and compare them, with different strategies. I have no idea who would be more favorable.

Malin: Yeah but, Wendy's sells a concept also. Don't forget that. Like you go to a restaurant and experience, buy food and spend time with your friends. This is Oatley, you buy a carton of oat milk from a supermarket. It's like you connect it differently as brands.

17072 words · The transcribed text is auto-saved using your browser's local storage. You can access this page without Internet tool

Appendix 5: Coding the Transcribed Material in Quirkos (Screenshot)

The screenshot displays the Quirkos 2.5.0 interface. The main workspace is a dark blue canvas with a mind map of coded text. The nodes are represented by colored circles and connected by lines. The central node is a large yellow circle with the text "A way to gain knowledge of brand perception/awareness". Other nodes include "Established brand perception/awareness", "Younger for whom does roasting work for? /services", "Risks associated with roasting in Sweden", and "Adapting the content more to Swedish humor/language".

On the right side, there is a transcript window with the following text:

the risk is that you can confuse your customers, if you have a strong brand recognition from before.

Hannes: I mean some people will be upset, but they wouldn't care anyways. Like it wouldn't even go there in the first place to begin with.

Agnes: [01:36:00] That's like customers that isn't really within their target segment. Like the older generation, like if it would get the response like this, they might be a little bit upset or take a stand back from the brand. On the other hand they might gain new customers by doing this strategy as well.

Hannes: As you said about the low risk as well, I feel like it's really not that bad if some people get upset. They're going to forget about in a couple of weeks or what ever. If you have to try to be a socially responsible brand, you have a lot of more to lose.

At the bottom of the interface, there is a zoom slider and a status bar indicating "Source Coded: 36% (36% total)".